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Borders, Boundaries, Lines of Control: Literature Across Disciplines in Contemporary Times

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Editorial Note

MEJO, or the *MELOW Journal of World Literature*, is a double-blind, peer-refereed e-journal brought out annually by MELOW, the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World. It is a reincarnation of the previous publications brought out in a book or printed form by the Society since its inception in 1998.

MELOW is an academic organisation, one of the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly World Literature. The Organisation meets every year at an international conference, and it seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages and grooms younger scholars, and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The papers presented at MELOW conferences are screened, selected, edited and published by a Board of Editors especially appointed for the purpose. Whereas in the initial years, the Society favoured a book publication, in recent years, it has a published journal annually. With the changing times, MELOW decided to move on to online publication. The result is *MEJO*, the *MELOW Journal of World Literature*.

This is the eighth volume of *MEJO*, the *MELOW Journal*. This issue contains essays from the 2023 conference held at Sri Gobind Singh College, Sec 26, Chandigarh, India. Additionally, MELOW also releases a Call for Papers on the same theme after the conference on various academic portals. Many scholars and professors worldwide sent their papers for publication in our Journal. A panel of reviewers have selected the papers from the revised submissions.

We would like to acknowledge the effort put in by Tripti Aggarwal, a research scholar, in the final proofreading of the draft.

We at MELOW wish you happy reading!

About MELOW

MELOW (The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World) was first set up in 1998 as MELUS-India. It is an academic organisation among the foremost of its kind in India. The members are college and university teachers, scholars and critics interested in literature, particularly in world literature and literature across borders of time and space. The organisation meets every year at an international conference. It seeks to maintain academic standards, encourages younger scholars and provides a forum for senior scholars in literature.

The *MELOW journal* has existed in hard print for about a decade. The *MEJO Journal* was revamped in 2016 and is now available online on the website.

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ISAAC SEQUEIRA MEMORIAL FUND

Professor Isaac Sequeira

(5 January 1930--7 September 2006)

Professor Isaac Sequeira from Hyderabad, who worked at Osmania University and was closely associated with the ASRC, Hyderabad, was a mentor and patron to several generations of academics in India. His sad demise in 2006 created a void hard to fill. We at MELOW wish to keep alive the memory of our Patron and guiding light, who played a key role in all the activities of our organisation.

We have set up an Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund, out of which a cash prize is awarded for the best paper presented at our conferences (see details below). * With effect from the 2010 conference, there is a Special Invited Lecture by a person of eminence funded by the Isaac Sequeira Memorial Fund.

Several individuals have come forward to offer contributions towards the corpus and donated generously to the ISM fund. **Donations of Rs. 1,000 or more may be sent in cash/by draft/NEFT payable to MELOW at Chandigarh. For details contact melusmelow@gmail.com**

THE ISM AWARD

- In memory of Prof Isaac Sequeira, MELOW annually awards a prize for the best paper presented at its conference. The award comprises a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 5,000.
- The competition is open to Indian citizens who are members of MELOW. The participant/delegate should be less than forty years of age at the time of the conference, follow the stipulated deadlines and submit the abstract and complete paper before it is presented at the conference.
 - The Office Bearers of MELOW appoint a panel of Judges.
- If required, these rules may be amended by a simple majority of members present and voting at the Conference.

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Isaac Sequeira Memorial Lecture

Science, Technology and Literary Imagination: The Twentieth-Century Perspective

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The relationship between science, technology, and literary imagination, of which literature is a product has a complex and fascinating history in the Western world, for it is intertwined with the making and unmaking of disciplinary boundaries and taxonomies, which stabilised only towards the middle of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though science and literature existed before that for centuries, their boundaries were hazy and kept on changing. Technology developed independently of science for centuries and connected with science and literature around the middle of the nineteenth century. Even though Aristotle gave his threefold classification of disciplines in his time, he had his moments of unease, which he negotiated by putting all of them under the broad category of philosophy (Moran 3-5). Until 1833, science was natural philosophy. Literature had no recognisable boundary till the middle of the nineteenth century, for along with the work of poets and dramatists, it also included the work of historians and philosophers. It was recognised as a distinct product of the imagination only in the nineteenth century, and as an academic discipline at the University of Oxford, it had to wait till 1896. Despite this, the shadow of Aristotle's unease has proved so durable that advanced research degrees across disciplines are still designated PhD, the Doctor of Philosophy.

Two clarifications are needed before dealing with the relationship between science, technology, and literary imagination in the twentieth century. One, that, the complex nature of this relationship can be understood in its fullness only if we know about science and literature as modes of knowledge. And two, what this relationship looks like in the twentieth century cannot be appreciated in isolation from what it was like in times before that because most of its features are a carryover of what it was like then, with several extra edges of complexity to them.

A close look at the way writers, scientists, and technologists function reveals that they share many things because they are both social and technological animals. Writers' use of technology has increased steadily with time, from quill pens to typewriters to personal computers, iPads, and what have you. The growth of printing technology changed the very idea of a writer, for it gave new professional visibility to authors by enabling them to live on their writings. New and exciting developments in the growth of science and technology have expanded the possibilities of new writings by scientists that engage with issues and problems of our times in novel ways.

By now, it is also known that literature and science are not as distant from each other as they might look. Both writers and scientists engage with nature and represent it in their respective works. Since literature is the product of language, which, with its codes and signals, is like technology, a writer is also a kind of technologist. We also know by now that the idea of science as purely objective knowledge, which is unmediated by the scientist, is no longer true, as has been confirmed by Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Experts of science have stated that the idea of science as "reductive realism," which implies that a "true physical reality underlies appearances" and can be articulated in a language that is "achromatic, imparting no colours of its own to the picture it projects," is questionable (Weininger 39). This has increasingly been confirmed by researchers in the fields of Chemistry, Physics, and Medicine. (James J Bono, Joseph W Slade and Judith Yaross Lee, Jeremy Campbell, and Lisa M Steinman) So, one can say that there are many commonalities in the processes in which writers and scientists read nature.

The relationship of science and literature is both direct and indirect. It is indirect when advances in the corpus of science permeate the intellectual climate of the times and affect the writers' mode of apprehending and engaging with the world around them and are reflected in the nature and quality of their writings. It is direct when it stimulates the growth of new forms of writing, which also evaluate both science and technology for their value in human lives.

The first major moment of the interpenetration of science and literature happened close to the time of the Renaissance when there was a revolutionary change in the structure of the universe, the

growth of new knowledge in the fields of cosmology and astronomy, and innovations in maritime technology. Cumulatively, they contributed to the slow dismantling of the medieval worldview and the social edifice based on that. But changes took time to be accepted and absorbed by the society of the day, as is clear from what happened to the people associated with the new Heliocentric Theory: Copernicus had to wait for decades to make it public for fear of being punished; Galileo had to suffer imprisonment for voicing it openly, and Bruno had to pay with his life for propagating it vigorously. Because of this, the intellectual climate of the major part of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in Europe and England was one in which the birth of the new existed with what clung to the old. Quite interestingly, this contributed to the richness of the literature produced during the time, in which the influence of the new knowledge of science collided with the old one that had been controlled by the Church for centuries.

The plays of the time, of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, are emblematic of this tension between the old and the new. Marlowe created Faustus to embody a new being who loves to live a life of voluptuousness on this earth by mastering new knowledge and seeking a life of “profit and delight” but cannot get over the residue of the old thinking instilled by the Church. Faustus’s yearning soul wrestles with its medieval moorings, leading to his sad end, but not before going through an agonising wrench.

The growing influence of science among writers is reflected, without such tragic implications, in the writings of Francis Bacon and John Donne. Bacon popularised the image of a scientist as a provider of useful knowledge, spun a theological argument to promote science, and paid with his life to advance its cause. In the field of poetry, advances in scientific knowledge led to extraordinary developments. Till then, poetry was dominated by the tradition of courtly love, a product of what C S Lewis calls the “realising imagination,” as different from “transforming imagination” or “penetrating imagination” (206). The poets were bound by set conventions, which provided no scope for articulating anything original or new. The artifice of the courtly tradition was breached by the breaking of the old chain of being. It resulted in the rise of the sonnet, a short but forceful medium

for voicing the personal, and the use by Donne of the new knowledge of cosmology, astronomy, and planetary motion to weave elaborate conceits to energise poetry that had become worn out and effete because of its artificiality.

The second moment is when the growth of science touched a new high because of the work of Isaac Newton, which led to the rise of the scientific temper that had both literary and aesthetic dimensions and a strong bearing on the drive towards human perfection, marked by the rise of reason. All these had a major influence on the shaping of neo-classical aesthetics of the eighteenth century, with a string of values for literature and a search for perfection in human life.

If Newton could apprehend the universe as a clockwork mechanism characterised by order that is understandable, then artistic creations should also be well organised and deal with common human experiences. The result was the view of art characterised by order, symmetry, and proportion, in which, to use John Dryden's phrase, imagination is tempered by reason, and the poet, according to Alexander Pope, writes poetry about the ordinary but in a way that was never so well expressed. Because of this, Gary Day observes that "Neo classicists had some affinity with scientists because they both saw order in nature, because they both believed in reason, and because they were both committed to clarity" (172).

The primacy of reason in human life that followed the rise of science strengthened the view that human beings could strive for perfection in their lives. The writers were inspired to produce art that gave delight and instructed people to help them get better. The literature of the times got a pronounced public stance, which gave rise to satirical compositions that cut across generic categories. Writers examined the society of the day and attacked everything that came in the way of making it better than it was. The attack touched all aspects of life: social, political, religious, literary, even scientific. Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Henry Fielding, and Jonathan Swift wrote satires in dramatic, poetic, novelistic, and other non-narrative forms, like the essay. The main impulse behind such writings was to help people improve the quality of their lives.

Another interesting angle of the relationship between science and the poetry of the eighteenth century is seen in the readiness of the poets to greet science with hope and promise. Several poets composed poems on Newton, acknowledging his genius and admitting that his work had freed their imagination as well. Because of this, they felt that science, instead of coming in their way, helped them to rejuvenate their poetic spirit.

The optimistic attitude of the writers towards science changed during the Romantic Age. In Edgar Allan Poe's sonnet addressed to Science, science is a vulture who "peyest...upon the poet's heart" (Otis 3). It eats into his imaginative flights and prevents him from imagining Naiad in the flood and the elfin in the grass and dreaming under the tamarind tree. In this lament, science, as a mode of knowing, is pitted against the poet's soaring imagination.

Even when the romantic writers accepted science as a source of knowledge, they did not consider it a source of moral development. The advent of the machine was seen as a threat to both humanity and art. William Blake's statement that "Art is the Tree of Life, science is the Tree of death" sums up the distrust of the writers towards science and technology. However, the impression of science on their poetic compositions, especially in their use of imagery, has been documented by critics like MH Abrams and Desmond King-Hele.

This moment is also significant because science and technology were scrutinised with grave concern vis-à-vis their impact on people's lives. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* exemplifies both the influence of science on a writer and the writer's response to its effect on the well-being of humans. She modelled the scientist on the German physiologist John Wilhelm Ritter but sounded a clear warning: that scientific passion is like a craving for reckless knowledge that could pose a serious threat to life, a tendency that grew steadily during the twentieth century.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution gave a distinct melancholic tone to the late Victorian poetry of Alfred Tennyson and Matthew Arnold and a tragic nuance to the fiction that was appropriately called literary Darwinism, which grew in Britain, France, and America. Social Darwinism also encouraged the growth of disturbing theories of retrogressive evolution, such as the

one of Cesare Lombroso, who came up with the view that crime is a form of innate physiological debility, which led to the production of novels like Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Sherlock Holme's story "The Creeping Man" (Cartwright et al, Ch 8).

The relationship between science, technology, and literature in the twentieth century carries forward these strands more intensively and with some interesting additions too. The focus in what follows will be on four major ones that are closely related to the exponential growth of technology and its deepening link with science during this time when scientists depended on technology for their advancement and technology grew because of advances in scientific knowledge.

1. This is related to the pervasive influence of science and technology on the intellectual climate of the twentieth century, which greatly shaped the literary currents of the day, such as modernism and postmodernism. This is documented in work produced by scholars in the fast-growing interdisciplinary field of Literature and Science programmes of various academic institutions and reflected in scholarly publications, such as *Literature and Science* by John Cartwright and Brian Baker, *Quantum Physics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot and the Science of Modernism* by Daniel Albright, *Einstein's Wake: Relativity Metaphor and Modernist Literature* by Michael Whitworth, and *Being Modern: The Cultural Impact of Science in the Early Twentieth Century*, a volume of essays edited by Robert Budd and others. In their introduction to the volume, they write that "the arts drew upon the ideas, metaphors, symbolic meaning and practical potential of science" (2).

I would like to begin with another work of seminal importance by Sara Danius that appeared in 2002 and is titled *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*. She argues persuasively that the connection between technology and aesthetic modernism has remained unexplored because such a connection has been considered irrelevant for a long time. She concedes that scholars have explored the connection of technology with avant-garde movements like Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism and Vorticism. Still, the connection of technology with the mainstream novels of the time has been ignored. According to her, "the nexus of perception, technological change, and literary form" is at the heart of "modernist aesthetics from Marcel Proust to James Joyce," which she

considers the “index of a technologically mediated crisis of the senses” (1). She considers this connection quite strong and remarks that “technology is in a specific sense *constitutive* of high modernist aesthetics” (3) and expounds it at length in individual chapters on three iconic Modernist Texts: Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

One of the essays from the volume on *Being Modern*, entitled “Multiple Modernisms in Concert: The Sciences, Technology and Culture in Vienna Around 1900,” establishes two crucial linkages between technology and literature. One that “modern ways of thinking in the natural sciences and mathematics and radical changes in the arts ...occurred at the same time” (26). Two, the modernist style in both sciences and arts “involved a break with direct, supposedly pictorial representation of nature and a turn towards giving free play to abstraction and theoretical imagination” (27). The second essay dwells on how scientific metaphors shaped the thinking and writings of three influential modernist writers. In her essay “Woolf’s Atom, Eliot’s Catalyst and Richardson’s Waves of Light: Science and Modernism in 1919,” Morag Schiach explains in detail how Woolf’s critique of the naturalistic fiction of her contemporaries in her essay on “Modernist Fiction” is based on her belief that life can only be captured in “incessant shower of atoms,” thus applying the principles of physical sciences to the human psyche. In this way, the atom is not merely an object of scientific interest but also of “wider cultural interest” (66).

The essay also discusses that the metaphor of catalyst is seminal to the poetics of impersonality discussed in detail by Eliot in his essay “The Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Eliot confirms the connection between poetry and science when he writes, “It is in this depersonalisation that art may be said to approach the condition of science” (69). He clarifies the metaphor in another passage in which he mentions how two gases are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum and that “the mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. The more perfect that artist, the more complete separately in him will be the man who suffers and the mind that creates.” Eliot discusses this also in his essay “Humanist, Artist, Scientist” which was published first in *The Athenaeum*. In another essay,

“Poetry is a Science?” Eliot developed many ideas around tradition and the metaphors for expressing these ideas.

In a similar vein, the critic discusses Richardson’s exposure to science and the use of stream of consciousness, which are reflected in several moments in her work *The Tunnel*. In this way, science contributed to the growth of non-linear narrative modes, in which space and time work differently from how they functioned in earlier works.

Much later, when scientists made rapid strides in the development of thermodynamics and established that heat is a form of energy and there is a universal tendency for the degradation of mechanical energy, especially in closed systems, more new scientific metaphors became available to the writers. Since the universe was also a kind of closed system, it was also subject to such degradation, which is measured in terms of entropy. So, like the atom and the catalyst, entropy became the new metaphor for the social and cultural decline of the world. Such visions of decline are in HG Wells’s *Time Machine*, where entropy is considered an inverse of evolution. Entropy is a metaphor for this decline and psychological disturbances in Thomas Pynchon’s *V* and *Gravity’s Rainbow*. Pynchon also wrote a story, “Entropy,” to dramatise this entropic decline. The influence of science on his work has prompted a critic to say that “Pynchon [has] proved that modern literature must make poetry out of equations and chemical bonds” (Limon 1). Entropy functions as a powerful metaphor in many science fiction novels, too. When entropy gets associated with cybernetics, scientists consider it a kind of negative entropy and label it “negentropy.” Heat loss, disorganisation, and the rise of noise combine to create a dismal world, which is dramatised in Don DeLillo’s *White Noise*.

2. Although scientists have continually made claims that their work and the technology developed from it is essential for raising the standard of living of people and, therefore, an arbiter of value, writers and literary intellectuals have increasingly felt concerned about the price that humans would have to pay for that. They think that crude scientific rationalism and technological revolution are gradually assuming dangerous proportions. These concerns find expression in a series of dystopian

works of fiction that create a world of nightmare and bondage in which an attempt is made to destroy diversity in nature by replacing it with mechanical sameness, and individual liberty and privacy are threatened, as, for example in Aldous Huxley's *The Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. The same figures as a key theme in many science fiction novels, of which Philip K Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* is a kind of trendsetter.

Wells also shows how scientists can threaten the very processes of life by developing schemes to alter them. In one of his stories, an old man, Elvisham, befriends a young man and promises to give him all his property provided he gives proof of his being fit and healthy. When he is satisfied with the young man's fitness, he invites him to dinner, plies him with some concoction and tells him to take some other powder before going to sleep. When the young man gets up in the morning, he is shocked to find that Elvisham has taken his young body and given his old, decrepit one to him. Out of sheer frustration, he commits suicide; Elvisham, too, dies soon after in an accident.

Further, the growth of technology is perceived as a serious threat to all the good things—the values and verities—that have descended the ages. The shift in the zones of technology, from the industrial to the scientific to electronic, is seen as a threat. It dehumanises and diminishes human beings, playing havoc with value structures, and becomes a veritable source of the destruction of civilisational forces, turning the humans into the dead-alive people seen crossing the London Bridge in TS Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

3. Although writers and intellectuals have consistently dwelt on the destructive potential of the fast growth of science and technology, some still believe that science is superior to literature. This became a serious issue in the twentieth century and paved the way for two of the most prominent critical theories of literature, which need to be seen in perspective.

The anti-science attitude of the romantics led to a startling turn when Thomas Love Peacock came up with the idea that poetry had touched a low level and that a poet was “a semi-barbarian in a civilised community...His ideas, thoughts, feelings, associations are all with barbarous manners, obsolete customs, and exploded superstitions” (Wimsatt and Brooks 417). In response to that, Shelley

wrote a spirited defence of poetry and elaborated on its huge influence on the social and political lives of people, but this did not put a stop to the incessant questioning of poets and writers by scientists.

The controversy surfaced, once again, but in the context of culture and education when Julian Huxley stated that attaining real culture with an exclusive focus on scientific education is as effective as exclusive literary education. Matthew Arnold steered past this by defining literature in a very comprehensive sense in which the science and literature controversy ceased to exist. To put what he said in the words of Stefan Collini, “Literature is a larger word; it may mean everything written with letters or printed in a book. Euclid’s *Elements* and Newton’s *Principia* are thus literature.” And further, “By knowing modern nations, I mean not merely knowing their *belles lettres*, but knowing also what has been done by such men as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin” (xiv-xv). In this way, Arnold recognised that both science and literature deserve a place in the educational process.

CP Snow gave a new turn to that in his lecture “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution,” by attacking literary intellectuals for being reactionary and backwards-looking and considering scientists progressive and forward-looking. He also found fault with the methods of literary people, which he called unreliable because they are subjective.

The debate not only impacted the writers but also those who had just begun to teach literature as an academic discipline. Their response to the criticism of the advocates of science shaped two of the most influential methods of reading and interpreting literature. Seeing that literature was being attacked because it was not considered valuable, IA Richards proposed a new theory of value for literature and a new method for reading it. Seminal ideas regarding them figure in his *Principles of Literary Criticism* and the volume on poetry and science. This became the basis of close reading of literary texts and inspired the school of New Criticism, which ruled the academy for several decades.

FR Leavis severely attacked CP Snow not only for what he said but also attacked his person. He criticised Snow for projecting the idea of the unquestionable cultural authority of the scientists and their attempt at influencing people to have unqualified belief in the idea of progress through science. He believed that Snow’s quantitative description of the goals of life was highly inadequate.

Such knowledge is embodied only in great works of literature for answering questions like what human beings live for and by. Interestingly, in the revised edition of his lecture, Snow also pleaded for a third culture, but it proved a plea in vain. Much later, Aldous Huxley pleaded for moderation in his short work entitled *Literature and Science*, but Leavis's influence continued to shape the discipline of cultural studies.

4. The most significant development that took root in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century is the rise of the new genre of science fiction, which some trace to writers like Jules Verne and HG Wells. Experts make a distinction between hard and soft science fiction depending on the way in which science is used in this fiction. The hard one is mostly science-oriented, about the emotional experience of describing and confronting what is scientifically true and plausible, as is done by Isaac Asimov and Arthur Clarke. As against this, soft science fiction has a strong speculative element, allowing writers to use more imagination than merely to rework what is already known. Ursula Le Guin and Philip K Dick are known writers who deal with social aspects of science, such as sociology and psychology.

Early science fiction works were speculative in nature, which dealt with what was still unknown in the form of fantasies, like extraordinary journeys, such as Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* or HG Wells's *The First Men on the Moon*. Or journeys away from the Earth into new worlds, which are wholly imaginary and, in some cases, also involve encounters with aliens. It also deals with subjects that concern people on this earth, such as human intelligence and its relationship to the physiology of the brain, biological changes and artificial life forms, and genetic engineering, which involves issues related to human cloning, alternative histories, and dystopias.

Another interesting aspect of science fiction is its concern with the human future, which some science fiction critics club under futurological fantasy. The history of science fiction shows that this has been of varied kinds, with political affiliations as well, as, for example, a conception of a scientific, collectivist future or consumer-oriented capitalist future. Apart from this, science fiction also deals with carrying forward the movement of the evolutionary process. If humans have evolved

over time, then it is possible to imagine that they could live in artificial environments, eat artificial foods, and have artificial means of reproduction. The writers have also experimented with the possibility of prolonging human life.

Science fiction works have also projected the possibility of the earth becoming a place not fit for supporting life. Given the levels of environmental degradation the earth has already touched and the possibility that any disaster could destroy life on the earth, this possibility sounds realistic. So, the writers have conceived the possibility of interplanetary travel and the setting up of human settlements in outer space. Considering that science fiction could imagine atomic wars and journeys by humans into outer space, which have already happened, more new possibilities could also come true.

Some of these ideas are implied in the theory of science fiction given by Darko Suvin, who has been recognised by critics across disciplinary boundaries as the one who established science fiction as a legitimate field of inquiry. In his theory of “cognitive estrangement” or “strange newness” or *novum*, he propounds that science fiction is a work that provides an imaginative framework that is different from and, therefore, an alternative to the environment of the writers. In other words, the difference between the two arises from the writer’s creation of an alternative reality based on scientific discoveries or technologies or on new ones which have a scientific or rational basis or are validated by cognitive logic. Because of this, genuine science fiction does not accommodate anything like the supernatural. Even when it looks different from what it is like in the real world, it is within the realm of possibility that is backed by science and holds promise for humans. That is why Frederick Jameson associates Darko’s theory with the human desire for utopias and comments that “Darko’s is an aesthetic... that characterises science fiction in terms of an essentially epistemological function, [and] posits one specific subset of this generic category specifically devoted to the imagination of alternative social and economic forms” (xiv).

Another related development in the field of science fiction is the increasing levels of participation by scholars of scientific background in literary activities by writing novels, short stories,

essays, and even long narratives about issues related to disease, health, and bodily concerns. Some of the scientists turned writers write mostly science fiction; they include David Brin, Gregory Benford, Carl Sagan, Rober L Forward, Poul Anderson, and Fred Hoyle. Short story writers and essayists include Lewis Thomas, Richard Selzer, Jeremy Bernstein, and Stephen J Gould, and long narratives related to disease and health have been published by Siddharth Mukherjee and Atul Gawande. The last one has contributed significantly to the evolving discipline of medical humanities.

Thus, science and technology have impacted human thinking and culture and influenced the creative efforts of writers in multiple ways. Their writings have also assessed the impact of science and technology on the well-being of humans. By taking to writing, scientists have helped raise the consciousness of the general masses about issues that have a direct bearing on the health, welfare, and creativity of human beings.

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Isaac Sequeira Memorial Award-Winning Paper

South Asia's Second World War: Exploring the Legacies of World War II on Indian Memoirs

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Abstract: World War II was a pivotal moment in world history. The Asian theatre of war saw unprecedented levels of destruction, displacement, and loss of life. I examine the memoirs of Ramesh Benegal and Bharati 'Asha' Sahay, volunteers of the Indian National Army (INA) and John Baptist Crasta, a soldier of the British Indian Army who was captured as a prisoner of war (POW) by the Japanese. Benegal's memoirs offer a unique perspective on the war as a member of the INA, which fought alongside the Japanese in their efforts to liberate India from British colonial rule. Benegal and Asha's accounts describe the brutal conditions under which the INA fought, facing not only the British forces but also the complexity of being mobilised to fight their own former units often. Crasta's memoirs, on the other hand, offer a perspective on the war from the other side of the conflict. As a member of the British Indian Army, he was captured by the Japanese and spent several years as a POW. His account offers a stark contrast to INA memoirs, highlighting the harsh realities of life as a captive of the Japanese. Their memoirs shed light on the complex political and social dynamics of the conflict and the toll it took on individuals caught up in the violence. By comparing their accounts, this paper will attempt to analyse the complex memories and traumas that indelibly shaped the emerging postcolonial states of South Asia but have hitherto not been given the necessary analytical attention.

Keywords: War Literature, Memoirs, World War II, Trauma, Conflict Studies

The capture of Singapore by the Imperial Japanese Army on 15th February 1942 came as a shock to the British Empire, leaving its claim to being the dominant power in Southeast Asia utterly exposed. It was the gravest catastrophe for Prime Minister Winston Churchill to have struck the 'prestige' of

the British Empire's entire history. It was just as much of a shock to the nearly 85,000 British, Indian and Commonwealth troops who were taken as prisoners of war (POWs) by the Japanese (Roy 46-49). The once seemingly unchallenged colonial army of the British Empire had been comprehensively outmatched by an enemy that the ideology of imperial racism had deemed as ineffectual opponents. This turn of events would lead to a cascade of events that would indelibly shape the history of Southeast Asia. In the dominant discourses of this form of narratives, especially for the Second World War, there has hitherto been a marked bias in centering Anglo-American voices. The specific context of an Indian soldier fighting for a colonial army against fascist forces places an added layer of complexity and nuance that needs to be engaged with on multiple discursive levels to begin an exploration of the qualitative effects that were wrought on the colonised world during World War II.

When analysing the impact of World War II on the Indian subcontinent, historian Yasmin Khan makes the compelling case that the fraught memories of the War played a vital role in the shaping of the postcolonial republic (5). However, until recently, the more significant impact of the Second World War on the Indian consciousness was not an area of historical research that garnered much attention. While there have been works on the military history of the Indian Army's role in WWII as the most significant volunteer force which served on the Allied side, a more nuanced discussion of the multifaceted impact of the War on the subcontinent and the narratives it spawned is yet to be had. WWII was an especially complex event in Indian history. On the one hand, it laid the groundwork for the eventual relinquishment of British rule in Delhi while also being the period in which the sectarian political climate that would lead to the violent conflagrations of Partition was most widely articulated. According to historian Srinath Raghavan, the experience of fighting WWII institutionally and effectively transformed the Indian Army. It gave the contours of the professional force it was to become for the independent republic (9). On the other hand, the narratives of the War in independent India are indelibly marked by the need to create a nationalist narrative to comprehend the role of Indian men in uniform within the framework of the Indian nationalist movement. In this

respect, it is the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) that has received the most attention in independent India.

This paper looks at the complex web of narrative construction that ties together the fraught memories of this often-overlooked chapter of Indian history. The paper will use three memoirs by Ramesh Benegal and Asha Bharati Sahay, who both served in the INA and John Crasta's account from the other side of the barbed wire as a captive POW of the Japanese. Life writings such as these provide a different path to exploring historiography away from what LaCapra calls the documentary and positivist methodology of traditional professional historians. He describes 'radical constructivism' as a key approach to problematising the milieu of historiography, to include the space for emotions, narrative and affective structures that can make claims to further our understanding of historical events by lending a different and equally important form of authenticity than that offered by the positivist research paradigm (LaCapra 41).

In this regard, memories and their recurrence are a crucial feature of the Second World War. The Asian theatre has hitherto faced a relative lack of attention from the popular memories of the War, along with details of the participation and tribulations of non-white troops at the front. One need only look at the body of research that incorporates these men having been 'forgotten' as a critical aspect of analysing their wartime experiences in the works of researchers ranging from G.J. Douds to Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper. A poll conducted in the UK regarding the greatest battle fought by the British, in recent years, awarded the Battle of Kohima and Imphal as the greatest battle that Britain ever fought instead of more officially and historically memorialised British victories such as the D-Day Landings and Waterloo (Guyot-Réchar 328). While this can be read as symptomatic of a wave of imperial nostalgia in an increasingly right-wing post-Brexit UK, there are more profound implications to the resurrection of these memories from theatres of the war that saw the massive participation of non-white troops and, in turn, revisiting the legacies of wartime to understand how it shaped the fault lines of the postcolonial world which was taking shape in South Asia at the time.

To delve further into how the voices arising from these memoirs can complicate a collective confrontation of the legacy of World War II in Asia, one needs to address the positionality of the speakers in these texts. The experience of war is both a severely traumatic rupture in the psyche of the individuals caught up in the maelstrom of events that is mass armed conflict, and it also simultaneously plays a crucial role in reshaping the identities of the ones who went through these experiences. In trying to make sense of how these combatants made sense of their own experiences and tried to capture their own memories in their texts, it becomes essential to locate them within the milieu of colonial society and be conscious of the positions from which they spoke. Researchers such as Gajendra Singh have pointed out the lacunae in the popular historical memory of the role of the INA and the British Indian Army during India's World War (175). Why the participants chose to fight on one side or the other, or how they fashioned their own identities and made sense of their own roles in the conflict, becomes a crucial factor in deconstructing some of the more nuanced realities that underly the conflict as it played out.

The two INA volunteers whose memoirs are considered here came from privileged segments of Indian society. Ramesh Benegal was a well-educated young man living with his privileged and Anglicised family, part of the upper crust of the Indian diaspora in colonial Burma at the outbreak of war (10-12). This is revealed through his family's ability to make use of their resources to send multiple family members, such as Ramesh's mother, across the Indian border to safety at the start of the Japanese invasion of Burma. Benegal's account of his journey with his uncle through war-torn Burma gives yet more examples of the clout that some segments of the Indian community held there as his uncle can resist the depredations of Burmese extortionists by identifying their leader to have been his one-time servant (15). Benegal's joining the INA comes about in the context of his awakened national and ethnic identity amid the collapse of the British colonial state in Burma. His account of the rumours of Indian soldiers committing atrocities on Burmese women as they retreated in the face of the Japanese offensive indicates some of the more complex racial dynamics and power hierarchies that operated in colonial society. Those Indian soldiers could be perceived to be the hatchet men of

an increasingly gutted and ossified colonial state in stark contrast to the new vision of Indian agency offered by the recruiting officers of the INA (Benegal 22). It is crucial to foreground some of these issues in locating Benegal's induction into the INA as an officer cadet and his subsequent journey to Japan to be trained as an Air Force pilot.

In the case of Asha Sahay, her involvement with the Indian nationalist movement seemed to have been a foregone conclusion from the outset. The daughter of Anand Mohan Sahay, a former secretary to Dr Rajendra Prasad and later a key organiser for the Indian Independence League in Japan, and Sati Sen, the niece of the revolutionary freedom fighter Chittranjan Das and an active participant in the nationalist movement in her own right, Asha's family had unimpeachable nationalist credentials (Sahay 23). Even as a young girl, Asha was steeped in the lore of the freedom struggle, and the anti-imperialist ideology was a dedicated commitment in her household. Her upbringing in Tokyo amongst the Japanese and the dissident Indian diaspora who had settled in Japan to escape British persecution indelibly shaped her understanding of the Second World War and her own role in it. The influence of Showā era Japanese nationalism and her parents' views is apparent in Asha's worldview. For her, the motivations of all her fellow Indians could be flattened into the binary of being *deshpremi* (trans: patriots) and *deshdrohi* (trans: traitors/collaborators) (Sahay 23). The nationalist ideology, especially the one gaining currency with the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose in Japan in 1943, at the height of the war, helped bolster Asha's identification with the freedom struggle and the role she carved out for herself to play in it. She joined the Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the INA as an officer cadet while being accompanied by her father, a senior figure in the intelligence apparatus of the Azad Hind government.

In stark contrast to the young INA volunteers, one confronts a very different voice when encountering Crasta's text. John Crasta belonged to a religious minority (he was a Catholic) from an impoverished part of southwestern India (in the modern state of Karnataka). In a postscript to his memoir, John's son Richard explains the circumstances of his father's joining the British Indian Army as one of economic necessity. Working as a labourer in Karachi was the financial burden placed on

John at the time of the death of his father, which saw him join the Indian Army for the same reason as many recruits to the army: economic survival (Crasta 92). His working-class background lends a voice that describes the wartime shorn of the ideological rhetoric of the better-educated and privileged officer corps. Crasta was stationed in Malaya with a Supply Troop at the time of the peninsula's capture by the Imperial Japanese Army. His ordeal at the hands of the Japanese would see him suffer a gruelling battle to survive against the criminal treatment of POWs at the hands of both the Japanese and, notably, Indian soldiers who had defected to the Indian National Army (INA). Initially stationed with the British Indian Army in the Malayan Peninsula, his sojourn as a captive of the Japanese would see him being transported against his will from Malaya to the Dutch East-Indies (Indonesia) to finally witness the horrors of the Pacific theatre on the island of New Britain at Rabaul (Crasta 36-68).

When analysing his reasons for not joining the INA during his captivity, Diya Gupta argues that Crasta provides a more nuanced view of the Indian soldiers in combat and what motivated their actions and conceptions of themselves as colonised subjects fighting for a colonial army. She makes the case that Crasta's loyalty to the Indian Army cannot be conflated with a corresponding loyalty to the British colonial regime. His principled opposition to joining the INA had more to do with his perception (with more than a grain of truth to it) that the INA itself was co-opted by the Japanese and, in turn, would inevitably be an instrument of Japanese expansionism (Gupta 154). In military history, the motivations of the British Indian Army in intense combat situations were explained through the specific organisation of military institutions of the British Raj. Narratives of regimental honour and traditions formed the cohesive glue to keep the colonial war machine going (Barkawi 325). Crasta himself indicates his attachment to his regiment as a primary reason for refusing to defect to the INA (24).

Gajendra Singh's study of the reasons why most of the captured Punjabi Muslim soldiers of the Hong Kong garrison refused to defect to the INA supports Barkawi's argument. Far from being the simplistic 'martial races' that the colonial state envisioned them as, and many in postcolonial India seem to have assumed them to be, these soldiers refused to part with their Indian VCOs

(Viceroy's Commissioned Officers) and NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers) (Singh 187). In addition to the growing anxiety amongst Muslim soldiers of the INA and the Congress program being heavily influenced by Sikh and Hindu political rhetoric, the incidents of resistance to the INA at the Gun Club Hill Barracks in Hong Kong suggests a far more nuanced perspective of Indian soldiers than they are usually given credit for. The Combined Defence Services Interrogation Centre (India) (CSDIC-I), in fact, directly concluded that the refusal of large bodies of Indian soldiers to defect to the INA was categorically not the result of any entrenched loyalty to the British state (Singh 174).

The experience of wartime itself wrought further challenges to the self-fashioning of combatants. In this regard, a war memoir is a unique form of narrative that can juxtapose the tensions of trauma and memory and simultaneously illuminate the realities of war for a reader while also alienating them from the battlefield as a visceral yet ultimately inaccessible lived experience. When discussing the specific characteristics of the war memoir, there is a unique expression of this juxtaposition of conscious articulation, inherent inaccessibility, and revealing silences. When describing one of the seminal tensions of war literature, especially of soldiers' narratives, Samuel Hynes described writing war memoirs as a unique form of travel writing, giving the (most likely civilian) reader a tour of the essentially alien landscape of war and its destruction, while simultaneously inscribing the essential inaccessibility of that space for anyone who has not undergone that experience. For Hynes, a complete war story involves the return of the only surviving soldier from an enemy ambush to his base, but who dies before he can tell his comrades what happened out there (25-30). That aspect of the unknown is a seminal part of constructing war experiences and dovetails into a similar tension of silence and articulation characterising trauma.

The effects of wartime mobilisation thus produce tensions in the narrative construction of memory that reveal and challenge the cohesiveness of revisiting lived experiences. In the case of Asha, her primary emotional struggle in fashioning her self-hood amid the armed camp of the INA in Thailand is one mostly marked by interiority. It is marked by her preconceived notions of the revolutionary's mental state and her striving towards a state of being where she is purged of most of

her personal emotional connections to be wholly dedicated to the cause of India's freedom. Yet, her own narrative reveals the underlying tensions in this essentially idealistic cauterising of her own psyche for the service of her cause. "But how do I crush these unyielding emotions? I have to scold myself and hold myself accountable. I am no longer a college girl," laments Asha (80). Asha firmly believes in the tenet of a revolutionary having to excise their inner worlds of the effect of any other connection except to their cause and fellow comrades.

As an organising principle, this serves as a potent tool of mobilisation. Yet, Asha's inner struggles delineate the emotional costs it imposes as she is making the self-reproach due to her anxiety over the fate of her mother and siblings back in Tokyo, which was being ravaged by American air raids. Yet, the war also provides hitherto unimagined outlets for self-fashioning. For Asha, her role in the struggle was already refracted through the INA's re-imagining of traditional gender roles, attested to by the very fact of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment's existence. In addition to her training with the rifle and in guerrilla warfare, the role-playing that the exigencies of combat allow an individual to refashion their selves is revealed in one of the most interesting episodes in her memoir. While in uniform, Asha visits the daughters of one of her hosts in Taiwan and takes the subversion of her own gendered existence to a new imaginative plane. As she presents herself to these young women in her army uniform, she imagines herself as a man, as well as a possible lover to these women. "If I was really a prince, I know these girls would become infatuated with me immediately" (Sahay 87). Her momentary destabilisation of gender, too, in the final instance, must be brought back to the nationalist cause, as she proclaims the role of a 'princely figure' as one essential to fighting for the nation.

The effects of wartime force reveal insights into the life worlds of the narrators of these life writings while equally highlighting some of their silences and elisions in constructing the narrative. One of the primary points of historical interest in revisiting these memoirs would be to understand the role of the INA and the Indian combatants in Asia in the context of Japanese imperialism. In the case of Benegal, his text captures some of the tensions that inevitably existed in the somewhat liminal status of Indian combatants, fighting either as colonised subjects for the Raj or as ostensibly

independent fighters allied to the Japanese, which made the reality of Japan's war aims a tense counterpoint to Indian aspirations. While Benegal initially marvels at the order and discipline imposed by the Japanese military in Burma, his memoir offers disturbing instances of a far grimmer reality that, at some points, also causes deep anxiety to the narrator himself. Benegal encounters the infamous 'comfort women,' who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during his stay in Mergui. Yet, he tries to explain it away as another ode to Japanese efficiency (20). He seems to see the women without truly seeing them at all. A more disturbing encounter for him occurs on the Burma-Siam Railroad. The journey through wartime Burma to reach Japan creates a dissonant and uncomfortable narrative thread as he depicts the racial hierarchy between Indians and the Burmese, as well as his shocking encounter with the conditions of British POWs working on the infamous Burma Railway (Benegal 28). The 'Death Railway' saw the forced labour and starvation of thousands of captured Allied POWs. Benegal's experiences and guilt over his and his comrades stealing the pig of a destitute woman in rural Philippines, while at the time comprehended through the hardships of wartime, leaves an indelible link to the large-scale policy of expropriations conducted by the Empire of Japan across Asia (44).

Unlike Benegal, Asha, perhaps because of having been a product of the rigidly nationalistic education system of Imperial Japan, seems to be unaware of the realities of Japanese occupation in the conquered territories. Asha had written her original diary entirely in Japanese. Alongside Bengali, Japanese was the language she was most fluent in then. A large part of her time at the INA RJR training camp was spent studying Hindustani, and she only gained fluency in English well after the war. Her linguistic heritage reveals the complex cultural crossroads for a diasporic subject. Tellingly, during her stay in Saigon, she observes, "But today there is peace with Japanese rule...they are disciplined, but not exploited" (Sahay 102). She ironically makes this comment at a time when the Viet Minh were, in fact, actively engaged in a guerilla war against the Japanese occupiers, and the Imperial Japanese Army's requisition of rice stocks was leading to mass starvation in rural Vietnam. Asha's encounter with the Kamikaze pilots in Taiwan is also portrayed in a similar vein of awe at the

prospect of self-sacrifice for the national cause. Her interactions with the Kamikaze officers leave a deep impression on her as they come to symbolise the highest ideal of service to the nation (Sahay 81). Yet this view misses some of the nuances of the Kamikaze and their mobilisation as a desperate gambit by the Japanese Empire as the heavy toll of the Pacific war left the air force without any experienced pilots who could last long against American airmen leading to these suicidal aerial attacks on US Navy ships to become standard policy. Indeed, the pilots' motivations for joining the Kamikaze were more nuanced than blind Emperor worship, as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney captures in her remarkable study of the diaries of Japanese *tokkotai* pilots. She gives the instance of Machida Dokyō, who flew his final mission because he believed it might bring reprieve to his mother from the incessant American air raids on the Home Islands and to support her through his pension upon his death (Ohnuki-Tierney 173-176).

With Crasta, one encounters the most enduring lacuna that marks war literature and memories of this sort: the narrative of trauma. When analysing Freud's contemplation of the unique nature of trauma as a form of mental wound in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Cathy Caruth concludes that the best way to comprehend the nature of trauma is to view it as a unique form of narrative construction. Using the example of Tancred unknowingly wounding his beloved Clorinda while the latter is first disguised in armour during a duel and later when her soul is trapped in a tree during a magical Crusading quest, Caruth contends that there is a tense dynamic between the knowable and the unknown within the ambit of traumatic experience (9-10). Not only is trauma experienced once, when for the victim, the nature of the event may be the least comprehensible, but the memory of trauma returns as a repeated haunting spectre to the victim. Life writings that recount and confront traumatic experiences reveal this tension of a double narrative, where, as a reader, one needs to negotiate through the traumatic realities that are illuminated by the text while simultaneously being forced to ponder the silences and elisions that I would argue from an equally integral aspect of the narrative construction of the text. In a larger sense, this discourse can be understood in the context of history as the constant repetition of wounds in the form of traumatic memory, which cry out to be

acknowledged. The nature of the voice may be both raising the listener or reader to the consciousness of the inflicted wound while also obfuscating some of its deeper, existential impact.

Crasta recounts the deaths of many, indeed most, of his comrades during their captivity by the Japanese. In the case of two POWs from a Pioneer Battalion on Rabaul, not only are they killed in an Allied air raid, but their corpses are flung out from their shallow graves in a subsequent air raid to perform a metaphoric repetition of the traumatic loss for Crasta (51-52). How did Crasta process the pain and suffering of his years of captivity under the Japanese in the years after the War? There is a scant record of that. He ends his memoir with his repatriation to India at the end of the war in 1945. A detailed postscript by his son Richard documents the difficulties of publishing and disseminating the text in 1998 in the face of resistance from Indian government officials, but after 1945, his father's voice lapsed into silence. The fact that John Crasta kept his memoirs as merely personal notes for more than fifty years after the War, and they may not have seen the light of day had it not been for his son, is a telling fact. The text's silences are just as revealing as the graphic details it provides of the inhumane conditions under which these men had to attempt to survive. That silence poses both a challenge and defines a key concept for any subsequent reader of memoirs such as this, namely that the record of explicit suffering must co-exist with the implication of the repetition of silent traumatic memories. Arguably, the opacity of the silence that may be perceived in the interstices and the telling of Crasta's memoir offers critical possibilities to re-imagine how trauma and conflict narratives operate and what they offer to our understanding of an affective authenticity beyond the bounds of the factual accurate or real. The ineluctable gap between the articulating of the traumatised veteran and the reader may offer the possibility of renegotiating the revisiting of historical events with a renewed understanding of how to theorise inaccessible aspects of traumatic experience.

Lastly, in an ominous sign of the cascading effects of wartime mobilisation, brutalisation and the radical self-fashioning that ripped through the subcontinent in the 1940s, Crasta documents the spontaneous outbreak of communal violence between Muslim and Sikh soldiers in Romali during the repatriation process at war's end (72). Similarly, the reason Crasta's memoir sparked controversy

with the defence establishment of the Indian state in the 1990s stems from his testimony, posing a direct challenge to the constructed memory of the mythicised heroism of the INA. More than just being a facet of Crasta's possible ideological indoctrination by the colonial state, he gives concrete examples of INA brutality towards Indian soldiers who refused to defect by giving descriptions of Buller Camp, a 'separation camp' where INA men tortured uncooperative Indian officers, and in describing men such as Subedars Sher Singh and Fateh Singh, who figure as major tormentors of the Indian prisoners who had refused to serve in the INA (Crasta 23). Indeed, he is initially elated to have his custody handed over to the Japanese from his INA overseers (Crasta 30).

This testimony starkly contrasts the national memory of the INA's actions as sanctioned and sanitised by the Indian state. Just as silences and narrative rebuilding play a role in individual memories comprehending traumatic events, collective memories, in this case, fashioned by the emerging postcolonial state, take recourse to a similar process of narrative construction and silencing to make sense of and sanctify a nation's historical memory, especially of traumatic events. Richard Crasta, John Crasta's son, appended a long and fascinating postscript detailing the challenges of getting his father's memoir published and recognised in India in 1997-1998. The reactions of the then Chief of Army Staff, Gen. VP Malik, and Defence Minister George Fernandes reveal a conflicted attitude towards the legacy of the War in India in general and the army in particular. Crasta's memoir may be located within that lacuna of the mainstream Indian memory of World War II. As much as a valuable source to revisit the history of Indian experiences in World War II, Crasta offers a fascinating example of the elisions, tensions, and traumas of war narratives, especially in a context away from the dominant Anglo-American voices of the War. In this regard, one is reminded of Freud's parable of the dream of the burning child, which Caruth deploys to analyse the simultaneous subconscious and literal (including historical) reverberation of trauma, and war memoirs like Crasta's deploy their narrative construction much the same way to both reveal and repress traumatic memories. The voices captured in these memoirs sketch an elaborate psycho-geography of memories, often conflicting narratives, that when confronted at multiple discursive and theoretical levels, may help us to begin to

deconstruct the ignored and multifaceted histories and legacies of the global wars of the previous century on the subcontinent and to begin to grapple with the consequences of when India last became a state mobilised for total war as the 21st century progresses by revisiting (to borrow Ian Buruma's phrase) the unfinished business of the war.

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**Representation of Rape Trauma in Shakespeare Onscreen: A Look at Julie Taymor's
Adaptation of *Titus Andronicus***

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Abstract: Shakespeare's world is a realm fraught with masculine anxieties and desires, often enacted upon the woman's body. Feminist scholarship has engaged in a prolonged struggle with Shakespeare's texts, exemplified by the examination of tragedies such as *Othello*, where Desdemona falls victim to male insecurity, or *Hamlet*, where Ophelia's tragic fate vividly portrays the patriarchal suppression of the feminine voice. Additionally, the protagonist Lear's famous diatribe against his daughters, whose wombs he bids the gods to "dry up," further accentuates how Shakespearean tragedies often privilege the masculine at the expense of eroding the feminine voice and agency. *Titus Andronicus*, one of the most violent of Shakespeare's plays, centres around the violent act of rape and mutilation of the character Lavinia. Lavinia's rape not only goes unrepresented on account of it happening off stage but also Lavinia's body in the play takes on the connotation of "enemy territory" needed to be conquered and rape is recognised not as a crime against the woman, but instead it is viewed as a crime against the men of the family particularly the father who usurps the role of the victim, robbed off his honour and property. Lavinia's rape is hence a traumatic event circumscribed within the male-authored discourse of the play's text. Lavinia as a victim of trauma does not exist on the pages of Shakespeare's text; rather Lavinia's trauma can only be viewed through a sensitised performance. Filmmaker Julie Taymor's 1999 adaptation addresses this by situating Lavinia's rape within the historical context of patriarchal violence. Taymor's film intervenes in Shakespeare's violent tragedy, refocusing on Lavinia's violated self and challenging patriarchal literary traditions that have excluded and misrepresented women's lives. This cinematic adaptation makes a much-needed feminist intervention into the play's text responding to the grand narratives perpetuated by patriarchal literary traditions.

Keywords: Adaptation, Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, Rape, Trauma

Introduction

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s linked women's private experiences of abuse, both physical and psychological, to the traumatic aftereffects which plagued women for their entire lives. Studies in trauma theory immensely benefitted from social movements like feminism; as Judith Herman, in her seminal work *Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), points out, the feminist movement brought together private and public experiences of women across the spectrum of race, class, gender and sexuality. These narratives of traumatic experiences exposed social structures and practices which perpetuated patterns of systemic abuse within societies. The study of sexual violence, particularly narratives of rape, have now been included within contemporary trauma studies. Further, Psychoanalytical studies have pointed out how the psychological manifestation of trauma from sexual violence and abuse results in repression and disassociation within survivors and therefore, historicising, theorising and narrating 'the event' becomes an important exercise to come to terms with the traumatic experience of sexual violence, both in the fields of psychoanalysis as well as literature. Theorists like Cathy Caruth, whose works have been considered pioneering in the field of trauma theory, talk about how literature plays a vital role in representing the experiences of trauma and abuse.

In her study *Unclaimed Experience, Trauma Narrative and History* (1996), Caruth talks about Freud's work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where Freud himself takes the recourse of literature in the form of 16th-century Italian poet Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which includes the story of the hero Tancred who unknowingly kills his beloved in a battle and experiences a repetition of the traumatic events of the battle in his dreams and nightmares. According to Caruth, it is important to note that Freud turns to literature to describe the representation of trauma because literature, just like psychoanalysis, is often "interested in the complex relationship between knowing and not knowing" (Caruth 3). Caruth adds that not only have experiences of trauma been represented profoundly within literature but also that literature has provided a particular language for the

expression and representation of these difficult experiences, which cannot be expressed otherwise in straightforward, linear ways. Literary narratives dealing with trauma are texts that ask “what it means to transmit and theorise around a crisis that is marked not by a simple knowledge but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness” (Caruth 5).

Feminist scholarship has had a long history of struggle with Shakespeare’s texts, often pointing out how Shakespeare’s plays privilege the masculine through a simultaneous and steady erosion of the feminine voice and agency. Feminist enquiries into the various forms and manifestations of early modern misogyny have led to a massive exercise of re-reading and re-examination of texts, especially Shakespeare’s plays, which often concern themselves with issues of female sexuality, feminine chastity and alternatively female sexual transgressions and its perils. The female body within Shakespeare’s plays becomes a site that evokes patriarchal desires for power, dominance and control. Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* is one such play where the titular character Titus’s daughter Lavinia is raped not once but twice, first when she is abducted by Bassianus, implying the old Latin connotations of the term ‘rape’ as ‘to seize’, and later when she is sexually violated by Tamora’s sons to avenge the murder of their eldest brother at the hands of Titus. In both these instances within the play, as Kate Aughterson points out, the objectified and territorialised female body becomes “subject to the male political power, in a masculinised world where competition for women is a primary motivator of politics, war and games” (Aughterson).

***Titus Andronicus* (1594)**

Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* is often designated as the most violent and bloody of all the playwright’s tragedies. *Titus Andronicus* not only depicts the turmoil of war and violence within the civic and political sphere but also extends this violence to the horrific acts of rape and mutilation of Lavinia’s body, who becomes a victim of not only a political war of succession but also victim of deep-rooted misogyny and sexual violence. Thus, Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* qualifies as a trauma narrative which centres around the traumatic experience of rape and abuse of the most violent nature, where the trauma of Lavinia’s tortured, mutilated body becomes heavily circumscribed within

the male-authored discourse of the play's text. Lavinia's rape in Shakespeare's text is never recognised as a crime against her, the woman, but rather, it is viewed as a crime against the men of the family, particularly her father, Titus, who usurps the role of the victim, robbed off his honour and property.

This paper deals exclusively with the depiction and representation of rape trauma in both Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and its adaptation in cinema by Julie Taymor. Both these texts give a glimpse of the changing depictions of sexual violence and trauma both on stage and onscreen. In her article, "Rape's Metatheatrical Return: Rehearsing Sexual Violence Among the Early Moderns," critic Kim Solga states how the theatrical representation of sexual violence in Shakespeare's early modern stage was always tied to the "extra theatrical" discourse upon what 'the act' meant, how it should be reported and whom does it affect (3). Solga draws upon major early modern legal theories and treatises such as *The Laws Resolutions of Womens Rights* (1632), where the rape victims were encouraged to perform a show and tell, to give a report of their violation to "trustworthy men" to seek justice and reparations (4). In Shakespeare's play, likewise, the representation of the experience of sexual abuse onstage is somehow never designed to reflect the trauma that the terrible nature of the physical and psychological violence has unleashed upon its victim, Lavinia. Rather, the play's focus becomes the representation of the experiences of "those upon whom rape is reported", that is, the experience of the men in the Andronici who then take upon themselves the mantle of avengers (Solga 3). In this way, the experience of trauma is detached from the suffering of the violated female mind and body and identified or rather 'mis-identified' with men who exercise control over these bodies. According to Solga, throughout the thirteenth to sixteenth-century rape was considered a property crime, a violation of a woman's chastity, which was exclusively part and parcel to the family's asset and was defined as "theft" with or without the woman's consent (6):

The 16th-century emphasis on a woman's non-consent as the ultimate arbiter of rape, combined with misogynist assumptions about women's loose sexual appetites, resulted in

new fears of what Deborah Burka calls women's sexual defection. Was she raped or did she give herself (her husband's property) away? Failing to prove non consent a woman became not only complicit in the crime but, in popular prejudice her own rapist. (Solga 8)

Hence, not only was rape enshrined within the legalities of the property law but also it was incumbent upon the victim to provide proof of her non consent in order to illicit justice. Thus, in the light of such social cultural and legal prejudices surrounding rape the representation and staging of rape required similar elements of a 'show and tell' performance by the victim. As Shakespeare's play shows, Lavinia's performance of 'show and tell' is somehow supposed to lay bare the deep invisible and intimate wounds of the physical and mental assault of rape, in other words, Lavinia has to re-enact her trauma in order to give voice to it. Shakespeare's play explores the extremely vital but paradoxical effect of the mute Lavinia's 'voice' in the representation of her trauma. The play shows a world where Lavinia as a victim of rape cannot 'name' her rape, not only because she is mute but also because the act of rape has brought on a shame that "womanhood denies her tongue to tell" (Shakespeare 2.3.174). Lavinia's tormentors in the play have taken away her ability to speak mutilating her physical body and severing her tongue to keep her from testifying against the assault, additionally, even if she could speak, the nature of the early modern patriarchal society/culture is such that it disallows Lavinia as a victim of rape to speak due to the shame and stigma of defilement attached to her 'raped' body. And yet, while on one hand the raped victim needs to be 'silenced' within the patriarchal culture, which has put the onus of 'shameful' act solely upon her shoulders, but this silence becomes dangerous only when it comes in the way of a revenge, a justifiable act of retribution undertaken by the men of her family whose patriarchal property rights have been violated in the form of the rape of the woman of the family. Hence, Shakespeare's play makes its audience privy to the contradictory nature of early modern attitudes towards rape and how one hand it denies the women a tongue to report the crime but also feeds upon the unrest of revenge, violence and war that ensues after the crime.

In the play the men around Lavinia become the interpreters of her trauma, at first banking on her silence to mitigate the discomfort surrounding the sight of her mutilated body and later banking on her ‘voice’ and her performance of her trauma to exact their violent revenge upon their enemies. After Lavinia’s rape, she is found by accident in the woods by her uncle Marcus who upon the sight of her “lopped and hewed” limbs and her severed tongue, gives one of the longest speeches in the play, where he seems to immediately and rightfully arrive at the idea that Lavinia has been raped, invoking the story of Philomela from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*:

But, sure, some Tereus hath deflowered thee,
And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue.
Ah, now thou turn’st away thy face for shame.
And not withstanding all this loss of blood
As from a conduit with three issuing spouts
Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan’s face,
Blushing to be encountered with a cloud.
Shall I speak for thee, shall I say ’tis so?
O, that I knew thy heart and knew the beast,
That I might rail at him to ease my mind.
Sorrow concealed, like an oven stopped,
Doth burn the heart to cinders where it is.
Fair Philomela, why she but lost her tongue.
And in a tedious sampler sewed her mind;
But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee
A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,
And he cut those pretty fingers off,
That could have better sewed than Philomel. (Shakespeare 2.4.26-44)

And yet, for the course of next two acts Lavinia's rape remains shrouded in mystery. It is only in the fourth act of the play that Lavinia, struggling to overcome her trauma and shame, trying to come to terms with her mutilated body, is finally able to gather enough courage to make use of her stumps "to play the scribe" (Shakespeare 2.4.4). In these scenes Lavinia is shown frantically turning the leaves of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* yet again to make her rape known as everyone around her, including Marcus fails to understand her. Lavinia who is described in the play's text as "deeper read and skilled" by her father is provided with books only as a means to comfort in her grief. In this way, as Detmer points out Lavinia is seen more as a "receiver of texts than an author of meanings" (8). Even as she tries her best, she never has an authority over the representation or interpretation of her own trauma, she is never seen as an "source of knowledge" (Detmer 8). Finally, when Lavinia is able to reveal her rape by carving the word "stuprum" in sand with a stick held in her mouth, the revelation does not illicit any identification or sympathising with her trauma rather the focus of the play immediately shifts to the act of revenge, as Lavinia is asked to kneel down by her father and pledge allegiance to revenge. Thus, as critics have pointed out Lavinia's rape and trauma do not remain her own rather, Shakespeare's play seems to present anxieties surrounding rape and its legal, socio-cultural dimensions in the context of early modern patriarchal culture, here the rape victim Lavinia 's final revelation, presentation/performance of her rape trauma is only for the benefit of her male protectors reinforcing her status as a dependent without any real agency. Lavinia's protectors urge her to speak and make known her "map of woe" (Shakespeare 3.2.113), yet her voice is ultimately silenced by the same protectors, who co-opt her trauma, refashioning it and making it all about them. Lavinia is finally asked to die with her shame and her father's sorrow, killed at the hands of her own father.

Titus (1999)

Julie Taymor's adaptation of the play *Titus Andronicus*, entitled *Titus* came out in the year 1999, the film borrows from a variety of contemporary and historical references to reframe violence as presented within Shakespeare's play. Prior to the film Taymor had adapted the play for a Broadway production in 1994. Both these versions of the play attempted to deconstruct the themes and metaphor

of violence within the play. In the director's own words Shakespeare's play is "as much about how the audience experiences violence as entertainment, as much as it is about the tragedy of the endless cycle of violence itself" (qtd in McCanless 488).

Taymor's 1999 film adaptation presents a stylised show of grotesque horrors where bodies are deconstructed and dismembered as much as the discourse upon violence and its representation is. The film challenges the viewer's response and ability to stomach the violence in the titillating as well as disgusting spectacle of rape, revenge and murder as it unfolds on screen. The film attempts to make a statement upon the legitimisation and perpetuation of such acts of violence within the socio-cultural reality. Through the usage of post-modern, abstract, highly reflexive style of representation, Taymor's film both distances its audience from a complete identification with the events onscreen as well as provides enough shock value to question the modern sensibilities that have been desensitised to violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence.

However, the difficult task of the representation of rape onscreen along with the complexity of depicting the trauma of the rape victim is not lost upon Taymor or her critics. According to Pascale Aebischer, a text like *Titus Andronicus* becomes difficult to reproduce for a modern audience for it heavily relies on the voyeurism inviting the audience to partake in the violence especially the titillating spectacle of rape as and when presented openly onstage (137). Hence the task of the modern director especially the modern female director lies in the representation of the traumatic experience of sexual violence in a way that does not naturalise Lavinia's status as the passive object/victim of male orchestrated violence.

In Taymor's film Lavinia's rape happens offscreen, whereby she is apprehended by Tamora's sons who kill her husband and drag her off into the woods. In the aftermath of the suggested sexual violation of Taymor's Lavinia, played by Laura Fraser, the viewer finds the action shift to a barren swamp forest, this setting, like one of the many in the film's highly surreal mis-en-scene, represents yet another horrific post-apocalyptic vision befitting the chaotic and violent world of Shakespeare's play. Here the audience finds a mutilated Lavinia standing on a tree stump, bloody and disheveled,

wearing only her petticoat, her hands have been cut and replaced by branches, thus invoking the lines from Marcus's lament upon the discovery of his raped niece in the play, "lopped and hewed and made thy body bare of her two branches, those sweet ornaments, whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in" (Shakespeare 2.4.19). According to Solga in these scenes Lavinia is presented as a "hysterical symbol, simultaneously sign and referent, morbidly, uncannily, sufficient in herself" (24). Even though maimed and muted, Taymor's Lavinia is not a picture of silent endurance of her trauma. Rather, her mutilated body draws the viewer in, speaking for itself in her slow movements which almost seem like an emotive dance performance expressing her profound pain.

Hence, modern feminist filmmakers adapting the text of the play *Titus Andronicus*, like Taymor, have to re-read the portrayal of the victimisation of Lavinia and by default the victimisation of femininity as a socially constructed ideal within early modern patriarchal imagination. Lavinia's constant identification in the play with a doe as the Petrarchan love object and symbol of feminine vulnerability and chastity is revisited within the film. In Taymor's film for instance this myth is revoked at a crucial moment when Lavinia revisits the traumatic memory of the rape. In these scenes which depict the tortured psyche of the rape victim, Taymor juxtaposes the reference of the hunt scenes from the second act of Shakespeare's play where Demetrius and Chiron are anticipating the rape of Lavinia, hoping to "pluck a dainty doe to ground" (Shakespeare 2.2.29).

In Taymor's film, Lavinia's recollection of rape presents a tableau of the hunt whereby she is transformed into a doe hunted mercilessly by Chiron and Demetrius who are transformed into vicious tigers. The scene, which Taymor describes as a Penny Arcade Nightmare or PAN, in an interview with the cinema journal *Cineaste*, to designate the frequently occurring surreal vignettes within the film, feature a dreamlike abstract sequence which become symbolic representations of gruesome acts of violence such as Lavinia's rape and mutilation.



Figure 1.1 Lavinia after her rape with her tongue severed and arms mutilated

In the particular scene where Lavinia reveals her rape, the scene begins, just like in the text of Shakespeare's play, with Lavinia running after young Lucius in order to get from him the book on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where she flips through the pages to arrive at the story of Philomela's rape by her brother-in-law Tereus, after which she is handed a staff by her uncle so as to write the names of her perpetrators in the sand. Just as Taymor's Lavinia frantically begins to write the names of Chiron and Demetrius, the scene cuts into a flashback to show her memory of the rape. Taymor in these scenes not only plays on the idea of Philomela as the doe being hunted for her flesh, by transforming Lavinia into a half-doe half-human woman dressed in white and desperately pulling at her skirt to hide her shame. But also, these scenes remind one of the popular image of the actress Marilyn Monroe striking a similar pose, pulling on her billowing skirt. The juxtaposition of these two images Shakespeare's of a hunted Lavinia and Hollywood's most objectified female artist not only symbolises Lavinia's objectification, her status as a pawn in the revenge war between Titus and Tamora in Shakespeare's play but also makes a telling critique of the cultural representation of sexualised and objectified female bodies in media.



Figure 1.2 Lavinia's memory of rape imagined as Penny Arcade Nightmare by Taymor

In the final and most controversial scenes of Shakespeare's play, Lavinia is murdered by her father after he has avenged her rape in the most violent fashion, baking the bodies of her rapists in a pie and feeding them to their mother Tamora as well as the rest of the dinner party in Saturninus's court. While in the play Lavinia is a silent observer in these scenes in Taymor's film Lavinia is very much an agent in her father's plan. As pointed out, Lavinia as a victim of trauma does not exist on the pages of Shakespeare's text, Shakespeare provides no insight into Lavinia's traumatised psyche in his text, hence Lavinia's trauma can only be interpreted and viewed through a sensitised performance by the actor/director of the text either on stage or on screen. Hence, Taymor's portrayal of Lavinia is a feminist re-claiming and re-creation of her trauma, otherwise made invisible in Shakespeare's original text. In this way, Taymor's film attempts to re-present and re-write not only early modern attitudes towards gender violence but also points towards the continued presence of such practices four hundred years after Shakespeare's play. Through the retention of the final scenes of Lavinia's death at the hands of her father, Taymor shows how the stigma surrounding shame and disgrace of the raped victim, continues to exist in modern times. In the film as in Shakespeare's play Lavinia silently accepts her fate, voluntarily walking towards her father who then kills her. In her interview regarding the ending of the film the director pointed out the reason why she chose not to change or omit Lavinia's unjust and brutal death was because Lavinia's fate reflected the reality of numerous

modern-day women victims of honour killings and bride burnings that continue to happen around the world in the twenty/twenty first century (De Luca et.al 31).

Conclusion

Taymor's adaptation presents a much-needed intervention into Shakespeare's most violent play. Through the study of violence as it manifests itself in the political, social and gendered dimensions, the film performs a re-reading of the play to represent the myriad of ways mindless violence results in cultural and individual trauma. Giving adequate voice and representation to Lavinia's fate in the play, becomes a social and cultural necessity. By looking at Lavinia's trauma which is a result of both her rape as well as the cultural attitudes towards her "victimised" "objectified" self, the text of both Shakespeare's play and Taymor's re-reading of it exposes the gaps and fissures within patriarchal cultures to map moments of gender-based oppression, resistance and survival.

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***In/Spectre* and the Construction of “Truths”**

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Abstract: With growing criticism of universal metanarratives and singular objective truth, for the man in a society of the post-truth era, the emotional response becomes an essential variable in his subjective understanding of truth or reality. Truth, as Michiko Kakutani explains, “increasingly seems to be in the eye of the beholder, facts are fungible and socially constructed.” This paper analyses how *In/Spectre* engages with and complicates ideas of objective and subjective “truths” by exposing the politics of the construction of “truths.” The troubled relationship between the contemporary man, reality, and truth weaves the background of the popular thriller anime *In/Spectre*. *In/Spectre* or *Kyokō Suiri* is a 2011 Japanese novel by Kyo Shirodaira that has been adapted into an anime series since 2020. It revolves around Kotoko Iwanaga, the Goddess of Wisdom of the spirit world, and Kurō Sakuragawa, a spirit-human hybrid. This anime, however, is unique as, unlike other thriller-mystery works focusing on unravelling “the truth” by logical deduction, *In/Spectre* brings to light how logically constructed “truths” can satisfy the listener’s desire for meaning. Iwanaga’s real “superpower” is to meticulously create “truths” that are both logically sound and curated to satisfy the audience’s appetite. Her knowledge of the complexities of objective reality, the desires of the listeners, and how stories can “feel” like “truth” grant her authority similar to Foucauldian power. Thus, *In/Spectre* does not simply represent the construction of possible realities in a post-truth society additionally points to the complex relationship between the knowledge system, power, alternate truths, and popular belief. Besides analysing the politics of truth construction, this paper also aims to enquire how *In/Spectre* represents the relation between power and truth, thereby revealing the volatile nature of reality, power dynamics, and the human belief system.

Keywords: Power, Post Truth, Alternate Facts, Anime, Mass Imagination, Desire

As the protagonist of *In/Spectre*, Kotoko Iwanaga reveals her strategy of defeating the antagonist Rikka Sakuragawa and the ghost of Steel Lady Nanase to the police inspector Saki Yumihara, and a chill runs down the latter's spine. Yumihara's fear is not a result of her scepticism of Iwanaga's capabilities but rather due to the faith that Iwanaga might actually emerge as the victor, and this victory would further reinforce the volatile nature of truth in the post-truth society. Iwanaga mentions that to get the support of the masses, she will just have to present a story that is plausible and interesting enough. "As long as they (the stories) seem reasonable at a glance and are entertaining enough...Then we can turn fiction into fact" ("Episode 08" 21:28-21:39). Iwanaga's proposition exposes how truth is not "objective facts" but rather possibilities often curated by dominant power structures to shape popular belief in accordance with its aspirations.

Kyoko Suiri (2011) is a Japanese novel by Kyo Shirodaria that was adapted into a manga series in 2015 and 2019. In 2020, the first season of the anime version of Shirodaria's work came out under the English title *In/Spectre*. While *In/Spectre* initially appears as an exemplary detective story, it gradually reveals a striking twist on the detective's "quest for truth" as the detective's motive here is to construct probable "truths." The young protagonist, Kotoko Iwanaga, seldom concerns herself with the truth of the mysterious incidents she acquaints with. Instead, what drives the plot is her ingenious deduction skills and knowledge of human nature to deconstruct a scenario or outcome and reconstruct a possible solution that "feels" like the truth and satisfies her audience. With her accomplice Kuro Sakuragawa, the Goddess of Wisdom of the yokai world, Iwanaga solves multiple mysteries to maintain order between the human and the non-human world and secure her position of power.

In the anime's first season, Kotoko Iwanaga is introduced as a young girl with an amputated leg and a prosthetic eye, who also happens to be the "Goddess of Wisdom" of the Yokai (spirits and ghosts) community. The eleven-year-old Iwanaga, who was kidnapped by some spirits, exhibited her remarkable deductive skills to resolve the conundrum of the dim-witted spirits. Astonished by the young girl's ability to think critically, the spirits requested her to become their Goddess of Wisdom

to guide them. Iwanaga complied with their wish and followed the ritual of sacrificing her right eye and left leg, thereby gaining the title that grants her power over knowledge production in both the human and the spirit world.

What is striking is the nonchalance of an eleven-year-old girl at the mention of sacrificing her limbs and her instant willingness to pay this price to achieve the power of being the God of Wisdom. Georges Bataille's theory of sacrifice can justify Iwanaga's compliance with sacrifice for her desire of almost divine discursive power. According to Bataille, the extravagant sacrifice of one's extra energy and resources naturally culminates in death, as life is expended in an attempt to outlive even life itself. Bataille's idea of sacrifice pushes human beings to explore the confines of not only their communities but also their beings (Connolly 108-10). Iwanaga gains her identity and power by her sacrifice, and at the same time, the sacrifice, the representative of extravagance as Bataille mentions, also ascertains (and commodifies to a great extent) her knowledge. She gains the symbolic "eye of wisdom" by sacrificing her physical eye, and her loss of a leg foreshadows the resultant chaos, disorder, and imbalance that would soon follow.

While the anime presents the sole perspective of Iwanaga, it also introduces us to the inconsistencies of her narrative through the discrepancies between how she presents certain characters and how they are when they appear. Iwanaga mentions at the beginning that the spirits are dim-witted and unable to solve simple problems—the reason she decided to become their Goddess of Wisdom and help them. However, as the anime progresses and we get glimpses of spirits such as the Guardian Serpent or Lady Nanase, they appear far from being dim-witted. Another factor that problematizes Iwanaga's position as the Goddess is that she was offered the role by the few spirits who kidnapped her and were bewitched by her capabilities. She formed a homogenized idea of the intellectual inferiority of the spirits. She represented that to her companion Kuro Sakuragawa and the audience as the general "truth" of the Yokai realm. In comparison to the inferiority of the spirits, Iwanaga appears to be the intellectually superior one worthy of holding the title of the Goddess of Wisdom.

As we see the inconsistencies in Iwanaga's accounts, we are forced to question the truth-value of her perceived intellectual superiority and the stability of her position. Iwanaga becomes aware of her superiority when she figures out about the dimwittedness of the spirits. Thus, the powerful "self" comes into being due to the existence of the inferior "other", and throughout the anime, Iwanaga struggles to prevent her God of Wisdom "self" with the construction and manipulation of subjective truths. According to Michel Foucault, knowledge is essentially an exercise of power, and power plays a significant role in producing knowledge. Power is achieved, exercised, and justified, using the existing knowledge system. On the other hand, power structures reproduce and perpetuate knowledge systems, shaping them according to their desires and anxieties (Foucault 1988). *In/Spectre*, the intricate association between power and knowledge production becomes apparent through Iwanaga's position as the Goddess of Wisdom of the Yokai world. Iwanaga gains the title due to her knowledge of and association with the human realm.

From Iwanaga's flashback, it is clear that the two separate realms of the spirit and the human world are unaware of the structure or mechanism of the other. The humans are primarily unsuspecting of the existence of the spirits most of the time, and even when they happen to stumble upon some affair of the yokai realm, their judgment of the latter is shrouded with mysticism and prejudice. The spirits also find human matters and ways incomprehensible. Representatives of both realms are often found to rely on and seek aid from Iwanaga, as she is the rare intersection between the two worlds. Iwanaga holds the liminal position where she knows both the human and spirit worlds. However, not her awareness of the structure and dynamics of the two realms gives her the upper hand. Rather, what grants her power is her intricate knowledge of the mechanics of the two realms and her ability to mould the knowledge according to her benefit before sharing it with the representatives of the two realms. Just like the spirits get the idea of the human world from her perspective, the depiction of the yokai realm reaches the humans and the audience, filtered by her point of view. What then appears interesting is the lack of any objective truth in the anime. The anime, a representation of the real world, highlights the impossibility of the existence or awareness of an absolute objective truth.

What is considered truth is the subjective perceptions of multiple variations of “truths” filtered by individual biases or ideologies. In the anime, Iwanaga appears as the chief force behind the construction of “truths” and the production of knowledge regarding both the spirit and the human world. She moulds these “truths” in a manner that would justify her position of power—a position that is otherwise volatile and dependant upon other’s acceptance of the position.

The narratives Iwanaga provides become the accepted “truths” and are not questioned. On the other hand, her narratives gain credibility as she occupies the position of the Goddess of Wisdom. When a spirit desires to know something or has doubts regarding the human world, the spirit seeks the aid of the Goddess of Wisdom, as all accept her to possess wisdom. Similarly, the monster-human hybrid Kuro Sakuragawa and the human police officer Saki Yumihara rely on Iwanaga for her knowledge and hold over the spirit world. Her account and ideas of the spirits are unquestionably accepted as the only truth. Thus, the Goddess of Wisdom gains power due to her knowledge, and her knowledge system is further perpetuated due to her position of power. However, just like the knowledge system, power is also not stable. Iwanaga’s position as the Goddess would cease to exist if the Yokai community stopped treating her as one or started questioning her accounts. This is perhaps the reason why Iwanaga is more concerned with what “feels like the truth” to her audience than the proven facts.

Iwanaga appears as the representative of Michiko Kakutani’s idea of a totalitarian regime under the rule of which conspiracy theories and ideologies reign over scientific knowledge, research, and expertise. Kakutani mentions that modern propaganda aims not to spread misinformation but rather to annihilate truth and destroy people’s thinking. Iwanaga aims to hold such a discursive hold when she declares, “If we present a plausible story that fits with enough of the facts and is interesting enough, the masses will irresponsibly support it and vote in our favour. Which means anything goes with this committee. We can obscure and hide the real data, call black ‘white,’ and present several contradicting answers...I will put everything I have into these lies” ("Episode 08" 21:08-21:55).

Iwanaga employs her ingenious deduction skills and her understanding of the listener's psyche to chalk out stories that satisfy those listening, and the central driving force behind this narrative construction is to quench the curiosity of the listeners. Often, the actual truth or the real incident is given away almost immediately. However, the fundamental truth appears too weak to satisfy the curious listeners, and hence, Iwanaga constructs stories that are accepted as "the truth." We witness Iwanaga's ingenious skills at play when the wise old Guardian serpent calls for Iwanaga in the second episode of the anime. It is immediately revealed that Iwanaga consciously painted a false picture to Sakuragawa about the serpent being a dangerous spirit so that she can fulfil her desire for Sakuragawa to join her in this adventure, emphasising that Iwanaga is an unreliable narrator who often misrepresents facts for her benefit.

The Guardian Serpent, an ancient spirit, called for the Goddess of Wisdom to decipher an incident that the Guardian witnessed. There was a woman who climbed up the mountain to get rid of a corpse. After dropping the body in the Tsukuna swamp, the residence of the Guardian Serpent, the woman whispered with vengeful and teary eyes, "I hope they find you" ("Episode 02" 10:58-11:02). The Guardian was curious of the entire story about what that woman had meant and why she chose to dump the corpse in the swamp. The anime, at his point, adapts to the form of a classic detective story where the detective has to solve the murder mystery. However, instead of rationally tying the strings of arguments to reveal the truth, Iwanaga presents the serpent with multiple possible scenarios to satisfy the serpent as the serpent mentioned, "I would like to hear an answer I can be satisfied with" ("Episode 02" 13:03-13:06). We see that the aim of neither the detective nor the listener is the quest for truth but for explanations that appear as agreeable truth. Hannah Arendt says, "The need for reason is not inspired by the quest for truth but by the quest for meaning" (15). For the Guardian Serpent, his desire was never to find out "the truth" but "a truth" that would fulfil his quest for meaning—an explanation that would fit into his preconceived idea of what the truth might be.

Iwanaga, true to the listener's aspirations, presents multiple possible scenarios, each becoming more thrilling than the previous one and painting a more complicated psyche of the murderer. Even

though the serpent likes each of the following stories a bit better, none gives him the satisfactory resolution he wishes for, and he nit-picks each of Iwanaga's stories. Finally, Iwanaga can construct a probability that is so thrilling that it satisfies the serpent, and he expresses his gratitude to the Goddess of Wisdom for shedding light upon the "truth." Later, Iwanaga reveals to Sakuragawa that what she told the Guardian as "the truth" was a mere far-fetched possibility as he did not believe when Iwanaga revealed the possible truth that the murderer was not in her right state of mind while dumping the corpse in the swamp, and hence, whatever she uttered does not make much sense. The murderer, who had grown up listening to legends of a man-eating serpent spirit, wanted the yokai to find the corpse and consume the dead body—a fact that is verified when a ghost sent by Iwanaga eavesdrops on the murderer. However, the serpent did not believe this could be true because this did not satisfy the serpent's desire for an "interesting" truth. Iwanaga reveals to Sakuragawa that another possibility is that the aged Guardian serpent misheard the murderer—something that he would never accept. However, these possibilities were not lucrative enough for the spirit who, more than to know the truth, wanted an explanation that would satisfy her curiosity and his desire for meaning. Thus, the secondary title, *Invented Inference*, appears apt for the anime. Inference, the celebrated trope of detective fiction, is to reach a conclusion depending upon logical reasoning and deduction. In *In/Spectre*, there is the antithesis of this process—the deduction, or rather the reconstruction of the truth. Iwanaga literally "invents" inferences to appease the listeners, thereby perpetuating her status as the Goddess of Wisdom. Sakuragawa, voicing the audience's mind, mentions that he now finally realises Iwanaga's true powers—it is not to decipher the truth but to use her deductive skills to construct possible satisfactory truths, keeping in mind the probability and the psychological mindset of those who seek answers from her.

Iwanaga's reconstruction of truth complies with Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of the impossibility of objective truth. Instead of any perceivable universal truth, what is commonly accepted as truth is the individual perception following one's interests or "Will to Power" (Nietzsche 267). In her world, Iwanaga desires to uphold her title of the Goddess of Wisdom, which grants her

a powerful hold on discourse in and about the Yokai realm, which is the chief impetus behind her construction of “truths.” A similar case is represented through the construction of the ghost of Steel Lady Nanase by the antagonist, Rikka Sakuragawa. Rikka, a yokai-human hybrid, can recognise and immortalise her cousin Kuro Sakuragawa. Giving in to the superstitions, the Sakuragawas would feel a bit of Yokai flesh to their children, most of whom would die. It is only through Kuro and Rikka that their desire to create what Nietzsche calls *Übermensch* or “overman” is satisfied. This, however, brings disastrous consequences for the children. Rikka, a depressed child who has spent her childhood in hospital rooms with doctors performing experiments with disregard to her sensation of pain, grows up to be an adult determined to challenge the rules of God by creating her weapon of self-destruction. While the mysterious death of Nanase raised scattered speculations among people, Rikka ingeniously turned these speculations into mass belief, thereby bringing the ghost into existence. We discover that the Nietzschean Icarus that Rikka is created the ghost to explore the limitations of her seemingly inscrutable powers. She believed that if she pushed herself enough, she might end up constructing a monster that would destroy her miserable life against her fate. While, according to Nietzsche, the “overman” ultimately brings self-destruction, Bataille mentions that this transgression is not unconscious or an indirect effect but somewhat inevitable for the actualisation of the self. Following Bataille’s idea that self-destruction is to accept the unavoidable destruction of humans, thus actualising the self fully, Rikka aims for a creation that would challenge her fate of immortality and, therefore, by destroying her, Rikka would have a self, more powerful than any god—she would become the true *Übermensch* (Armstrong).

Rikka created an anonymous online site titled “Steel Lady Nanase Wiki”, where she fabricated accounts of multiple people coming across a vengeful spirit. By painting a picture of the spirit, Rikka gave the mass speculation a material shape, thereby shaping the mass belief. People believed in the fabricated accounts of the ghost, believed that the ghost existed, and, based on the biases, added their own accounts of possible ghost sightings. Thus, curated by the mass perception, the vengeful spirit of Steel Lady Nanase comes into existence. People’s perspectives about the truth of Nanase have

created the destructive spirit of Steel Lady Nanase. The belief of something as the truth constructs truth as an abstract idea and brings the idea into material existence. Iwanaga explains that the spirit of Steel Lady Nanase is not the ghost of the late singer Nanase but rather a product of mass imagination—it is the construction of people’s belief in a vengeful spirit. Iwanaga mentions that the spirits generated by imagination are difficult to control because their existence and power depend upon popular belief. Even though the real reason behind idol Nanase’s death is broadcasted, people refuse to believe it as the truth because the fact that Nanase’s death was merely an accident is much less interesting than the idea that there might have been some conspiracy behind the idol’s death. Iwanaga analyses how popular an interesting truth rather than facts shape belief. Instead of believing boring, proven facts and harsh truths, people tend to lean towards interesting theories that appeal to their emotions. In his “A Government of Lies,” Steve Tesich claimed that the American people were complacent in their acceptance of the government’s theories and consciously chose to live in a world where objective truth became irrelevant (Tesich). *In/Spectre* portrays a similar kind of world, in which the people choose to believe in different versions of probabilities that appeal to their emotions rather than to believe in the official report of Nanase’s death as given by the police.

Rikka would foresee the future and curate the figure of the spirit that satisfied and intrigued people, who ultimately had more faith in her constructed truth than the true event. Iwanaga defeats this monster by defeating Rikka’s narrative and creating more compelling and trustworthy narratives. Iwanaga dominates Rikka’s superpower of precognition through her knowledge of the human desire for meaning and the politics of truth-formation. Unlike Rikka, she does not shape people’s ideas by feeding them a fake story. Instead, Iwanaga mentions multiple alternates to Rikka’s narrative, making each one more convincing than the previous. In the process, she subtly repeats certain familiar tropes in each story, thereby naturalising those ideas and formulating a counter-ideology. Finally, the people form their version of “truth” based on Iwana’s subtle, naturalised points. They believe they have come to the conclusion themselves, unaware of Iwanaga’s trick. This illusion of free and conscious choice corresponds to the Althusserian notion that “those who are in ideology believe themselves by

definition outside ideology” and interpellates an individual under the guise of free choice where the individual’s subjection is “all by himself” (Althusser 117-23).

Unlike popular action sequences, in *In/Spectre*, the real fight happens behind digital screens between Iwanaga, Rikka, and innumerable other people. Iwanaga gains victory with the help of social media, and her action of “discipline” is justified as it is done to maintain order and to defeat the possible threat to people caused by Steel Lady Nanase and Rikka. Matthew Stein observes in analysing Foucault’s idea of biopower, “Wars, which were once waged on behalf of the sovereign, began being waged on behalf of the existence of the entire population. Essentially, death became a tool to ensure an individual's continued existence and, moreover, the perpetual existence of the population” (2). Thus, Iwanaga’s actions become an excuse to reestablish order between the spirit and the real world and eliminate the threat Nanase poses on the population. Therefore, ultimately, Iwanaga uses her knowledge of the spirit world as well as of the human mind and powers of constructing believable truths to perpetuate her position as the Goddess of Wisdom—someone who brings wisdom and maintains balance. Social media, in this case, becomes what Foucault called a panoptic surveillance through which the authorities, in this case, Iwanaga, constantly keep an eye on and control the minds of people to fortify order and justice. According to Foucault, a perfect disciplinary structure would oversee all of the subjects in a single gaze (Stein 4).

Iwanaga compares her battle with Rikka to passing a bill in parliament, with the audience behind the screen being one with voting rights. While Rikka has already established the existence of Nanase’s ghost, Iwanaga will now have to prove otherwise, and this is possible as, unlike the real court or parliament, people here are not judges bound by proof, facts, or even the truth. The judges are, as Saki points out, “irresponsible judges who have no idea they’re involved” and it is not difficult for Iwanaga to convince them of anything as “All that’s here is fiction...This assembly bears no responsibility, that nothing will hold them back. Not the law, justice, or even the truth” (“Episode 08” 19:18-20:55). So long as she can feed them with a more interesting and rationally sound story, they would believe it to be true and the truth that they have discovered themselves.

In the end, while describing the power of precognition that he and Rikka possess, Kuro explains that his precognition ability is not recognising the future but rather identifying the possible future based on current circumstances. Hence, there is no such thing as a definite future, as there is no such thing as a definite truth in this world of multiple truths. Just like truths can be manipulated and constructed, so can the future. Finally, Iwanaga emerges as the winner as she can force “a future” she desires by constructing truths and manipulating mass imagination. In Iwanaga’s world, there is no such thing as objective truth. Truths are mere possibilities curated by people in power to uphold their powerful positions, exposing the unstable nature of both power and truth. Does truth then become meaningless in this post-truth world? *In/Spectre* forces the audience to consider such questions concerning the real world. Similar to the anime, in the real world, the things we consider true are also influenced by power dynamics. *In/Spectre*, then, appears as a warning against the complacent acceptance of narratives as truth by the masses by exposing the fractures of knowledge systems, politics of the construction of truths, and the relation between truth and dominant power structures.

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Exiles and Prisoners: Literary Representation of Illness in Albert Camus's *The Plague*

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Abstract: Despite Susan Sontag's assertion in her work *Illness as Metaphor* that a disease should primarily be looked upon as a disease and nothing else, literary imagination has often employed illness as a metaphor or objective correlative for diverse ends. In some texts, disease represents an individual's complicity in the rotten system. In others, it is considered as evidence of divine retribution. This paper examines how Albert Camus's novel *The Plague* (1947) employs plague to develop the existential tropes of authenticity, choice, will, exile and absurdity. The idea of pestilence as divine punishment and a scourge also necessitates the task of self-interrogation. Set in the imaginary town of Oran, the author underscores the banality of everyday existence. The death and decay wrought by the plague and its putrescence become symptomatic of the ugliness of the town and its inmates. The novel is also a psychological portrait of the people of this non-descript French town caught unawares by a pestilence. Oscillating between hope and despair, the inmates devise various strategies to cope with the unprecedented nature of suffering—the *Plague* resorts to realism in depicting the different stages of the epidemic's cycle. The novel has also been understood as an allegory where plague stands for the evil perpetrated by the Nazis. This reading further strengthens Camus's play *State of Siege*, a take on totalitarianism. The paper will focus on these aspects of representation.

Keywords: Authenticity, Choice, Will, Absurd, Exile

Despite Susan Sontag's assertion in her work *Illness as Metaphor* that a disease should primarily be looked upon as a disease and nothing else, literary imagination has often employed illness as a metaphor or objective correlative for diverse ends. In some texts, disease represents an individual's complicity in the rotten system. Texts like J M Coetzee's *Age of Iron* and U R Ananthamurthy's

Samskara fall into this category. In others, especially in the Greek texts, the illness (usually plague) is considered evidence of divine retribution. Sontag warns the readers of the dangers of romanticising diseases like tuberculosis and cancer. This creates a feeling of inadequacy among the patients as the disease is linked to psychological traits. This approach puts the responsibility of falling ill and getting well on the patient. Albert Camus's novel *The Plague* (1947) differs from these approaches as it primarily aims to debunk the myth-making associated with illness.

This paper examines how Camus's novel *The Plague* employs plague to develop the existential tropes of authenticity, choice, will, exile and absurdity. Camus was essentially a humanist. He did not believe in God but in life's moral and spiritual dimensions. He firmly believed that evil means could never result in good ends. "In Camus's thought, meaning comes from human acts" (Heims 5). The Absurd is Camus's idea of making sense of the chaos and apparent meaninglessness of the universe. For Camus, the Absurd is a concept encompassing the philosophical, the social and the psychological dimensions. Camus's vision is not governed by nihilism but by strongly and deeply felt moral convictions. Camus's ideal is a Sisyphean character, relentlessly pursuing his chosen path. "The burden of Sisyphus, Camus had concluded, which requires devotion to the activity of the moment rather than to unachievable (putative) perfection is not a curse" (Heims 37). Camus provides "...a naked demonstration of a man struggling doggedly to determine his literal and figurative place in the world" (Mckee 56). Camus's hero is a person who embraces the absurdity of existence but dares to live life in totality.

Existentialists believe in the power of choice. The power to choose brings responsibility. Even if existence is inherently absurd, it would be wrong to cling to despair. To believe that we are fixed entities is termed 'bad faith'. Existentialists despise victimhood. It is for the individual to face every challenge with courage and dignity. In other words, to live an authentic life. Gary Cox describes authenticity as "the holy grail of existentialism" (5). Camus rejects the conventional reasons for giving meaning and purpose to one's life. He rejects God and the consequent notions of subjugating

one's will to divine will and, consequently, the possibility of a transcendent reality. The existence is absurd because it is irrational, unjust, and meaningless. However, what matters for Camus is the role human beings take on themselves alone or in association with others to meet life's challenges. The focus is on the individual. Jean-Paul Sartre also postulated that "Man is condemned to be free" (23). As there is no God, human beings have a moral responsibility to create their essence. Authenticity is the total involvement of people in choosing their path and fulfilling themselves. This makes existentialism a philosophy of vibrant optimism. It is "an ethics of action and involvement" (Sartre 36). Camus's novel is an expression of the ideas developed in his non-fiction.

The novel is also a psychological portrait of the people of a non-descript French town caught unawares by a pestilence. Oscillating between hope and despair, the inmates devise various strategies to cope with the unprecedented nature of suffering. The death and decay wrought by the plague and its putrescence become symptomatic of the ugliness of the town and its inmates. Camus makes his protagonist, Dr Rieux, remember that nearly thirty plagues have ravaged humankind and decimated its population. He vividly imagines the cities of Athens, Chinese towns, Marseille, Provence, Constantinople, Milan, London, etc., "nights and days filled always, everywhere, with the eternal cry of human pain" (Camus 38). The idea of pestilence as divine punishment and a scourge also necessitates the task of self-interrogation. In the novel, the illness seems to be of the whole town: "It was as if the earth on which our houses stood were being purged of its secreted humour—thrusting up to the surface the abscesses and pus-clots that had been forming in its entrails" (Camus 13). Dr Rieux imagines the plague as "one of the great visitations of the past" (Camus 42). However, the *Plague* resorts to realism in depicting the different stages of the epidemic's cycle for a greater part of the narrative.

Set in the imaginary town of Oran, the novel underscores the banality of everyday existence. The narrator describes the town as ordinary and ugly. He finds its inhabitants living mundane lives devoted to money-making. Stripped of any finer sensibilities, their evening pastimes are also characterised by monotony. "Certainly nothing is commoner nowadays than to see people working

from morn till night and then proceeding to fritter away at card-tables, and in small-talk what time is left for living” (Camus 2). The narrator points out the volatility of people and extremes of climate to underscore the fact that it is difficult for people to face death. The town of Oran is “treeless, glamourless, soulless” (Camus 3).

The epidemic’s beginnings are considered random events by the people of Oran. Dr Bernard Rieux finds dead and dying rats in the town. The townsfolk are also disturbed by the shrill death cries of rats and their rotting and bloated bodies. Dr Rieux is someone who wanted “to have no truck with injustice and compromises with the truth” (Camus 10). He rings up the Municipal Office and urges them to take the sanitary condition of the town seriously. The hall porter M Michel’s death after suffering from fever and wheezy breathing plunges everyone into panic and serious thought. Dr Rieux advises the chairman of the local Medical Association to isolate the fresh cases, but his warning is not heeded. Dr Rieux is the first one to conclude that the various symptoms reported by the inmates of the town, i.e., suppurating glands and fever, point to plague, but nobody believes him. Even his colleagues think that it is a taboo subject. He is the lone voice for implementing stern measures without raising unnecessary alarm. The authorities fail miserably in imposing Draconian measures; instead, their efforts are perfunctory.

Camus wryly points out the deeply held conviction among people that though pestilences happened in the world, they could not be afflicted by one. The instinctive urge to deny and live in negation perhaps explains why people do not take a crisis seriously. The inhabitants of Oran live a life wrapped in themselves. Dr Rieux is also torn between fear and confidence. The dimensions of pestilence are out of proportion for the perception of human beings, and this probably accounts for the fact that people hope that the nightmare will soon be over. However, ironically, people fall prey to the pestilence, especially those who are optimistic and do not take any precautions.

Part II of the book gives an account of the psychological suffering of the town inmates forced into exile as the town gates are shut. The separation from loved ones exacerbates the misery of

confinement. It is for the first time that perhaps everyone finds themselves in the same boat. The inability to write letters and phone calls to their loved ones throws people into unprecedented crisis. The people of Oran suffer two-fold: one for their own lives and second for their loved ones whose fates they did not know. The imagined suffering of the family members leaves them distraught beyond words. The “prisoners of the plague” (Camus 65) find themselves cut off from the main spring of action. They are forced back on their memories to find solace. “the first thing that plague brought to our own town was exile...that sensation of a void within which never left us, that irrational longing to hark back to the past or else to speed up the march of time, and those keen shafts of memory that stung like fire” (Camus 67).

The inmates also take recourse to denial of reality but drop the mask when they realise that the exile would last longer than they had expected. “At such moments, the collapse of their courage, willpower, and endurance was so abrupt that they felt they could never drag themselves out of the pit of despond into which they had fallen” (Camus 68). Due to their suffering, they simply drift through life like shadows. People realise what it means to live like prisoners. In these abnormal situations, they have to depend on themselves without support from anybody else. The plague takes a toll on people’s relationships. Grand and Jeanne’s marriage falls apart because of overwork and poverty. Rambert wishes to leave Oran to go back to his wife.

With time, people’s patience plummets, and they think they are being pushed to madness. The hot weather exacerbates the epidemic, and people get discouraged and disheartened. “Plague had killed all colours, vetoed pleasure” (Camus 109). They pin their hopes on the impending cold weather. The disease acquires a deadly form, and there is an alarming rise in the death rate. As the epidemic picks up momentum, people no longer have individual destinies but only a collective destiny. The strongest emotions that people share are a sense of exile, deprivation, fear and revolt. The town “...seemed a lost island of the damned” (Camus 162). The plague acts as a unifying as well as a disrupting force. This is most apparent when illness forces people to quarantine themselves. As sanity

crumbles, people begin setting fire to their dwelling places to kill the plague germs. The funerals become a hurried affair as vigil near the dead bodies is not allowed. Collective funerals have become necessary due to the scarcity of coffins and winding sheets. The lack of dignity of last rites is what Camus associates with “the plague’s last ravages” (Camus 169).

As the plague continues unabated, people no longer feel a sense of rebellion but a crushing despondency. The town inmates become indifferent, exhausted and unable to visualise any future for themselves. People are engulfed in darkness or slumber and stop trying to keep the disease at bay. There is a spurt in spending on luxuries and the theatre as if people wanted to extract whatever joy they could from life. The epidemic enters its final phase as its strength declines, and people get into cautious jubilation. Dr Rieux realises that all one could glean from the experience of the plague is memories and knowledge. Nevertheless, the plague ends only for those being reunited with their loved ones and not for the lonely mourners.

Dr Rieux is the epitome of how human beings can live a meaningful existence in the face of calamity. He finds sustenance in meeting the challenges of daily life. “All the rest hung on mere threads and trivial contingencies; you could not waste your time on it. The thing was to do your job as it should be done” (Camus 39). The doctor realises that, like all misfortunes, plague helps people to look beyond themselves, but “All the same, when you see the misery it brings, you’d need to be a madman; or a coward, or stone blind, to give in tamely to the plague” (Camus 131). Dr Rieux believes that the appropriate response to a man on a deathbed would be to help ease their suffering and not think of the ennobling nature of the experience. He tells Tarrou that he has never been able to reconcile to the idea of people dying of disease. The doctor believes that even if the battle against the plague is one of never-ending defeat, one must put up a fight and not surrender before the epidemic. He tells Rambert that one must have “common decency”. “I don’t know what it means for other people. But in my case, I know that it consists in doing my job” (Camus 158). Camus’s message is,

“...on this earth there are pestilences, and there are victims, and it is up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences” (Camus 243).

Camus ironises the profoundly entrenched idea in the collective unconscious of people that plague is a scourge sent by God to humble the proud and show mankind their place. “For plague is the flail of God and the world His threshing-floor, and implacably He will thresh out His harvest until the wheat is separated from the chaff” (91). Father Peneloux and ecclesiastical authorities organise a Week of Prayer where the epidemic is understood as a time of darkness devoid of God’s light. Religion is a succour in the initial phases, but after some time, people take recourse to pleasure. Dr Rieux thinks that putting faith in God would absolve him of the need to cure people. The sight of the Magistrate’s son, wasted to the bone and contorted with pain, interrogates the idea of plague as divine punishment for the sins of humankind. The death cries of the child fill the doctor with revolt. “And until my dying day, I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture” (Camus 208). Even Father Peneloux feels something change in him as the child succumbs to death. Stripped of certainties, he thinks we can only surrender before the divine will. Father Peneloux, too, contracts the disease that proves fatal in his case. Faith does not ameliorate suffering.

Camus’s novel is rich in symbols, too. In this novel, water symbolises renewal and regeneration, whereas the sun is a symbol of oppression, a hostile force. The sun keeps shining brightly as an agent of indifferent forces of nature. The intense heat of a Mediterranean day brings thoughts of violence and restlessness. As the city of Oran reels under the plague epidemic, mentioning the sea recedes from the narrative. The inhabitants’ link with the sea is ruptured as the beaches, bathing pools and ports are closed. The sea fades in people’s memory and imagination as they learn to live like prisoners, focused only on survival. In one of the episodes, a plunge into the sea serves to invigorate Dr Rieux and Tarrou, and they feel as if the city and the plague do not exist for the time being. The swim creates a new bond of warmth and friendship between the two men.

Apart from being a man of letters, Camus was active throughout his career as a journalist. He was not an armchair philosopher. His most significant achievement in this regard is his editorship of the clandestine French Resistance newspaper *Combat*, published during the Second World War. *The Plague* has also been understood as an allegory where it stands for the evil perpetrated by the Nazis. Neil Heims reads the novel as a response to the absurdity of “living meaningfully” (40) in the face of “an invincible evil” (40). This reading derives further strength from Camus’s play *State of Siege*, a take on totalitarianism. For this play, Camus had collaborated with Jean-Louis Barrault. Set in Spain, the play describes a character named Plague who ravages the town, killing people randomly.

There are some solid autobiographical echoes in *The Plague*. Camus started working on the novel in 1941. The novel underscores Camus’s preoccupation with illness and death. He depicts the suffering of the body with its bloody infections and gradual disintegration. At the same time, he also describes psychological suffering and pain as people inch towards a miraculous recovery or inevitable end. The urgency of disease is also brought home to the novelist as he had been coping with bouts of tuberculosis in those years. Secondly, the world of the novel is a world where women are conspicuous by their absence. The only women who appear are peripheral. In his *Notebook*, Camus writes: “It is a world without women and thus without air” (18). Jenn Mckee links Camus’s failure to create women characters of depth to the alienation and disconnect faced by the author in his relationship with his deaf and nearly mute mother. Mckee thinks it shapes “...Camus’s repeated failure to include female characters of any complexity or significance in his prose” (58).

Camus’s message in the novel is delivered in the character and choices of Dr Rieux. As the novel ends, the doctor drops the mask and reveals that he is the narrator who wants to witness the ravages of the plague. He wanted to be a chronicler of those troubled times and record the injustice done to people. The time of pestilence has taught him “that there are more things to admire in men than to despise” (Camus 297). This chronicle is also an account of a never-ending fight against terror “...by all who, while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilences, strive their utmost

to be healers” (Camus 297). The task has Sisyphean dimensions, as the doctor knows very well that the plague bacillus remains dormant and can rise again at any time.

The novel’s popularity has been resurgent because of the recent pandemic outbreak. *The Plague* has been read and understood as a narrative about the contemporary world. The onset, spread, and decline of the plague epidemic in the novel bear an uncanny resemblance to the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. People oscillated between hope and despair, pinned their hopes on the weather, and lost loved ones. There was no dearth of people exploiting the pandemic for mercenary ends and selfless warriors who worked till the end of their tether. The only difference between fiction and the natural world was that internet connectivity had not transformed human communication when Camus wrote his novel. The psychological and bodily pain, suffering and anxiety made it an archetypal situation. The religious and philosophical issues raised by Camus resonated with people as they lived through quarantine and brooded on what the future held—no wonder this book gained wide readership during the COVID-19 crisis.

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**Exploring Violence, Trauma and Recovery in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*:
A Feminist Perspective**

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Abstract: This paper looks at the issue of violence and trauma in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The story is about a Nigerian family ripped apart by religious and political tyranny, with Kambili, the protagonist, being subjected to physical and mental abuse at the hands of her father. The research addresses the generalised perception of violence and trauma as isolated episodes, whereas the long-term repercussions on individuals and communities are often ignored. The paper looks at how Kambili's horrific experience affected her memory and how these traumatic memories are passed down through generations. Kambili's experience is representative of the abuse encountered by women and girls in a patriarchal society. The paper also contends that appreciating and highlighting a woman's contributions can be empowering. We can empower women by recognising and amplifying their voices as a society. Moreover, literature may support processing and recovery from trauma, as Kambili escapes from her terrible family life by reading books, which gives her comfort. Kambili can find her own voice and perspective and start to recover from trauma. The paper aims to present a Challenge to the prevalent patriarchal narratives and create a space to build a more equitable society.

Keywords: Identity, Memory, Patriarchy, Religious, Trauma, Violence

Introduction

Women in general, regardless of rank, class, age, caste, or religion, face violence in almost every aspect of their lives, whether at home, school, work, on the street, in government institutions, or

during times of conflict or disaster. It is a global attack that takes place in communities. Physical, emotional, sexual, economic, and psychological abuse are examples of such violence. Family members, as well as outsiders, frequently carry out this abusive behaviour. According to bell hooks, in patriarchies, men often condone violence against women so as to exert control over them and their families. In her words:

Patriarchy, like any system of domination (for example, racism), relies on socialising everyone to believe that in all human relations, there is an inferior and a superior party, one person is strong, the other weak, and that it is, therefore, natural for the powerful to rule over the powerless. To those who support patriarchal thinking, maintaining power and control is acceptable by whatever means. (hooks 142)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a prominent contemporary writer from Enugu, Nigeria. She was born to Igbo parents on September 15, 1977, and is now a member of Africa's third generation of female writers. Adichie earned numerous academic distinctions while attending high school. She obtained her MA in African Studies from Yale University in 2008. She was a Hodder fellow at Princeton University from 2005 to 2006. She divides her time between Nigeria and the United States, where she often gives writing seminars. Her debut novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), highlights how women strive for their identities and struggle for survival in a violent and patriarchal society (of Nigeria). The novel depicts the anguish and resilience of three female characters—Kambili Achike (the protagonist), Beatrice Achike (her mother), and Aunty Ifeoma (Kambili's paternal aunt)—as they navigate through complex family dynamics and societal expectations. Adichie credits writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye for a “mental shift” in her perception of literature. She said she “realised that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognised” (Adichie). That is probably why her female characters are believable and have been portrayed realistically in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the reader is provided with the stories female characters tell. These narrators illustrate a variety of concerns regarding violence against women. This study examines the themes of violence, trauma, and healing in Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *The Purple Hibiscus*. The story describes a post-colonial Nigerian patriarchal society in which Kambili, a fifteen-year-old girl, and her mother, Beatrice, have been physically and psychologically abused by her father, Eugene Achike. While well-liked in society, Eugene is a charismatic but violent Catholic patriarch who acts as a fanatically devout tyrant at home. In terms of colonial ideals and patriarchal tone, the characters' lives as they contend with the impact of Western religion, education, and patriarchal traditions imposed by colonial forces and how these principles lead to Kambili and her mother face violence and trauma throughout their lives as a result of their direct personal encounter with patriarchy's corrupting influence and psychological abuse.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie describes several forms of discrimination faced by women. Women are tortured and subjected to emotional distress. Through Kambili's eyes, we observe how a complete family has modified their lives under a repressive and unpredictable patriarch. The novel reveals the complex realities that Kambili and the other female characters experience, as well as their responses to these problems. Heather Hewett, in her article "Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation," she says that through Kambili, the author introduces her readers to a family blessed with material wealth but cursed by violence. As the story unfolds, the daily events of their troubled lives—their mother's multiple miscarriages, Jaja's deformed little finger—remain unspoken secrets" (H81).

Violence in Patriarchy

Male dominance and the imposition of conventional gender roles are depicted as characteristics of a deeply rooted socioeconomic system. Patriarchy has a socioeconomic basis that remains hidden. This is especially seen in Eugene, whose authority moulds the family dynamics. He utilises his religious zeal to exert his patriarchal power over his wife, Beatrice, and his children, Kambili and Jaja. "Things fall apart"—with these words, Kambili begins the account by referring to a change from stability to

chaos frequently sparked by internal and external influences. It denotes a failure of the relationship system or framework. This expression indicates the breakdown of the family's outward unity and the emergence of underlying tension as a result of patriarchal rules and violence. "Things Fall Apart" and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe serve as models for understanding how violence contributes to Eugene's family's disintegration. According to Cheryl Stobie, "Eugene's absolutist intolerance of women's biological functions is exhibited when he beats the family with his belt as Kambili has consumed food with medication for menstrual pain, thus breaking her fast before Mass" (Stobie 427).

As Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Eugene moulds his family from his point of view and is unconcerned with the needs of the other family members. Both Eugene and Okonkwo have authority over their children and strive to mould them into what they view as virtues. In order to shape the destiny of the children, Eugene uses violence and forces Kambili and Jaja to adopt the Catholic faith as a model for a civilised lifestyle. Eugene's vision of the Catholic faith is highly dogmatic and dictatorial, and he uses forces to impose his views on his children. Family harmony and individual well-being are irreparably harmed by the patriarchal system and the violence that upholds it. Multiple acts of violence bolster Eugene's patriarchal dominance. He uses physical violence to chastise his family members and retain his power through his own abusive behaviour. This allows him to maintain absolute control over his family through terror. The characters are greatly affected by patriarchy and brutality. Beatrice, Eugene's obedient wife, assimilated his position and suffered silently under his dominance. Their children, Kambili and Jaja, retain their father's anger scars. "Part of the problem afflicting the Achike household is not just the frequent vicious rages of its head but also the stifling silence imposed on its members. Since no cruelty Beatrice and her children have to endure is ever spoken about, Kambili and her brother Jaja are reduced to communicating with their eyes and reading the language of bodies" (Hillman 99). The novel depicts the protagonists' struggles to break free from the patriarchal and violent cycle. The contrast between Kambili's exposure to a more open-minded and caring household at Aunt Ifeoma and the stifling setting at home is apparent. Ifeoma defies established gender roles and offers Kambili and Jaja a fresh outlook. The prospect of

breaking free from patriarchal restrictions and creating a more equal future is desirable to Kambili and necessary for her personal growth.

Trauma and Its Manifestations

Trauma describes the overwhelming, upsetting situations that trigger a person's strong emotional, psychological, and physical reactions. It can arouse powerful emotions, including fear, anxiety, anger, and sadness. Kambili and her mother are often terrified, oppressed, and driven to psychological breakdown by a strong, dictatorial masculine figure, Father Eugene. Fear and tension haunt their troubled memories and sordid situations. Even in his absence, Eugene's imposition of rules on her family implies that their daily activities, such as meals, prayers, studies, and even free time, are planned according to a strict schedule. The timetable strictly controls the family's lives. The imposition of such a timetable disturbs Kambili and Mama's feelings of oppression and terror. When Kambili's father violently belts her, she experiences humiliation and psychological disturbance. "It was like the hot water Papa had poured on my feet, except now it was my entire body that burned" (Adichie 211). The characters have been subjected to violence or abuse, most commonly at the hands of their father. Her complete body experiences the agony that at first only impacted the feet and continues to haunt her physical, mental, and emotional state. This depicts the cascading impacts of trauma. However, through exposure to other viewpoints, helpful connections, and a different familial setting, Kambili is able to recover and reclaim control over her life gradually. Her journey from a helpless bystander to an independent person demonstrates the possibility of recovery, development, and resiliency despite the devastating effects of trauma. Cheryl Stobie, in her work "Dethroning the Infallible Father: Religion, Patriarchy and Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" says:

The reader is invited to experience this loss of absolute faith, but not of love, through the point of view of the young narrator as she journeys to an adult's understanding of the malaise at the heart of her family. While the quest for psychological autonomy is a universal one to which any reader will respond, the novel is also firmly located in a Nigeria where this

particular family is presented as a microcosm of a nation and church that is in need of reform.
(Stobie 423)

Recovery and Resistance

“It has never happened like this before. He has never punished her like this before” (Adichie 214). These lines denote a turning point consistent with the ideas of resistance and recovery. Kambili is aware of the brutality her father has shown her. On her way to rehabilitation, Kambili must gradually push back against her father's authority. She begins to doubt his authority and the propriety of his actions as she learns more about the magnitude of the abuse. This internal resistance intensifies as she gains the courage to defend herself and voice her own thoughts. By not following the restrictions imposed by her father's authority, she reclaims her agency and identity through her resistance. Aunty Ifeoma is crucial to Kambili's recuperation and resistance. Her home becomes a safe haven for Kambili, providing an alternative setting where open dialogue and critical thinking are welcomed. Moments crucial to her transition include her developing understanding of her father's violence and the contrast between his authoritarian and Aunty Ifeoma's loving atmosphere. It is intriguing to observe the role that her time in Nsukka played in helping her discover her voice and resist repressive influences in her life. This illustrates how supportive connections and different viewpoints may encourage personal development and resistance.

Ifeoma's loving and accepting disposition serves as a counter-example to her father's authoritarian behaviour. Ifeoma supports Kambili in rejecting her father's dominance and following her road to healing by exposing her to a setting where her voice matters, and she is encouraged to think freely. Much of Kambili's recuperation and resistance comes from her contact with the Ifeoma family, her cousin, and Nsukka. It symbolises her coming to terms with her father's unusual conduct and the start of her path to recovery. The mentoring role Aunty Ifeoma plays, and the supportive environment she creates are crucial to Kambili's metamorphosis because they enable her to find her voice and defy the repressive forces that have ruled her life.

Feminist Perspective on Healing

The character of Mama (Beatrice Achike) exposes the African concept of an ideal woman as one who keeps quiet in the face of humiliation, victimisation, and brutality in order to be perceived as a good woman. She is a prime example of how Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* challenges men's propensity to dehumanise women. "She is trapped not only by the brutal customs of a Christianity that exercises stifling control over mind and body but also by her inability to recognise the negative effects of Igbo patriarchy" (Hillman 97). In her book, Adichie depicted two kinds of women: the actual woman (Aunty Ifeoma) and the excellent woman (Mama). In this tale, women attempt to debunk this age-old legend by standing up for themselves and displaying their power in the face of adversity. Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, is attractive, dedicated, financially secure, sturdy, and self-assured. Despite the fact that her late husband's relatives cause her discomfort for a variety of reasons, she is not provoked. She stands up for herself to show that a woman can stand up to a dominant male; when men resign from their obligations, women assume leadership roles and carry out the duties that were historically ascribed to men. They defy conventional gender stereotypes and expectations by demonstrating their capacity to manage various problems and duties traditionally ascribed to men. Following her father's death, Kambili ensures that the family's various business concerns are well maintained. In this tale, women attempt to debunk this age-old myth by standing up for themselves and displaying their power in the face of adversity.

Kambili recognises that, in light of her brother's imprisonment and her mother's psychiatric instability, it is her responsibility to make decisions for the family. She appeared feeble and weakened at first. However, she is subsequently prepared to adjust to current circumstances in order to deal with problems at home alone. Aunty Ifeoma and Amaka challenge stereotypes by seeking education and creative expression, demonstrating that women may transcend limited societal norms. Their tales demonstrate how recovering agency and pursuing personal improvement are essential components of the healing process. *Purple Hibiscus* emphasises themes of agency unity, perseverance, and empowerment. The story demonstrates the transforming potential of women supporting and enabling

one another in their collective search of self-discovery, freedom, and healing from the scars of patriarchal oppression by showing the characters' journey to recovery.

Conclusion

Adichie expertly reveals the lingering wounds of violence while crafting a narrative of survival and empowerment through the experiences of the protagonist, Kambili, and her family. Kambili's path from persecution to the release of her voice acts as a beacon of hope amid the dark landscape of trauma. Adichie's depiction of Kambili's development exemplifies the transformative force of autonomy and self-discovery, echoing the stories of numerous women navigating patriarchal systems to recover their identities. The *Purple Hibiscus* has the capacity to act as a catalyst for recovery and transformation. Kambili highlights the transforming power of stories by providing the voiceless and the oppressed with courage. The work of Adichie is proof of the value of narratives in amplifying the voices of the marginalised and opening the door for rehabilitation, change, and healing. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* examines violence and suffering and provides a gripping narrative that contradicts standard conceptions by investigating the long-term effects of trauma on individuals and communities.

Kambili's story shows the long-term consequences of abuse, demonstrating how trauma memories may span generations. Furthermore, Kambili's capacity to find peace in reading demonstrates storytelling's therapeutic potential. Her escape from her harsh reality through reading represents the function of literature in trauma processing and recovery. Kambili begins on a journey of healing and perseverance as she discovers her voice and perspective. This paper also underlines the need to empower women by acknowledging and amplifying their efforts. Kambili's story demonstrates the difficulties experienced by women in patriarchal civilisations, emphasising the importance of opposing dominant narratives in order to promote a more egalitarian society. *Purple Hibiscus* is a strong prism through which to analyse the complexities of violence, trauma, and empowerment. Stobie further says, "The novel is not, however, an example of Afro-pessimism. Adichie pays tribute to the spirit of survival, to the power of humour and intelligent criticism and the

possibility of social reform” (Stobie 428). We pave the path for a more compassionate and just world by understanding the long-term repercussions of trauma, supporting women's voices, and embracing literature as a tool for rehabilitation.

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Fact-Fiction Interface: Revisiting the Holocaust Memory, Trauma and Violence in *The Librarian of Auschwitz*

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Abstract: This paper critically engages with the fact-fiction interface as represented in the novel *The Librarian of Auschwitz*, written originally in Spanish by Antonio Iturbe and translated into English by Lilit Zilkin Thwaites. It is based on the real-life story of Dita Kraus, the librarian of Auschwitz, presented fictionally. At a very young age, Dita, along with her family, was transported to Terezin Ghetto and later to Auschwitz concentration camp at Birkenau, operated by German Nazis and the SS during World War II. During her confinement in the camp, she was responsible for taking care of “eight books”, which her fellow inmates managed to smuggle inside the “children’s block 31” in the camp. While performing her duties as the youngest librarian, Dita witnessed deaths of her close kith and kin including her father and a fellow inmate Fredy Hirsch, whom she admired for his courage. The death of her father traumatised her to an extent that rather than mourning, she grows infuriated and wants to kill the Nazi soldiers. *The Delayed Life*, a memoir by Dita Kraus, demonstrates how “[trauma] attests to its endless impact on a life,” as Cathy Caruth has stated (7). The novel, on the one hand, deals with perturbing facts through suffering Jews; on the other, it tells the “story born from . . . the rich imagination of author.” Thus, the paper focuses on how Dita revisited memories of her hauntingly perturbing past and examines its fictionalisation by Antonio Iturbe (*Dita Kraus Librarian of Auschwitz* par. 3). It will also examine memory and violence as leitmotifs based on textual analysis of the novel.

Keywords: Facts, Fictionalisation, Revisiting, Trauma, Violence, Memory, Holocaust

In recent years, we have witnessed a recourse to fictionalising facts or real events in many novels. Writers such as Salman Rushdie, Angie Thomas, and John Green blur reality with fiction so that everyday reality becomes nothing but a fictional representation. The relationship between facts and

fiction is quite complicated, and sometimes, they are not evident and may require a close reading of a text. For example, Salman Rushdie, in his novels, primarily uses this technique of adapting reality as fiction, which may require a close textual analysis so that a reader is able to decode what elements of reality lie therein a text. ‘Facts’ are real events, people and sometimes situations, whereas ‘fiction’ brings forth imaginary characters, imagined situations and events. In many instances, writers use these facts and real incidents to devise a work of fiction to point out certain harsh realities of the world we live in. “On a technical level, fiction writers must contend with the difference between realism and verisimilitude, or the quality of appearing to be true” (Penelope). It is right to say that fiction writing partially relies on borrowing from reality. Therefore, it is suitable to state that reality supplements a text’s writing during fictionalisation.

Kai Mikkonen has argued on the transition of fiction to facts, “. . .modern sociology of literature or historiography may use the realistic novels of Balzac and Zola, despite their fictional status, as exemplary descriptions of actual nineteenth-century life. Thus, as the world changes, fiction obtains new, real reference” (294). It is, therefore evident that not only can facts be significantly remodelled as fiction, but the process can happen vice-versa. Fiction may attain the status of reality, as is evident in many instances. Trauma literature, which appropriates the sufferings of the victims, depends on the very act of fictionalisation. “Literary texts and their fictional worlds allow for nuanced engagements with the subject of trauma which is often personalised and contextualised, fictionalised and historicised, as well as psychologised and metaphorized at the same time” (Schönfelder 23). With these nuanced engagements, writers make their readers associate with the sufferings of others to achieve catharsis.

In the novel *The Librarian of Auschwitz*, Antonio Iturbe uses this narrative technique of mixing facts and fiction, a postmodernist approach, in order to represent the trauma and suffering of Dita Kraus in the novel. Her lived experiences in the Auschwitz concentration camp have been recorded in the form of a fictional account while borrowing real incidents of her life. The authentic

names of people and places have been used to lend credence to the fact that the novel is the portrayal of Dita's suffering and the trauma she underwent in the concentration camp.

The word trauma originated in the 17th century from the Greek word 'traumaticus', which signifies a wound. 'Trauma' is defined by *Cambridge Online Dictionary* as "severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience, or a case of such shock happening." Trauma, therefore, can be defined as an emotional response to distress, which in many cases, leads to the altered mental state of a person. *Online Etymology Dictionary* gives the roots of the word trauma from "1690s, [meaning] "physical wound," medical Latin, from Greek trauma [means] "a wound, a hurt; [or] a defeat," sense of "psychic wound, an unpleasant experience which causes abnormal stress" is from 1894." Mental trauma has a lasting impact on a person than physical trauma. Even physical trauma, in many cases, results in mental trauma, which affects the psychological make-up of an individual and, in certain situations, leads to MMDs, PTSDs or complex PTSDs. Many theorists, such as Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth and Roger Luckhurst, have explored this field and provided remarkable insights.

Cathy Caruth is a noted trauma theorist who has explored several facets of trauma and trauma studies in literature. In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, she defines trauma as:

As the repeated infliction of a wound, the act of Tancred calls up the ordinary meaning of trauma itself (in both English and German), the Greek trauma, or "wound," originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body. In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. (3)

Cathy Caruth's observation based on the understanding of Freud's theory states that trauma is not just physical but rather mental, which has a lasting impact on the psyche of a person. Sigmund Freud was the first person to take a plunge into the field of trauma studies, but he soon discontinued his venture. He believed that hysteria is related to trauma, which is reflected in his theories of seduction in

childhood, but later changed his views and further developed the idea of “Oedipal Complex”. His theoretical postulations referred to the fact that any sexual encounter which is forced leads to the development of traumatic memories. In his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud states:

We describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure.

(23)

According to Freud, trauma has the capacity to break the protective shield, which then further affects the mental ability and the defence mechanism of an individual going through traumatic neurosis. He states that the mental apparatus, after experiencing trauma, gets flooded with overwhelming responses, which thus affects the responses to the stimuli received by the mind, a condition called hysteria. Hysteria, as stated by Freud, is a mental condition which occurs in a person because of repressed desires and emotions or because of specific traumatic experiences. It impacts the overall psychological makeup of a person and can lead to certain chronic diseases which require critical medical attention.

Trauma studies have become a significant field in literary studies with the rise of trauma theories and genres such as trauma novels. In trauma theories, the central concern is the aftermath of trauma, which thus tries to explore the events post-trauma and its effects on an individual. In the case of traumatic neurosis, the repetitive memories work back and forth, which brings out the past painful/stressful events. It is related to remembering a traumatic event, which is stored in the memory of an individual. Thus, memory plays a significant role in harking back an individual to those traumatic events.

Memory shares a close relationship with trauma, as memory is the container of information and previous experiences. This relationship between memory and trauma was first studied by Perrie Janet in 1889. Traumatic experiences get stored in our memory, and at certain intervals, they are reflected via subconscious or unconscious actions. ‘Memory’ is defined as “the store of things learned and retained from an organism's activity or experience as evidenced by modification of structure or behaviour or by recall and recognition” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Traumatic memories are associated with terrible events that a person has experienced or observed. Exposure to trauma in childhood or any stage of life leads to the development of traumatic memories, which then emerge in the form of emotions, anger and depression. Ernest G. Schachtel expounds that memory “...as a function of the living personality can be understood only as a capacity for the organisation[s] and reconstruction[s] of past experiences and impressions in the service of present needs, fears, and interests” (3).

Violence is yet another aspect which is usually associated with trauma and trauma studies. Sometimes violent experiences are the major factors leading an individual to trauma such as abuse, assault and rapes. It is a common phenomenon which occurs on a daily basis and many violent acts get reported every day. Whereas in many cases, the violence is not physical but psychological as well which severely affects a person’s mental health. The origin of the term ‘violence’ has Latin roots, from the term ‘volentia’ which means vehemence. Later, it was anglicised as violence which means the use of physical force in order to do harm or some sort of damage and also relates with violation. Sometimes, trauma ramifies itself as violence and more often it is violence that results in trauma and traumatic memories. The terms such as ‘trauma’, ‘memory’ and ‘violence’ are reciprocally related to each other as is discussed above all three play a significant role in trauma studies and trauma theories.

The novel *The Librarian of Auschwitz* is a real-life story of Dita Kraus, a fourteen-year-old librarian in the Auschwitz Birkenau Camp. The novel limns Dita’s life story and how she ends up with her family at the concentration camp. She has been handed over the responsibility to take care

of eight books by Freddy Hirsch that has been smuggled into the camp by some inmates. The novel opens up with the remarks:

The Nazi officers are dressed in black. They look at death with the indifference of a gravedigger. In Auschwitz, human life has so little value that no one is shot anymore; a bullet is more valuable than a human being. In Auschwitz, there are communal chambers where they administer Zyklon gas. It's cost-effective, killing hundreds of people with just one tank.

(1)

In concentration camps, killing people was an everyday task where hundreds of people were killed together, especially Jews, because they were thought to be “unworthy of life” (Holocaust Encyclopaedia). Dita and her family get transported to the concentration camp on 18th December 1943 when she is fourteen years old. Before her transportation to the camp, Dita, though unable to recall the date, said it was March 15, 1939, when “her childhood ended forever” (10). Dita’s childhood ends when she witnesses the army trucks moving in the streets of Prague. According to her, it was the time when her life underwent a change in all respects. “By 1940 Nazi Germany had assigned the Gestapo to turn Terezín into a Jewish ghetto and concentration camp. It held primarily Jews from Czechoslovakia. . .” (History of Terezin).

A few limitations were put on the populace after the entrance of Nazi forces in Prague, mostly on those who were of the Jewish origin. But with time, these limitations became more severe, and they were compelled to give up their property rights. When the Germans moved Dita along with her family to the camp, the first lesson that she learned in the camp was how to survive. The new inmates are instilled with the lesson on their ultimate task of survival in the camp, how to survive longer by surviving for a few hours. Multifarious killings take place in a single day, and it becomes difficult for the guards to handle the dead bodies. Violence is a quotidian drill in the camp; those who do not follow the orders get thrashed by the Kapos (guards). The violence perpetrated is not only physical but mental and psychological as well. The Kapos constantly remind the inmates who are in-charge and set up precedents to follow. The atmosphere of constant fear is created by the guards in order to

maintain their authority and feeding the minds of the prisoners that any act of rebellion will lead to death.

Also, the food offered to the inmates is the bare minimum for their survival. The food offered in the camp consisted of coffee in the morning, a bowl of soup at noon, and a loaf of bread as supper, which could not satiate the hunger of inmates. “Dita eats her turnip soup very slowly- they say it fills you more that way-but sipping it barely takes her mind off her hunger” (29). It is undoubtedly true that insufficient food was provided to ensure their survival only for draconian labour, was also one of the reasons of deaths inside Auschwitz. Perpetual inanition, adds up in the battle of survival and affects the protagonist and her fellow inmates psychologically and physically. Dehumanisation and stripping of the captives from their identities is the tradition of the camp.

After her arrival at the camp, Dita discovers that “. . . in Auschwitz everybody deceives everyone else” (89). People in the camp turn against each other for food, survival and personal interests. Regular inspections and detaining of the prisoners are frequent, and if found guilty, severe punishments, which included starving and appalling beatings by the guards. The novel successfully portrays the fact that how Jews were looked down and treated as lesser beings. In the camp, “A thief, a swindler, a murderess . . . anyone of these is more valuable than a Jew” (179). This demonstrates unequivocally, how antisemitic the German Nazi troops were in their approach.

Dita both in her real life and in the novel was given charge to take care of eight books which according to Iturbe were brought secretly inside the Camp BIIb to teach the Children’s in the Block. These books include *A Short History of World* by HG Wells, *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas and *The Adventures of the Good Solider Syjek* by Jaroslav Hasek. While hiding the books from the Kapos was itself a challenge, the other challenge that it brought was the constant fear of getting caught. The novel constantly highlights the importance of books and the transformation they can bring about. “Books are extremely dangerous; they make people think” (4). But when asked in an interview that did books help Dita in surviving Auschwitz, to which she replied: “Certainly not.

They were a small section of my life in Auschwitz. A very short time. The whole thing was three-four months that I was the librarian. The books certainly didn't save my life" (The Librarian of Auschwitz *YouTube*). She also stated that in order to come up with the book Iturbe had to bring in imaginary elements which never existed in reality.

Watching hundreds of people die every day in Auschwitz is a common event, even the records of deaths are kept by the registrar, appointed by the superiors of the camp. The inmates in the camp have been reduced to mere numbers. When they reached the camp, they were inscribed with a number as Dita Kraus mentions in her memoir *A Delayed Life*, "With fresh ink I received the next digits, 73,305 in all" (136). Once the prisoners arrived at the camp, they became aware of the reality of the camps set up by German forces and witnessed the horrors inflicted on the people who lived there. Whippings, electric shocks, and injections are just a few of the torture techniques used in these camps. Additionally, at times the guards would fake executions to heighten the fear of death amongst the prisoners. "In the private sphere, psychological violence includes threatening conduct which lacks physical violence or verbal elements. . ." ("Psychological Violence"), which is clearly evident in this case.

After a few days in the camp Dita's father becomes severely ill because of the horrendous living conditions in the camp. He battles pneumonia while his body is malnourished, because the food provided is inadequate to back up the immune system of the inmates to fight diseases. It was not just the gassing that killed people but many prisoners perished in the camp because of the ailments they caught as a result of poor living conditions in the camps. Dita's father also became the victim of these dire living circumstances. Her father's death perturbs her to an extent that she becomes infuriated and wants to kill the Nazi soldiers. When her mother informs her about the death of her father, she says, "At least your father didn't suffer" (181). Dita on the other hand is astonished on her mother view, because according to her Hans suffered a lot in the camp on which she states, "They took away his world, his house, his dignity, his health . . . and finally, they let him die alone, like a dog, on a flea-

infested pallet. Isn't that enough suffering?" (181). Because of the anguish caused by her father's death, Dita yells at her mother while laying out his pain.

"[Anger] may be most often seen in cases of trauma that involve exploitation or violence" ("Anger and Trauma"). When Dita meets Professor Morgenstern, she tries to inform him about Hans' death but she gets enraged at the Nazis and shouts, "Murderers!" (181). She tells him that she'll get a gun and kill the Nazi soldiers as a result of her traumatic loss. "Traumatic loss refers to the loss of loved ones in the context of potentially traumatising circumstances" (Boelen et al). Such traumatic losses may occur in the form of accidents, massacres, murders and natural calamities. In order to alleviate Dita's suffering Morgenstern tells her, "Our hatred is a victory for them" (184). Even after living in trials and tribulations he suggests that they should not become inhuman. He comforts her by telling her that at least Hans will no longer tolerate the violence and suffering of the miserable life of the camp.

At this juncture, Dita harks back to the memories of the past when she was happy with her family. This recourse to bygone days eases the pain and suffering to a great degree which has been brought about by the confinement in the camp. Dita recalls the time when she and her family were free and lived respectably. In many cases the pleasant memories from the past proffer deep down reassurance to cope up with the sufferings. Same is the case with Dita she finds refuge in the pleasant memories of past to cope up with the pain and trauma of her father's death as well as her gut-wrenching life as an inmate in the camp.

The second incident that traumatised her is the death of Freddy Hirsch. Most of the inmates believe that he committed suicide because he was queer. Dita admired Hirsch for his courage and it is the reason that she is unable to believe that Hirsch committed suicide. She looks into the matter and finds that he is murdered as he was the leader of the resistance in the camp. Hirsch is killed before the uprising he planned with the members of resistance to save the children from September transport from being gassed. After the incident Dita and her mother Lisel with all other inmates in the hut starts hallucinating as a result of the trauma when they watched how people have been loaded in the trucks

in order to be killed. They think they are hearing some music because to the sounds of trucks and metals clanking. "...[A]uditory and verbal hallucinations are the most commonly reported type of hallucination..." (Quidé). Dita and other detainees are in a similar situation and hallucinate at the same time.

The novelist has tried to unravel the suffering caused in the concentration camps powerfully, and in order to come up with the novel Antonio Iturbe interviewed the real-life librarian of Auschwitz Dita Kraus. Iturbe first contacted Dita, to which she responded because of the intriguing questions he asked her. In order to answer those questions Dita must have revisited the memories of her wretched past. For months Iturbe asked Dita about her life in the Auschwitz. He also paid her a visit in Terezin and went to the camp with her where along with her, he also revisited the trauma that Dita and other inmates had to endure for years. The visits inspired Iturbe to write the book on the suffering that Dita underwent. The revisiting is done not just by Dita herself who in order to tell her tale of sufferings to Iturbe went back to her disturbing past but later Iturbe himself revisited the sufferings of Dita and other prisoners inside the camp. He collected facts from different places and then fictionalised them to reveal the horrors committed to the Jews in the concentration camps.

Summing up, it is visible that the novelist with his imaginative genius has successfully fictionalised the life of the librarian of Auschwitz and the leitmotifs such as memory violence and trauma are the key facets of the novel. Iturbe through the novel has unravelled the one of the biggest crimes committed in the period of World War II. The novel revisits the life led by Dita Kraus in Auschwitz along with other crucial aspects of her life and also highlights her courage and resilience which makes her survive the brutality committed in the camps. It is only through this courage she came out alive from the camp and summed up her life in a memoir titled *A Delayed Life* (2020).

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Pure Consciousness: The Ultimate Truth in the Poetry of Laleshwari

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Abstract: A man's innermost aspiration is to decipher the ultimate truth, the truth beyond ordinary comprehension. The inception of spiritual enterprise is to acknowledge the ultimate truth. Laleshwari was a prominent figure in medieval Kashmiri language poetry. Laleshwari, through her poetry, explicates how spirituality assists in the realisation of pure consciousness, and it highlights the cosmic significance of objective manifestation. Her poetry is of immense value in contemporary times. It prompts an individual to reflect on the ultimate truth through self-knowledge. This paper attempts to explain pure consciousness through the metaphysical realm of Kashmir *Saivism* and how an individual comprehends and unravels the dimension of the ultimate truth. Pure consciousness is the rekindling of ordinary consciousness with cognition of the true inner self, which sustains the entire cosmos. It is granted to those with unflinching faith in a religion's exoteric and esoteric aspects. Her poetry discusses love as a driving force behind all experiences, the cause, and the end. Laleshwari's poetry alludes to the notion of spirituality that aims to provide an objective to life. It can be asserted that the true purpose of life is to strive towards pure consciousness. It is to acknowledge the divinity in its manifestation and to merge with the divine, which makes life meaningful.

Keywords: Pure Consciousness, Siva, Ultimate Truth, Self-knowledge, Divine love, Unity

Introduction: An Overview of Pure Consciousness

Consciousness is a fluid term with psychological as well as metaphysical meanings. The English word conscious derives from the Latin word *consciuis*, meaning to know within. Also, consciousness is awareness, subjectivity, sensibility, and wakefulness of the mind. The spiritual connotation of the word implies the relationship between the mind and the profound truths that are more important than the physical world.

The literature on the Saiva system can be classified into three categories: *Agama*, *Spanda*, and *Pratyabhijna*. *The Pratyabhijna Sastra* is a valuable resource that interprets the principal tenets of the Saiva philosophy through dialogues, arguments, refutations, and reasoning. The term “pratyabhijna” means “self-recognition.” According to the *Pratyabhijna Sastra*, an individual (*jiva*) forgets their true nature and becomes associated with their psycho-physical mechanism. The spiritual discipline can assist an individual in realising pure consciousness as their true self:

According to the Saiva system (*Siva-sasana*), there is only one existing entity—pure consciousness. Jaidev Singh, in *Siva Sutra—The Yoga of Supreme Identity*, elucidates that, Pure consciousness represents the ultimate truth or the supreme Self, also known as *Parasamvit* or *cit*. Siva, who holds the power of doer ship, is called *Sakti* (*Citi/Parasakti*). It is an immediate awareness of the self and can manifest, maintain, and absorb the universe into itself. *Prakashavimarsamaya* is an attribute of Siva, an eternal light who realises his grandeur, power, and beauty. Also, Siva possesses traits such as *Svatantrya* (*Sovereignty*), *iccha* (*Will*), *jnana* (*Knowledge*), *kriya* (*action*), and *ananda* (*Bliss*). *Paramsiva* has two aspects. It is both transcendent (*Visvottisna*) and immanent (*Visvamaya*). (xix-xx)

According to *Pratyabhijna Sastra*, the ultimate truth is pure consciousness (*Cit*). It is self-illuminating, enables immediate awareness of I-consciousness, and is non-relational (Singh 5). It is a perfect unity between self-luminosity and consciousness (*Prakasavimarsamaya*). Additionally, pure consciousness can create, preserve, and re-absorb all manifestations. “The Supreme, who is the agent of creation, is also the agent of maintenance and dissolution” (Bhatt 31). This consciousness is ineffable, omnipotent, omnipresent, and imperceptible. Moreover, it is always in eternal bliss and can be realised only through meditation and contemplation. It is also known as self-consciousness (*Chaitanya*), the Supreme experience (*Paramsamvid*), the Supreme bliss (*Paramsiva*), and the self (*Atman*) of everything.

The *Pratyabhijna Sastra* is called *Trika* philosophy, which gets its name from the three energies of *ParamSiva*. These three energies are *para*, *para para*, and *apara*, representing pure

consciousness, cognitive, and objective energy. According to the *Trika* philosophy, pure consciousness is the all-encompassing universal energy. The three energies represent the supreme, immediate, and inferior energy of the ultimate truth, ParamSiva. Additionally, the philosophy explains that the objective energy of the ultimate truth is manifested in the universe.

As individuals, our sense of self is deeply rooted in *Caitanya*. It is the objective energy of the ultimate truth that defines us. However, our innate ignorance (*Anava mala*) limits our potential for evolution. This ignorance narrows the scope of our pure consciousness by limiting our will (*Ichha Sakti*). It makes us experience separateness and assume a separate identity, causing us to be tossed around from one form of life to another. Despite the challenges posed by our inferior state of mind, we can evolve toward our subjective energy by tapping into our intermediate energy and achieving a higher level of consciousness.

A powerful force that lies dormant within everyone is the *kundalini*. It is an expression of immediate energy, known as *Sakti*. *Sakti* is the manifestation of the immediate energy of pure consciousness that reveals the world contained within itself. It is the kinetic aspect of consciousness that is created. "*Sakti*, thrown up by delight, lets herself go forth into manifestation" (Singh 10). The spiritual techniques called *upayas*, including *anavopaya*, *shaktopaya*, *sambhavopaya*, and *anupaya*, are meant to eliminate the impurities (*Malas*) to secure divine grace. As impurities are removed, an individual's veil is lifted, leading them to encounter the Ultimate Truth. The principle underlying *Pratyabhijna's* philosophy is to rise from an objective state of energy using intermediate energy to become one with the subjective energy of *Param Siva*. *Siva-Sakti* principle is the origin of all emanation.

Emancipation is to recognise one's essence. According to *Utpaldeva*, pure consciousness (*Akrtrimaahamvimarsa*) is "an instant awareness of one's true self, and its realisation leads to liberation (Singh 27). Liberation is consciousness reversal, the transformation of the self into pure consciousness. It is the accomplishment of *Siva* consciousness that reverberates throughout the entire cosmos. The perpetual joy that follows this experience is known as *cidananda* (Singh 28).

The goal of *Trika* philosophy is to help us understand the essential purpose of life. It guides us to overcome the state of entanglement with the world and the perpetual cycle of birth and death. Emancipation is a state of attainment of oneness with the ultimate truth of life. The *Trika* philosophy helps to overcome ignorance by emphasising the oneness of humanity in the ultimate truth. Also, it guides us to overcome self-imposed barriers of discrimination such as caste, creed, religion, and belief. It holds that every human has the potential to unlock the mystery of the Ultimate Truth through self-knowledge, leading to a state of enlightenment and the true purpose of human existence. Laleshwari, a medieval mystic, shared the notion of pure consciousness as the Ultimate truth (*Param Siva*) and her spiritual quest through her mystical poetry.

Laleshwari: A Saiva Mystic

Throughout history, Kashmir has been an abode of enlightened saints and mystics who were profoundly committed to their spiritual quest to attain oneness with the ultimate truth. Laleshwari (1320-1377) was a great *Saiva* mystic from medieval Kashmir, born into a Brahmin family and a proponent of Kashmir *Saivism*. Her first mention is in Mulla Ali Raina's *Tadhkirat-ul-Arifin* (1587), an account of saints from Kashmir (Bhat 30). As per custom, Laleshwari was married at a young age, but her husband and in-laws did not treat her well. As a yogini and a misfit for traditional household life, she embraced the life of a wandering ascetic and dedicated herself to spreading the message of the ultimate truth. Also, as a wandering preacher of the ultimate reality, she faced trials and tribulations at the hands of the public (Bhat 50). Laleshwari was a yogini and a wandering ascetic who was immersed in the light of herself. Despite facing trials and tribulations at the hands of the public, she remained steadfast in her devotion.

The poetry of Laleshwari can be classified as the initial poetic work in the *Koshur* language, spoken in Kashmir. Her mystical expressions are written in quatrains known as *vaakhs*, derived from the Sanskrit word *Vakiya*, meaning a sentence or spoken word (Hoskote xi). Laleshwari's poetry focuses on spirituality and imparts valuable lessons for those seeking self-discovery and the Ultimate Truth. *Vaakhs* offers insight into philosophical expositions of Kashmir *Saivism* and her spiritual

experience. She expounded the tenets of *Trika* philosophy in the vernacular, making it accessible to everyone. Her verses were passed down orally for generations until 1920 when *Lalla-vakhyani* was published by the Royal Asiatic Society London, the first authentic written document of her poetry.

Additionally, *vaakhs* are profound and comprehensive in meaning and purpose. The substance of the poetry deepens the passion for the spiritual journey and can assist devotees to gain spiritual heights. Laleshwari's quatrains fall into three categories based on her comprehension and realisation of pure consciousness. Yogeshwari Bhatt, in *Shivayogini Laleshwari*, posits that:

Some of her *vaakhs* highlight her spiritual enterprise (*Aprokshanubhuti*). A few of her *vaakhs* are a rich source of information (*Sadhakopadesh*) for the sincere seekers (*Mumukshu*). The last set of quatrains is for the general awareness of ordinary people (*Lokopadesh*). (80)

Laleshwari toiled hard while seeking the divine until she unlocked the mystery of the Divine within her own heart (Hoskote 114). She advised sincere seekers to avail themselves of the opportunity to know the ultimate truth instead of being captivated by the world's enchantments. Her work highlights the importance of meditation, contemplation of the Divine, and advanced yogic practices. Moreover, it holds the potential to heal the sufferings of humanity. Laleshwari wanted her fellow beings to truly realise the sacred purpose of human life by working judiciously for the enlightenment of self. Furthermore, the themes of divine love, self-knowledge, harmony, tolerance, and brotherhood abound in mystical poetry with the underlying notion of the Ultimate Truth.

Laleshwari was a self-realized mystic who attained oneness with the Absolute truth. Kashmiri's poetry commences with her *vaakhs* that offer insights into the *Trika* school of thought. Her teachings are widely respected among Kashmiris, regardless of their religious beliefs. Many Muslim saint poets who hail from Kashmir acknowledged the philosophy of Laleshwari resonating with Islamic monotheism. As she was affectionately known, Lal Ded encouraged people to understand the true nature of existence and attain emancipation while living (*Jivanmukta*). People of

all faiths have cherished her poetry, and she remains a beloved figure for her message of the Ultimate Truth.

Pure Consciousness: The Ultimate Truth in the Poetry of Laleshwari

Kashmiri poetry is a testament to the depth of its spiritual culture. During the medieval period, Laleshwari was one of the most notable figures in Kashmir *Saivism*, who used *vaakhs* to share her profound spiritual insights. Her poetry eloquently expresses the philosophy of pure consciousness as the Ultimate truth. In one of her verses, Laleshwari asserted that there is nothing beyond the Ultimate reality and expressed personal experience about the universal nature of pure consciousness. She acknowledged the divine attributes of omnipresence and omnipotence, reminding us of infinite power and the presence of the Ultimate Truth. Laleshwari affirmed:

You are sky and earth.

Day, wind-breath, and night,

You are grain, sandal paste, flowers, and water.

Substance of my offering, you who are All.

What shall I offer you? (Hoskote 64)

Laleshwari stated that the ultimate Truth is all-encompassing and present in every aspect of the universe. She taught that selfless devotion is far more valuable than any worldly offering we can make. Therefore, she said, “what shall I offer you?” Laleshwari recognised the pure consciousness that permeated the universe and referred to it as Siva. The description of Siva in the following lines embodies the essence of Kashmir *Saivism*, as it acknowledges Him as the creator of the cosmos, she said:

The sun rises, sets, rises again.

Shiva creates, destroys, and creates the world again. (Hoskote 136)

The notion of pure consciousness is the primary principle of manifestation (*Abhasavada*) (Singh 17). It is believed that the perpetually evolving appearances express the ultimate reality. Pure consciousness exhibits the object through its absolute will (Bhatt 483). N. K. Singh expands on this

concept in *Saivism in Kashmir*, stating that “I am the Lord (*Ishvara*) with the power and will to create the universe” (385).

Consciousness, often called the inner creative spark, is eternal and cannot be destroyed by the external events of life (Chaudhri 164). Laleshwari affirmed that the worshipper and the worshipped are not separate from each other as they are essentially one (Bhatt 31). The influence of the Ultimate truth can be found in everything around us, and an awakened individual can experience it. The symbolism of water transforming into ice or snow beautifully illustrates the concept of “Oneness.” Laleshwari explained that the manifestation is wholly merged into the ultimate reality, permeating everywhere. She shared the message that the whole creation is a representation of the creator, Siva, in the following verse:

Cold changes water into ice or snow.

Discernment shows the three different states

Are not different

When the sun of consciousness shines,

The plurality is dissolved into oneness.

The universe appears throughout, permeated with Siva. (Kak 100)

Pure consciousness is a state of perfection that surpasses words, thoughts, and the mudras of silence. Laleshwari emphasised the significance of human life as an opportunity to attain the highest stage of realising the Ultimate truth. Shiva cherishes the offering of knowledge of Self above all else. Her self-description reflects her spiritual quest as consciousness, representing her profound personal experience. Laleshwari motivated seekers to unravel the mystery of the Self by concentrating on their true selves:

The day passes into the night.

The earth reaches out for the sky.

On the day of the new moon,

The moon swallows Rahu.

Siva's worship is the realisation of the self as consciousness. (Kak 99)

In this world, suffering is an inevitable part of human existence. However, the teachings of the Vedas enjoin us to seek the counsel of a spiritual mentor who can guide us with wisdom and help us overcome our suffering. The guru always shares the message about the Ultimate truth, which can bring us peace and enlightenment. Lalleshwari, for instance, trusted the words of her mentor and gained control over her mind with spiritual wisdom. She followed her mentor's advice sincerely and used her verses as a medium of guidance to conquer the inner darkness (Kak 134):

My master gave me just one rule:

Forget the outside, get to the inside of things.

I, Lalla, took that teaching to heart.

From that day, I have danced naked. (Hoskote 97)

A guru is a faithful servitor of God. He leads sincere disciples out of the darkness of ignorance and assists in cultivating divine knowledge. Through the teachings of a spiritual mentor, humanity can escape the suffering caused by ignorance. Lalleshwari, as a disciple, surrendered to the guru's instructions, who assisted her in decoding the spiritual life and comprehending the essence of pure consciousness. The guru's advice, 'forget the outside, get to the inside of things,' was helpful to Lal Ded. She practiced breath control, used the mantra of breathing to purify her inner self, and found her way to immortality. Her unwavering dedication to the proper path ultimately led her to enlightenment. Lalleshwari remarked:

Impurities of my mind were wiped away as from a mirror

And I attained self-knowledge

I saw him near me-He is everything,

And I am nothing. (Kak 68)

Lalleshwari explored the infinite nature of the self that liberated her from ignorance. Through her inward journey, she found that Siva permeates all and is the root cause of all (Kak 66).

Lalleshwari criticised the insignificant practices that do not contribute to the true purpose of life and rejected reading religious books without discernment (Kak18). Also, she equated religious preachers to a parrot chanting the holy name *Ram-Ram*. She believed taking control of one's senses was more important than praying lips and turning the rosary (Hoskote 140). Lalleshwari counseled the man not to please the stone god and questioned the priest-man about the object of his worship (Hoskote 60). She spoke out against the false notion of worship and called out preachers of religion as 'slaves of extremes' (Hoskote 84). Also, she believed practising moderate living was a key to understanding the truth. Lalleshwari versified:

Shiva lies in many places,

He does not know a Hindu from a Muslim.

The Self that lives in you and others

That is Shiva. Get the measure of Shiva. (Hoskote 106)

Lalleshwari treated everyone equally and associated with people of different castes. She was always willing to share food with people from all walks of life and encouraged others to do the same (Bhat 59). She emphasised the importance of breaking down societal barriers and recognising the interconnectedness of all living beings. According to Lalleshwari, *Siva* permeates every aspect of the physical world, and by cultivating self-knowledge, an individual can better understand and acknowledge the Ultimate Truth, which is essential for leading a fulfilled life (Kak 16).

Devotion is a noble path every religion emphasises, leading to an ocean of love. Consciousness is the highest form of awareness, revealing the ultimate truth underlying the cosmos. The universe is an arrangement of pure consciousness in a particular way. It means identities are not distinct, as everything is interconnected. Thus, the universe does not differ in identity from the Ultimate Truth (Chaudhri 99). It is a fundamental tenet of the non-dualistic tradition of Kashmir *Shaivism*. Henceforth, everything in the universe is only a form of pure consciousness, which is the Ultimate truth.

The history of Kashmir is filled with turbulence, yet it is also marked by remarkable saints who have left a lasting impact on the region. Laleshwari was a *Saiva* saint who witnessed some of the most tumultuous times in Kashmir. Despite the challenges she faced, Laleshwari was able to revolutionise the ethnic and cultural character of the region, even as new rulers enforced new faiths. Her ability to bring about significant change while respecting the underlying cultural structure of Kashmir is particularly noteworthy. She was able to exert a tremendous spiritual revolution against the brutal force of rulers who sought to change the Kashmiri ethos. Her spiritual wisdom, which many indigenous saints shared, can renew people's faith through piety and tolerance and enlighten them far above the self-created barriers that can divide humanity. As a humanist, Laleshwari preached a pure religious culture for Kashmir, one that was based on high moral values and endorsed communal harmony. She advocated for the masses to rise above the narrow bonds of religion and theology and to practice humanity. Her message is as relevant today as it was centuries ago, and her legacy lives on in the hearts of all who seek to build a more peaceful and just world, regardless of their background or beliefs.

J. L. Bhat, in *Lal-Ded Revisited*, shared thoughts of Pt. Anand Lal Kaul, who remarked *Vaakhs* of Laleshwari are simply pearls and diamonds and gems of the purest ray serene of Kashmir literature. They are current coins of quotations, a volume packed in a single saying. They touch Kashmiri's ear as well as the chord of his heart. They are freely quoted as maxims on appropriate occasions in conversation, having molded the national mind and set up a national ideal (31).

Conclusion

Kashmir is called *Resh-Vaer*, the Valley of Saints. Laleshwari, a yogini with spiritual insights, authored poems that sought to provide a purpose to life by referencing spirituality. Her *vaakhs* elucidated the terse principles of Kashmir *Saivism* in a manner understandable to the masses of her time and for generations to come. She posited that pure consciousness is the fountainhead of the universe and that self-realisation enables one to identify oneself with pure consciousness, leading to an immediate awareness of the Ultimate Truth. The veil of ignorance must be lifted to reveal a

person's true nature. At the individual level, human consciousness experiences the world as distinct from itself, and man's task is to reclaim pure consciousness, in which he is one with the Ultimate Truth. Laleshwari's spiritual accomplishment was that of a *jivanmukta* due to the dissolution of ego consciousness in the Ultimate Truth, resulting in her independence from external circumstances and her discovery of inner joy and happiness.

Consequently, reflecting on her experiences, everything appeared to Laleshwari as pure consciousness (*Siva Pramata*). This realisation led her to believe that the ultimate purpose of life is to pursue pure consciousness, to recognise the divine within all of us and merge with it, making life meaningful. The key to achieving this is to know oneself as "All the joy, all the love, all the peace, all the happiness we ever desired, is within us (Chaudhri 253) as pure consciousness, which is the Ultimate Truth."

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Analysing Paradigms of Pain in the BBC Adaptation of Sally Rooney's *Normal People*

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Abstract: Throughout the literary canon, the theme of love has been employed to understand the anomalies of a text's characters and its writing period. Love has been represented in multiple shades: love that is undying, mistaken, obsessed and also unrequited. A shade of love that defines the relationship dynamics of the youth today is love that is painful. Young love and the pain that is its antithesis is also a tried and tested trope. In all its forms, love brings forth a transformation of both individuals and eras. The stories that ensue serve as an allegory to understand generational trends. Be it Austen's novels, where the rise of the gentry is focused, or Marquez's web of love triangles, where a continent's evolution through an epidemic is recorded.

This paper suggests that in all its forms, the transformations brought upon by love lead to a definite shift and settling of the problematised individuals and eras. Still, the painful young love today is elusive of any resolution. The paper is an attempt at understanding how this narrative ties into the working of the young adult minds as depicted in the visually provoking BBC miniseries adaptation of Sally Rooney's *Normal People*, where growing up becomes an exercise to exorcise the traumas of the past and present expectations. Drawing from Søren Kierkegaard's existentialism, Nietzsche's nihilism as portrayed through the cinematography, Plato's allegory of the cave and John Rawls' veil of ignorance, the paper delves into the self-sabotaging mechanisms that the young protagonists of the series normalise and employ in search of their identity and unravel the threads that sew the collective tapestry of the mind of young adults today.

Keywords: Young, Adult, Pain, Identity, Class, Mind

Introduction

An interesting term that has gained currency among the youth of today's generation is the word 'gaslighting'. The dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster had chosen 'gaslighting' as its word of the year in 2022, with BBC reports suggesting that searches for the word had spiked by 1,740% in 2022 on the dictionary publisher's website. Merriam-Webster defines the word as follows:

1. Psychological manipulation of a person, usually over an extended period of time, causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, the uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator.
2. The act or practice of grossly misleading someone, especially for one's own advantage.

Etymologically, the word 'gaslight' was used to describe a type of lamp that used a jet of burning gas to light up, particularly used as streetlights in Victorian-era Britain and the continent. The prevailing definition of the term originates from a 1938 thriller play written by Patrick Hamilton titled *Gas Light*, in which characters are engaged in deceiving or rather 'gaslighting' each other under the symbolic presence of flickering gaslights. With further reproductions of the play and eventual screen adaptations, the most notable being the 1944 cinematic adaptation with the same title starring Charles Boyer and Ingrid Bergman, the word came to embody its present meaning.

Sally Rooney's *Normal People* delves into the workings of the young adult mind and presents a narrative that explores the normalising the gaslighting of young, seemingly ordinary people by each other driven by paradigms of pain rooted in human conditions. Rooney questions the perceived realities of the collective society by problematising the grand narratives that encapsulate the ideas of love and identity. The serialised visual representation of the text and the symbolic interpretation of the state of the protagonists, confused lovers Connell and Marianne, vividly dissect through the constructs of cultural configuration to reveal the absurdity of existence and the hurt that everyone

hosts within themselves. In problematising the understanding of the youth and its peculiarities, Rooney unsettles the receivers of her text by introducing the receiver to a similar state of unease experienced by the characters. For this, the narrative structure undertakes the perception of pain as the core motif of the text, where pain is represented as not only painful but also pleasing and a defence mechanism, eventually probing into the world of sadism and masochism.

We understand that sadism is deriving pleasure from someone else's pain, and masochism is deriving pleasure from one's own pain. The relationship dynamics of Gen Z friendships and affairs are bizarrely based on hurting oneself and each other, either physically or emotionally. The text represents this as the two young protagonists traverse the precarious time of high school life. In school, people assert their presence by belittling the black sheep of the lot, bullying them or hurting them by making inappropriate remarks. The bully seems to attain a sense of control or vindication by doing this because they are hurt by the confidence of the black sheep to act as a lone wolf somewhere within. Marianne faces the brunt of this at home and school for being smart and evolving into a distant and detached adult. If a member of the school pack seems to deviate from doing the ethical thing, then the group at large feel hurt because somehow doing the right thing seems wrong to this generation. Connell receives the dejected glares of his friends when he comforts Marianne and decides to move to Dublin to pursue a better education and future. Inflicting hurt on others for whatever hurt they are going through is the only process that makes sense. Friends will gaslight each other into staying in a friendship, even if it's clear that the group's purpose has been served or it is time to move on.

Similarly, in Gen Z romantic relationships, it has become increasingly difficult to avoid hindrances in each other's ambitions, as their partnership is defined as toxic. Partners hurt each other by engaging and uttering things that push them to despicable conditions, all the while being aware that it will hurt them both. They are hurt due to their churlish behaviours, but they will still hold on to limit each other. It is like they deny amputating an outgrown decaying piece of flesh while being aware that the infection is steadily spreading in the body. They will hurt each other to control one

another by making the other compliant, docile and dependent on them. All of this develops a cycle of inflicting pain on one another in return for being hurt themselves. Rooney brings into the limelight the absurdity of such ceaseless relationships. The only justification for sustaining such a pernicious cycle is that the certainty of pain and the ways to deal with it enables young adults to escape the uncertainty of the future, leading to a nihilistic existence. Gen Z thus derives its identity from this cycle, this constant clash between sadism and masochism.

Connell

I think I thought if I . . . moved here . . . I'd fit in better . . . meet more like-minded people, but that just hasn't . . . I left Carriclea thinking I could have a different life. But I . . . I hate it here and . . . I can never go back. (Episode 10 00:20:30 – 00:21:16)

Freudian psychology dictates that the self is unknown to the unconscious mind, and the innate impulses which manifest our discernible actions stay imperceptible to us. In *Normal People*, the protagonists exhibit such sudden impulses that form their social actions of self-discovery and self-preservation. In this oscillating paradigm of dual existence, where they persevere to balance between the tightrope of candid expression and defence mechanism, they occupy a precarious position of uncertainty, which leaves their present relationships and efforts unhinged. The response to such a painful existence that Connell and Marianne develop contrasts one another, but they both lead to the same road of self-sabotage.

Connell's response to life is a brand of mute stoicism that warrants silent suffering, often leading to emotional turmoil. His stoic behaviour is his attempt to conform to the social norms in a congenial manner (which gains him people's validation) to conceal his ill-begotten vulnerabilities rising from the inhibitions that restrict him from truly cherishing anything. His qualms originate from his misgivings regarding his family's working-class position in the closely-knit Irish society. The reservation, rooted in this, makes Connell susceptible to feeling society's gaze, which haunts his consciousness in the form of societal expectations from a gifted and intelligent working-class boy. His stoicism is a veil to shield his excessive self-conscious and demure personality.

Although Connell cherishes the family values that support him, he also wishes to shed them to escape his limitations. He faces a similar dilemma when he has to leave the small town of Sligo behind to pursue higher academics at Trinity College, Dublin. He knows what he wants and understands that going to Dublin will lead to a brighter future, but he still harbours qualms about leaving his friends and mother behind. In the process, he regresses into a stoic stupor of disassociation with people.

The aftermath of the 2008 Irish recession, which serves as the text's socio-political background, becomes evident primarily through Connell's financial insecurity. The class struggle in Irish society is represented through the underlying tension that steadily grows between Connell and Marianne's relationship dynamics. Connell's sense of identity is strongly linked to his financial struggles and the sustenance of a Sisyphean persona perpetually engaged in a herculean task. This can be observed in the manner in which, despite being academically gifted and agreeable to people, Connell downplays his intelligence and charisma to constantly try to disassociate with people and escape bonding at an extensive level.

The class struggle becomes more palpable, and the class difference is heightened in the tense transactions between Connell and Marianne, where the former always broods over avoiding situations, leading to future anxious hindsight. The causal reason for this can be traced to the employment of Connell's mother in Marianne's house as a maid. He carries a silent chip on the shoulder that mauls his consciousness whenever he encounters Marianne as a peer in school and college and as his love interest in social spaces. The dynamics of this are also represented through the disparity in the quality of life made available to both of them by their working and single mothers. The class tension is evident in how both the parent explicitly exhibits their inferior and superior positions, respectively. While his relationship with Marianne does become a catalyst for self-discovery, there is always the lingering feeling of internalised biases and the devaluation of self-worth. Marianne sees the end of their brief but happy romance as a result of Connell's reservations;

he views it as an affirmation of his unavoidable embarrassment of their class difference, in both cases eluding individual and narrative resolution.

Analysing Connell's representation through the lens of Søren Kierkegaard's three stages of existence, we can surmise that there is a distinct existential despair, an inner turmoil that brings out the emptiness in Connell, which is further accentuated following the suicide of his friend back home. The inconsistencies in his romantic rendezvous with Marianne, which prolongs even after college can be observed as the aesthetic stage of existence surrounded by intense impulses of self-discovery, the irresolute resolution of which ushers in the ethical stage of developing an objective approach to circumstances where he decides to leave behind his adolescent connections and move ahead in life. However, in the third religious stage, where the individual usually seeks the deeper meaning of existence, Connell descends into a state of confusion abetted by the shock of the sudden demise of his friend, for which he feels partly responsible for leaving him and all behind to move into the city.

Connell's lack of an individual identity becomes agonisingly visible in bits and pieces: His insecure orbiting of Marianne's path whilst being vague about his feelings for her, the curated obsequious mannerisms rising from a crawler mentality which wrecks his consciousness, and the self-imposed isolation from truly preserving relationships. The systematic suppression of emotions cramped into smaller and smaller places within, in a methodical attempt to keep his excruciating struggler personality afloat, leads him to face Kierkegaard's existential paradox that eventually everything leads to regrets, no matter what choices one makes or path one follows. Connell's pregnant mind thus painfully cracks with the burden of his guilty consciousness of never living and connecting to the fullest. The weight which he carries around like an albatross around his neck prompts him to state as follows when subjected to clinical sessions for treating depression:

I don't really click with a lot of people. I struggle with that, actually . . . in school, I definitely felt that feeling of isolation or whatever. But, um . . . People seem to like me . . . and . .

. here, [in Dublin] I don't think . . . people like me that much. (Episode 10 00:18:12 – 00:19:04)

Marianne

We're not done here. . . Don't move. . . You're worthless. You're nothing.

(Episode 9 00:06:27-00:06:50)

A recurring phenomenon can be observed in literary texts that seek to dissect the layers of society and present forth the omnipresent conflicted state of affairs. This phenomenon is responsible for revealing the cynicism of a social system that insists on curbing individuality for the cause of the perceived greater and moral good. It is the presence of the modern protagonist. Marianne occupies a similar position in *Normal People*. She is a protagonist in a text authored and set in the 21st century, but she is a modern protagonist owing to archetypal similarities she shares with past fictional modernist figures.

Similar to James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, Marianne faces the pangs of sexual desires. Similar to D.H. Lawrence's Paul Morel, she oscillates between lovers while getting hurt in the process, and similar to W. Somerset Maugham's Peter Carey, Marianne is detached from the family as she carries a physical impediment (in her case-masochism). They are all social pariahs in their way of looking through the world's hypocrisy and occupying a precarious position of residing in the grey area of society, i.e., being alone and not belonging to any social group. In their effort to transcend the agonising duplicity of their community, they tend to embark on a voluntary exile from their social milieu, oftentimes experiencing epiphanic episodes. These characters attain resolution in their quest as they settle for a stoic approach to initiate their process of self-actualisation. This is where Marianne differs from them. She does not attain any resolution to the question of existence through her quest. She rather finds a cycle of pain as an inevitable end encompassing herself and the people around her in their life transactions. In contrast, Marianne is rather too smart and above trivial things to even barely notice the very existence of such a cycle. But, when she does, she is faced with an existential crisis of what is right and wrong.

Compared to Connell's idiosyncrasies that can be characterised as being conformist, Marianne consistently exhibits an iconoclastic temperament that becomes persona non grata within the small society of County Sligo. Unlike Connell, her decision to leave behind her family and the small town for Dublin is not marred with hesitations. The abnormal hostility that haunts her family and erupts in the form of domestic violence and gaslighting each other to normalise being environed in such an abusive state made the decision all the easier. The initial break-up with Connell served as added motivation to an already resolute decision to move out of the well. Similar to Connell, the transition from the country to the city again unleashes Marianne's subsequent stages of existence.

Faced with the already erratic household situation and the obtuse school system, which comes forth as inconsiderate towards eccentric minds within a small town marked with class tensions, Marianne's aesthetic stage of existence can be noted to be one of rebellious in nature driven by inquisitiveness to challenge the conventions. Her sardonic behaviour in questioning the position of authority in school and in her house, combined with her mordant humour in dealing with her peers, gives her a contemptuous air to an otherwise wounded and impressionable consciousness. It is this bleak state of affairs that fills her with an ache to feel passionate, which fuels her desire to know, understand and make love to Connell, breaking the class hierarchies. The separation from County Sligo and Connell does not bring an end to Marianne's aesthetic stage yet. She ventures forth in oscillating between several romantic relationships and academic prudence accompanied by an enigmatic aura of ambiguity. The ethical stage comes forth with Marianne witnessing the triviality of human existence through the tumultuous human relationships that come her way, observing that, at the most intrinsic level, everything leads to nothing. This nothingness envelops Marianne's consciousness as she proceeds towards the religious stage of existence and discovers that every path leads to pain and regret. But this is where she differs from Kierkegaard's doctrine and Connell's response. Unlike Connell, she does not yield to a mental breakdown, nor does she identify with Kierkegaard's opinion of God and religion as the only sane path to overcome the existential paradox of perpetual and painful regrets. She accepts the painful existence of humans not with the spiritual

hope for salvation but with the intent to relish the very pain that exudes from existence. She replaces theological submission with that of submission to pain.

Marianne is the only one who truly unleashes the inherent core of mankind. To live in a hedonic manner and revel in pain. She is brave enough to face the human reality and accept it all. Rooting from her family's abusive domestic paradigm and her own turbulent relations, she chooses to embrace the perpetual presence of pain in its most crude and human form by eventually succumbing to masochism. Her practice of pain is intensified when she sees Connell, the person closest to her, deviate from his stoic manner to dwell in a depressive state of painful regrets. Her painful existence is cold and detached, symbolised by her move to Sweden, historically an inaccessible and hostile part of the continent, which she describes in her correspondence with Connell as follows:

I feel so not myself at the moment. Not in a bad way. I just feel outside of my own life somehow. . . And there's something comforting about it. Something good about feeling sort of numb. Detached from it all. Does that make sense? (Episode 9 00:06:58-00:07:32)

Her sexuality is a symbolic representation and fruition of it all. In her attempt to revel in pain, she also breaks the archetypal structure of female protagonists whose resolution to romantic and worldly pain/humiliation is oftentimes suicide. She breaks the curse by choosing to live and not die like Ophelia or Hedda Gabler. Instead of struggling against the pain, she gives in to the pain, and in her attempt to explore the pits of human humiliation, she loses the ability to love without suffering. Her existence and quest lead to no resolution of her hatred for her family, for herself and her love of Connell. She finds pain in all spheres and resides in the perpetual cycle of self-sabotage.

Writer to Viewer

While the book reads like a report of the characters' lives, the screen offers a much more intimate view. The serialised cinematic representation of the plot brings to life the recurring gaps in communication. Miscommunication, or the lack of it, results from the consistent individual and collective crises the characters face throughout the plot. The audio-visual medium of the text brings to the foreground a paradox that contests the very medium of storytelling. The interesting thing to

observe is how the text undergoes spatial temporality as it is transformed in the form of motion pictures that make the nihilistic environment palpable explicitly on the surface of the text, i.e., the faces and body language of the characters as observed by the viewers. In contrast, the book's implicit manner of plot revelation renders a readerly effect compared to the screenplay adaptation, where the series transforms into a writerly text. In the case of the book, the sterile readers remain a dormant absorber of the reports of the characters' lives, where the internal emotions are narrated for them. Whereas, in the series, the viewer is turned into an observant and sensitive voyeur of a very intimate and seemingly real union, who takes notes of the fidgety silences of, and awkward sex among, the characters enveloped within a palpable tension over their futures.

The paradoxes of the characters' lives are made more perceptible as episodes are concluded in the series by playing cultural and time-specific soundtracks as the credits are being rolled. These soundtracks, almost all by contemporary Irish and English artists, take up a characteristic of their own, as they act as the creator's box of commentary upon the events depicted in the particular episodes, performing the binding functions of an epilogue and encouraging diverse viewer interpretation. This effect is achieved as the author herself becomes the screenwriter, ironically following Roland Barthes' theory, for the screenplay adaptation to orchestrate the 'death of the author' to bestow interpretive liberty to the viewer.

Connell and Marianne occupy different positions in Nietzsche's master-slave morality paradigm. Connell internalises the slave mentality, whereas Marianne breaks through the moral boundaries to attain her highest power and splendour while encouraging sadism in her partners as an act of breaking the conventions. A lot of this is emphasised by the cinematography of the text that heightens the underlying nihilism which the characters embody against the world's vastness. The various camera shots project the characters unhinged against their surrounding:

1. The wide-angle shot juxtaposes the characters against their physical environment.

This shot is used to portray Connell flustered in the halls of Trinity College, feeling

uncomfortable and small in his new world. Also, Marianne always looks small and petite in her large house compared to her family.

3. The off-centred shot presents the duality of a particular situation or circumstance within a specific scene. It is used prominently to display Marianne and Connell's different positions intertwined. For instance, when Connell arrives uninvited to Marianne's house party seeking help after being bloodied and mugged. The contrasting social positions and experiences are reflected in these frames.
4. The shallow depth of field shot shifts everything out of focus to let the viewer concentrate on the characters and their immediate surrounding. This shot can be witnessed when the viewers find Connell wandering around heartbroken in Sligo and Dublin and also when Marianne seemingly gets awkward among peers and looks vulnerable with her lovers while engaging in masochism and giving in to the carnal submission to nothingness.
5. The numerous behind-the-head tracking shots present forth the point of view of an omnipresent stalker who is engaged in keeping a tab of the character's movements. This also brings forth an experiential element in the voyeurism the viewers engage in. For instance, this shot follows Marianne entering the raffle party at school or Connell entering Trinity College for the first time. The viewers/voyeurs become a part of the character's journey, and the negation of the facial expressions of the characters in these shots facilitates diverse interpretations.

All of these independent fragments of visual representation organically come together to form a keen sense of relatability, which is established between the characters represented and the viewers perceiving the representation, as contemporary insights of being powerless against the superstructures of society amalgamate into the picture of a real human relationship on screen. Thus turning the episodic medium of serialisation into an experiential form driven forward by both the object and the observer.

Conclusion

Love, young and passionate love, is a reckless yet intriguing way for a story to begin. Sally Rooney's *Normal People* puts love under scrutiny and finds love that is painful to be both agonising and healing, binding yet emancipating, that leaves permanent marks. Connell and Marianne's passionate relationship of miscommunications and blunders, and yet utmost respect for each other, forms a very complicated, sometimes unlikable pair that often holds a mirror up to the receiver of the text. They reside in a Platonic dimension of paradoxes. They both feel reality to be abstract, and the essence of life eludes them in a realm of idealism. The narrator thus states that:

Marianne had the sense that her real life was happening somewhere very far away, happening without her, and she didn't know if she would ever find out where it was or become part of it. (Rooney 11)

Again, it is because they are prisoners of Plato's allegorical cave, who fail to see the true nature of each other, that they begin to realise the limits to conventional morality. They occupy the paradoxical paradigm where they have chosen to leave the cave and see the world for themselves and yet long for the comfort of the cave—the presence of one another. Marianne thus ponders:

He probably won't come back . . . Or he will, differently. What they have now, they can never have back again. [Yet], You should go, she says. (Rooney 273)

But the serialised medium of motion pictures leaves the viewers wanting more. This is where the writer hands the reader a stencil to fill out the gaps in the almost-done canvas. The shallow depth of field shot shifts everything out of focus to let the viewer concentrate on the final scenes, bringing in the calm in the chaos.

Now, consider how the characters would choose the principles of justice behind a veil of ignorance, originating from a natural or original position as proposed by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Marianne and Connell come from different social backgrounds and have different views on politics, morality, and identity. Their relationship ensues as a result of the pre-existing social contract of class divide, both acknowledging they met only because of class differences. Therefore,

they initially shy away from candid expression. They both call each other “. . . the smartest person I know of.” But never to each other’s faces, which could cause a shift in the comfortable power dynamics in their strange relationship. But they eventually succeed in attaining social justice even with the absence of the veil of ignorance. Thus, the text reflects upon the logic of their transactions:

He brought her goodness like a gift, and now it belongs to her. Meanwhile, his life opens out before him in all directions at once. They've done a lot of good for each other. (Rooney 273)

This is where the receiver of the text must determine whether Marianne and Connell have been liberated from the painfulness of pain to move towards its pleasures or if pain and nullity persist for perpetuity in this tale of love and pain intertwined together.

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Exploring the Memory, Trauma and Survival of a Yazidi Girl in Nadia Murad's *The Last Girl*

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Abstract: The people of Iraq have witnessed the horrors of war and the trauma of violence. Trauma reverberates throughout life on both the body and the mind. Witnessing multiple traumatic events such as genocide, disappearance and loss of family members, abduction, torture, humiliation, rape, and human trafficking leaves un-healing wounds on the human psyche. Nadia Murad, the winner of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for her book *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity and My Fight against the Islamic State*, grapples with the physical and mental aftershocks of extreme trauma. This autobiography is not just a story of a single woman who suffers as a sex slave at the hands of the ISIS militants but is evidence of the incessant difficulties that the Yazidi people have faced for ages. Published in 2017, the text reveals the atrocities that the perpetrators of ISIS fundamentalists leashed upon the people belonging to the Yazidi community. Forced into the human trafficking system, Murad experiences inhuman treatment when she is “sold or given as a gift again, and again raped and beaten, then sold or given to another militant, and raped and beaten by him” (Murad 161). The objective of this paper is to unravel the trauma of the protagonist by using relevant trauma theories.

Keywords: Abduction, Rape, Sex Slave, Survival, Trauma, Violence

The word ‘trauma’ has its origin in the ancient Greek language, implying ‘wound’. The Greeks used this term only to point towards physical wounds; however, nowadays, this term has evolved, and it means psychological as well as emotional wounds. Herbert Page (1862-1927) and John Ericksen (1818-1896) first described the effects of trauma on humans. Initially, the consequences of trauma were mainly associated with the victims of railway accidents and were called “railway spines” (Keller

1597). The concept of trauma as physical injury (or wound) then extended its scope and included mental ailments resulting from the experiences of fear. Three different types of traumas have been identified since the Victorian age. Psychic trauma during the Victorian age, war trauma after the First World War and sexual trauma in the modern age were experienced by people.

Bonnie Burstow (1945-2020), in the paper titled “Towards a Radical Understanding of Trauma and Trauma Work”, says that “Trauma is not a disorder but a reaction to a kind of wound. It is a reaction to profoundly injurious events and situations in the real world and, indeed, to a world in which people are routinely wounded” (1293). It is caused due to any accident that a person finds emotionally or physically harmful, threatening and debilitating. Trauma can be a result of an unhappy childhood, exile, terror, war, sexual abuse, abduction, rape, or even death of somebody. Experiences of trauma can initiate strong physical and emotional reactions, which can have a long-lasting effect after the event. Ruth Leys (b. 1939), in her book *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000), defines trauma as “an experience that immersed the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what happened” (9).

Trauma, according to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), is seen as an incursion of excitations. It is a kind of breach or puncture. Freud states that the word trauma refers mainly to a mental injury rather than a physical injury. Trauma acts as a double wound (physical and psychological). In his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1961), Freud describes trauma as:

any excitations from the outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead— the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can then be disposed of. (23-24)

Freud believes that the ego acts as a shield or a layer that protects the psyche from external stimuli. When this protective layer breaks, there is an inflow of many excitations, which results in the circulation of energy that needs to be reduced to restore the pleasure principle. This breaking of the

protective layer results in a strong feeling of fear, and this fear is termed 'neurosis' by Freud. When a person cannot deal with these feelings of fear and worry, the ego develops a pathological defence, which is called 'repression.' For Freud, trauma acts as a triggering factor in neurosis, and he terms it as "traumatic neurosis." Traumatic neurosis is a psychological disturbance which arises after an intense emotional shock. Siegfried Zepf and Florian D. Zepf, in their paper titled "Trauma and Traumatic Neurosis: Freud's Concepts Revisited" (2008), define traumatic neurosis as "the psychological consequences of an immediate reaction to the shock and/or somatic disturbance such as railway collisions, landslides and similar events" (89).

Freud also argues that trauma is connected to "repetition compulsion." He opines that, basically, people suffer from trauma due to reminiscences or memories of traumatic events. It is the memory which makes an event hysterical. He views trauma as a supporting factor for neurosis. Even in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), he points out that the victims of trauma unconsciously tend to recreate scenes or conditions of their trauma. This happens only because the person cannot respond to the traumatic events because of their intensity. Freud further states that "the dreams occurring during traumatic neurosis have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright" (7).

Cathy Caruth's (b. 1995) origination of the concept of trauma is drawn from Freud's psychoanalysis. In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), she focuses on the components of memory while defining trauma. For Caruth, trauma is a structural phenomenon. She describes it as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucination and other intrusive phenomena" (11). She delves deep into the symptoms of trauma and reaches the conclusion that the inseparability of trauma is tied to neurological function. She argues that trauma "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature-the way it was precisely not known in the first instance-returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4).

Traumatic events are shocking and can emotionally affect an individual. In war zones, people get exposed to various traumatic events. Such exposure to traumatic events can result in mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Both men and women suffer during wartime, but arguably, women and young girls are subjected to more cruel forms of sexual violence, such as rape, sexual slavery, and forced prostitution. Raping of women and gang rapes by the soldiers is a very common practice in the war zones. It is used as a weapon during the time of war. It is not an act arising out of sexual need, but a woman is raped in order to dominate or to show her lack of control over her body and sexuality. Moreover, the rape of a woman belonging to a different religion (as was the case during Partition) is seen as an attack on the community as she embodies honour. Her rape stigmatised the entire community. Rape results in devastating effects on familial, psychological, physical, and social space, including genital and non-genital injuries experienced by women. Victims of rape and forced prostitution suffer from long-term psychological effects. Rape, as Susan Brownmiller points “is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep women in the state of fear” (6). Sexual violence is used as a means by the ISIS militants to spread fear and to compel people to leave an area. They rape women to unleash terror and force them to convert into jihadists after embracing the extreme form of Islam. Most of the women who are raped suffer from Rape Trauma Syndrome. This term was coined by Lynde Lytle Holmstrom and Ann Wolbert Burgess in 1974 to describe the behavioural and psychological reactions of rape. The stress disorder that these victims undergo manifests itself in multiple ways. Paul Giannelli, in his article “Rape Trauma Syndrome” (1997), defines these disorders as “fear and anxiety, depression, social maladjustment, and sexual dysfunction” (272).

Nadia Murad (b.1993), an Iraqi human rights activist who received the Nobel Peace Prize for her autobiographical novel *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity and My Fight against the Islamic States* (2018), is a victim of abduction, rape, forced prostitution and sex slavery. She shares her personal and collective experience of the Iraqi Yazidi women. She is a young woman who has

witnessed and endured the trauma of unbelievable humiliation, embarrassment, and cruelty because of her enslavement by ISIS. She describes the psychological trauma which she undergoes during the three months of her capture. Her life turns upside down as she is forced to witness the brutal murder of her brothers. Her life becomes even more traumatic as she is traded from one terrorist to another. She writes, “Every second with the ISIS was part of slow, painful death...of the body and the soul” (119).

Belonging to a small ethnic, religious minority group known as Yazidi, Nadia and other women of her community are considered as infidels. These women are oppressed and marginalized in different ways; they are not respected in their families as well as society. Even before the attack by the militants, the Yazidi women did not lead a good life. They are denied equal rights even in their own families and in the Yazidi society. Women are not supposed to say anything against their husbands. Nadia’s mother was her father’s second wife, as his first wife had died, and he wanted to have another woman to take care of his children. Later, her father marries for the third time, and her mother has no other choice but to accept her co-wife. Even in *The Pakistani Bride* (1990), Bapsi Sidhwa, through the portrayal of Zaitoon, shows that women in Islamic society are considered the property of men. When her husband Sakhi touches Zaitoon on their wedding night, she feels uncomfortable and hesitates; Sakhi at this point says, “You are my lady. I will explain you to follow me!” (172-173).

Nadia Murad also underscores the fact that women in Islamic societies do not even have any rights to their children. She writes, “Divorce took my sister Dimal’s children away. In Yazidi society, as in the rest of the Iraq, women have fewer rights when a marriage ends, no matter what happened to end it” (230). Women are restricted to the households, and men hold the powerful position in society. Murad continues, “Any woman in Iraq, no matter her religion, had to struggle for everything. Seats in parliament, reproductive rights, and positions at these were the results of battles. Men were content to stay in power, so power had to be taken from them by strong women” (168). Looking at texts such as *Stoning of Soraya M.* (1990) by Freidoune Sahebjam, *Daughters of Arabia* (2004) by

Jean Sasson, and *For the Love of a Son* (2010) by Jean Sasson, it is clear that men completely control the lives of women in Islam. Women's lack of control over their own bodies and sexuality is displayed when they are raped by men.

The suffering of the Yazidi women doubles after the ISIS militants attack them. On the one hand, they are subjugated on the basis of gender; on the other, they are discriminated against on the basis of their identity as Yazidis. They are not even treated as human beings. The ISIS militants have their own interpretation of the 'Koran' according to which they could rape Yazidi women as raping a slave woman is not a sin. Nadia recalls and narrates how one of the militants shouted at her, "You are an infidel, a sabiyya, and you belong to the Islamic State now, so get used to it now" (127). Nadia remembers how she turned numb with pain when she was raped for the first time. She says, "The rape was the worst part. It stripped us of our humanity and made thinking about the future- returning to Yazidi society, marrying, having children, being happy...impossible. We wished they could kill us" (176). These incidents of rape and sexual slavery are buried deep down in Nadia's memory. This relationship between memory and mind becomes very important when it comes to discussing sexual violence against women. Laurence defines memory in the context of trauma as "anything but a photographic record of experience; it is a roadway full of potholes, badly in need of repair worked day and night by revisionist crews. What is registered is highly selective and thoroughly transformed by interpretation and semantic encoding at the moment of experience" (Kirmayar 167). Traumatic memories are thus open to reconstruction of events.

Another traumatic event that is stored in Nadia's memory is that women are not only raped but are also considered commodities or property and are sold and gifted to the militants. Women are sexually objectified and treated as objects to be valued for their use by others. Sandra Lee Bartky (1935-2016), in her book *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (1990), explains that "Sexual objectification occurs when a woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire" (36). They are swapped among these militants. Nadia captures the pain in the following words:

“We would be bought at the market, or given as a gift to a new recruit or a high . . . we were desirable enough and not yet dead” (161).

The ISIS militants use female bodies to gratify their lust. Adriana Cavarero (b.1947), an Italian philosopher and feminist thinker, comments, “A suffering body occupies the centre of the scene, a body reduced to a totally available object... and life, the former between the wound and healing care” (31). Women are tortured to such an extent that they are forced to bear their pain silently. When the militants rape them brutally, they lie down like senseless objects. They are subjected to even more brutal behaviour if they shout or if they resist against the militants.

Nadia details the way she is treated while enslaved. She says, “Every Islamic State member treated me cruelly, but I remember a few small differences between the men who abused me...Hajji Salman hit me if I tried to close my eyes. For him it was not enough to just rape me-he humiliated me as often as he could, spreading honey on his toes and making me lick it off or forcing me to dress up for him” (185). She portrays how young girls are treated as objects by the militants. The girls are forcefully taken in the large buses. Even while travelling, they cannot feel relaxed. Nadia shares how “the militants touched [them] anywhere they wanted, running their hands over [their] breasts and legs as if they were animals” (137). A militant named Abu Batat abuses the girls in the bus and threatens that if they shout or scream, then he will kill them. Nadia reveals how the lives of women and young girls turn into a living nightmare after being abducted. She narrates, “It was clear by now that I didn’t belong to the skinny militant Hajji Salman or to any particular man . . . This was my life now” (192).

Yazidi girls and young women lose their identity as they are transported and sold to different parts of Iraq and Syria. They are even gifted to rich sheikhs and high-ranking officials. The militants use physical violence as a means to silence these women. She shares one of her several travails where Nafah, an ISIS militant, tortures her. “Nafah pushed the lit cigarette into my shoulder, pressing it down through the fabric of the dresses and shirts I had layered on that morning, until it hit my skin and went out. The smell of burned fabric and skin was horrible, but I tried not to scream in pain. Screaming only got you into more trouble” (127).

Nadia reveals the mental and physical assault that the women are subjected to. She narrates an incident where “One girl has her hands and legs tied when her captor raped her and another was raped when she slept” (195). Women used to smear ash on their faces so that they looked ugly and men do not get attracted towards them. They scratch their bodies to make themselves unattractive to the male captors. The girls even “penetrate [themselves] with the bottle to no longer be a virgin” (162) as the captors prefer raping virgin girls. Women become very helpless in the hands of the militants as they do not have the voice of their own in their lives. After being raped, women become so traumatised that they start blaming themselves and start looking down upon themselves for whatever is going on in their lives. Such self-castigating tendencies belittle them in their own eyes, thus giving a strong jolt to their dignity as humans. They are even scared of looking at themselves in the mirror. “Inside the bathroom, I splashed some water on my face and arms. A mirror hung over the sink, but I kept my gaze downward. I couldn’t look at myself. I suspected that I already wouldn’t recognise the girl who looked back” (132-133). They are forced to obey the orders of the militants and are not allowed to question them. These militants even forced the slave women to convert their religion.

Nadia gives a heart-touching depiction of her life while she was living with Haji Salman. He orders her to stay with him as his wife, cook for him, clean his house, put on dresses, and wear makeup. She follows all his instructions, but he never calls her his wife instead, he calls her a ‘sabayya’ (a sex slave). She even records the experiences of her niece Katherine, who is also tortured by the militants. Katherine is taken over by Dr. Islam and is forced to take pictures with him and she always has a pleasant smile on her face. The militants even restricted women, and they had to follow a particular dress code. “All the women were completely covered in black abayas and niqabs. ISIS had made it illegal for a woman to leave home uncovered or alone, so they floated through the streets, almost invisible” (133).

Yazidi women are not only ill-treated by the Islamic State militants but are also emotionally abused, starved and beaten by the ‘true wives’ of the militants as they are jealous of these ‘sabayas’. Murad calls these ‘true wives’ as “female terrorists” (154) as they are responsible for “taking starring

roles” in the physical and mental abuse of the innocent Yazidi women. Yazidi women have such traumatic experiences that they wish to die. Some of them attempt to “light themselves on fire” (129), and some even try to commit suicide “by cutting through their veins in their wrists” (162).

All the victims and the survivors react differently to the traumatic incidents that they experience. Unlike other Yazidi women, Nadia wages a war against the horrific traumatic events and manages to overcome all the negative effects of physical and sexual assault. The Yazidi women are silenced as the militants instill fear in them that even if they escape and return to their own people, they won't be accepted there as well. Hajji Salman warns Nadia, “Even if you make it home, your father or your uncle will kill you. You are no longer a virgin, and you are a Muslim” (176). Despite so many threats from the militants, Nadia makes an attempt to escape but unfortunately is caught by the guards and is then gang raped until she becomes unconscious. According to Michel Foucault (1926-1984), memory is considered as an act of resistance and Nadia here is an example who uses her memory to act against the militants. Foucault points out that “Memory is a very important factor in struggle. If one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism, experiences and their knowledge of previous struggle” (22). Even after enduring so much, she does not give up and gathers courage when she gets a chance to escape again. Naseer, a Sunni man helps Nadia flee to Kurdistan. Both of them start off with a heart stopping journey full of life threats but finally enter into a safe territory. After making a successful attempt to escape, Nadia chooses not to remain silent and dares to speak the unspeakable.

Nadia struggles for her existence and becomes an example of what Charles Darwin (1809-1882) terms as ‘the survival of the fittest’ in his book titled *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Narrating the incidents from the attack by the ISIS, followed by regular rapes and torture, Nadia shows how she gradually adapts to her new living conditions during enslavement and the obstacles that she overcomes until she manages to escape. Kenneth Kalmer (b. 1947) in his book *Surviving the Extremes: A Doctor's Journey to the Limits of Human Endurance* (2004) points out that the “the tools of survival lie in a person's brain” (275). Hope of surviving while accepting the reality of the situation

helps Nadia come out of the clutches of the militants. Her tenacity and resilience result into her safe escape.

In her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1995), Judith Hermann (b.1970) discusses about three different stages of the recovery of the traumatic patients. “The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety; the central task of the second stage is the remembrance and mourning. The central part of the third stage is reconnection with the ordinary life” (155). Nadia is fortunate enough that she experiences social safety when Baba Sheikh commands the Yazidis not to blame the women for being raped and asks them to behave with kindness and empathy with the returning victims. Secondly, Nadia also mourns over the death of her loved ones and on her own tragedy which according to Herman is the second stage of the recovery of a patient from trauma. Following this, Nadia also tries to reconnect with her ordinary life.

Nadia does not only find her voice but she becomes the voice of every woman who has been abused, every Yazidi who is a victim of genocide and every refugee who is left behind. Nadia’s story is what Milan Kundera calls “The struggle of [wo]man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting” (3) in his book titled *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1980). She faces all the hardships, endures emotional trauma, and ultimately overcomes all the obstacles in her life. “Nadia’s spirit is not broken, and her voice will not be muted. Instead, through this book, her voice is louder than ever” (Clooney xi). Being the victim of abduction, repeated rapes, and sexual slavery, the writer has an authentic voice. Being displaced, traumatised, motherless, and migrant, Nadia becomes a representative of encouragement and emancipation for the girls and women who have been raped, abused, and imprisoned by the IS militants. Nadia proves Angela Saini is right when she writes: “Beneath our skin, women bubble with the source of power that even science has yet to fully understand. We are better survivors than men” (web. n,pag). Women are more powerful than men when it comes to life expectancy, longevity, and fighting trauma. Murad in a public speech in Geneva says that “I want to be the Last Girl in the world with a story like mine” (306). She is an extraordinary woman who rises like a phoenix and refuses to accept her circumstances.

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Beyond Borders: Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand*

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Abstract: The paper follows Geetanjali Shree's tale of criss-crossings across borders; borders that partition as much as connect, that cause grievous loss and terrible trauma but also facilitate healing, that becomes the site for reconnecting with the old as also for the forging of new bonds and relationships. Borders are not just points from where things start or end but from where one may move either way... forward and backward. As Shree narrates, her eighty-year-old Ma decides to journey backwards and grows younger/smaller by the day to reach where it had first begun to go wrong. For there, she believes, she can change it back and set things right, as it was or was supposed to be. While expressing the yearning to make the river of time flow backwards, Shree/Ma touches upon almost everything that goes on in the human, non-human, animal, inanimate, mythical, literary, traditional, contemporary, public, private, ordinary, and day-to-day worlds. The paper evaluates how Shree portrays the in-between-spaces of hybridity between opposing cultures, nations, religions, times, genders, and generations, in fact, what is beyond borders, where her protagonist acts out on her right to assume the subject position in the struggle for identity. The paper also explores how literature, history, and the literary writers, historians, and chroniclers of stories become her community, offering support and strength in her struggle to come to terms with loss, injustice, trauma, and tragedy.

Keywords: Borders, Gender, Partition, Violence, Trauma, Identity

The idea of 'borders' has come to be closely associated with discussions around negotiations of identity in multiple settings. Its most common usage is in the context of physical borders between nations/states and their implications on the projection/assertion of cultural and ethnic identities. It is also a popular metaphor for thinking about psychological boundaries individuals/communities

confront/cope with while acquiring/constructing a sense of self. At the same time, it also indicates the presence of social borders based on categories of gender, class, race, caste, sexual orientation, etc., all of which have a huge impact on identity formation and assertion. Since all the above are interlinked, these overlap to impact the invention as well as reinventions of individual as well as collective identities. The idea of borders thus has emerged as a metaphor loaded with meaning and potential for immediate recognition for writers, readers, as well as scholars of literature. The paper attempts to explore the juxtaposition and interlinking of borders as portrayed in the celebrated novelist Geetanjali Shree's remarkable latest novel.

With *Tomb of Sand* (2022), originally in Hindi, *Ret Samadhi* (2018), Geetanjali Shree created history and blurred the boundaries between the 'regional and the global' by winning, along with Daisy Rockwell, her English translator, the prestigious International Booker Prize in 2022. Significantly, the Booker committee honoured it as "an urgent yet engaging protest against the destructive impact of borders whether between religions, countries or genders" (Shree 2022). In addition, the novel touches upon an extensive range of issues. After all, as Shree said in her article, "Writing is Translating is Writing is Translating," literature is always "MORE than its content. It is structure; it is texture; it is cadence; it is rhythm." It is no wonder that *Tomb of Sand* is a tale with layers of themes and meanings and sudden twists and turns, making it quite challenging to summarise. Steadfastly located in hybridity, the novel is about the in-between spaces between opposing cultures, religions, nations, times, generations, genders, human/non-human worlds, and so on. It is writing itself can be considered an act of transgressing, a crossing of borders of language and culture. Even its original version does not maintain the 'purity' of the Hindi language. It has a fair amount of splattering of English, along with several sounds of emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Superbly translated into English, the novel arrived on the global stage to expand readership, winning accolades and literary and critical acclaim. As Shree portrays, there is a constant blurring of borders at multiple levels—between the public and the private, past and present, traditional and modern, human and non-human, male-female, and of the transgender, the mythical, literary, and the real. So much so that none of these

categories can be perceived without being aware of the simultaneous presence of the other; unifying all these elements is the eighty-year-old matriarch who grows younger when she goes beyond several borders. Defying the boundaries and lines of control governing national, cultural, and social practices, Ma unabashedly exercises agency to assume the subject position, thereby demonstrating feminine strength. Since this aspect remains dormant and hidden within, it is generally overlooked and ignored in the male-centric society. The paper focuses on asserting identity by refusing to be a victim of the injustice society and history have traditionally on women.

Tomb of Sand opens with its claim to be a tale that tells itself; it “has a border and women who come and go as they please. Once you have got women and a border, a story can write itself.” (11). After all, borders and boundaries are neither new nor rare phenomena for women. What makes the tale special is that Shree narrativises the discourse of protest through the rebellion of the ageing matriarch, who, for some reason, has decided to stop behaving as per the social conventions. As Shree also acknowledges in an interview, Ma reminds one of Bilkis Dadi of the 2020 Shaheen Bagh anti-Citizenship Act protest. What Bhasha Singh, the journalist (qtd in *The Wire*, 29 September 2020) remarked about Bilkis, “She is dadi, she is nani, she is an Indian woman, beyond the shackles of Hindu and Muslim,” can very well be used to describe Ma. Through Ma's story, Shree voices her response to contemporary life, particularly how the concepts of gender, class, nationality, and religion impact identity.

Ma registers her rebellion as devoid of anger and more as an ordinary and routine progression acting out through different stages. The novel's three sections underscore the three stages of Ma's protest. First, when recently widowed, she begins her protest. She lies facing the wall, with her back turned on everyone, refusing to eat or participate in accordance with her age and status. Her son, Bade, daughter-in-law, Bahu, and two grandsons, Siddharth and the one abroad, Overseas Son (for these are the names Shree gives to these characters), as also the servants are clueless about why she is no longer the caring self-effacing, easy-going, affable mother. They cannot fathom how she has turned so ‘selfish’ to refuse to heed everyone's entreaties or scolding. The second stage is when she

marches out of home on a trail to unravel the disappearance/murder of her old companion Rosie, the transgender, also known as Raza Tailor Master. Third is when she crosses the border to Pakistan to fulfil Rosie's last wishes and reconnect with her past relations. Through this twist in the tale, Shree reveals the trauma that Ma and many others in history were forced to undergo during the partition of India.

Shree thus lets her protagonist roam at will, crisscrossing multiple boundary lines voicing the feminine perspective, which usually is in contradiction with the dominant male view of things. In every section, Ma crosses borders, going beyond the conventionally established way of behaving. This complex tale's three loosely connected sections make for a difficult read. The first section explores the complexities of everyday life, the second the intricate relations of male, female, and transgender characters, while the third is about the shared trauma and loss experienced on both sides of the national border due to the historical event of partition. Shree thus puts together a series of counter-images across time, genders, and cultures to sensitively portray the impact of borders on identity.

The tone of this 'talking' novel, written more as if a narrator is chatting with a listener rather than a writer writing for a reader, is funny, satirical, and playful, almost giving away Shree's glee at a woman deciding to live life on her own terms and not as per the age-old sacrosanct social rules and regulations. Ma merely announces and then follows up in action a series of decisions that reveal her newly claimed freedom. When she finally gets up from her 'samadhi', she announces that she will no longer stay with Bade, the son, and moves in with her daughter, Beti, a journalist and an independent, modern woman living alone. Here, as Shree portrays, the roles get reversed; the daughter who so far has been so mindful of her personal space that she keeps even her boyfriend at a certain distance now is happy to let her mother in her personal space. However, used to staying alone, she finds the jingling sound of bangles coming from Ma's bedroom strangely disturbing. Perhaps this is because it makes her doubt her long-held belief that bangles should jingle only when she moves her hand while writing. In a reversal of sorts, Beti becomes the 'mother' to Ma. With Beti, Ma too begins to change and

recover her true self through simple, inane, everyday actions. She begins to follow her own routine, interacting with residents, servants, sellers, visitors at will, tending to plants, and birds, reconnecting with Rosie/Raza, as well as making friends with KK, Beti's boyfriend. Bade, the son and sibling watches sulking, but being a man, he is conversant only with shouting which he has inherited from his father. Hence, he does not know how to express his feelings in words. Tongue in cheek, Shree writes that Bade worries about Ma because he loves her, but also, because he needs her to sign the cheques. Yet surprisingly, he can talk to the crow who, as also the partridges, parrots, Garuda, bugs, dogs, elephant etc., appear as characters contributing to the action of the novel. The crow provides a glimpse into the feelings of Bade, Ma, and many other characters. In fact, there is an entire chapter devoted to an assembly of crows deliberating on the problem of global warming (374).

The novel thus displays elements of magic realism as Shree constantly blurs the lines between fantasy and reality, demonstrating, in Matthew Strecher's words in another context, "What happens when a highly detailed realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe "(267). In a similar vein, Sanket Kumar Jha locates the novel within feminist metafiction as it, to quote Patricia Waugh's widely quoted definition of metafiction, "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 39). As Shree immerses the tale and the readers in the parallel, human, and non-human worlds, she also connects her writing with the past literary forms, most appropriately used in the tales of the Panchatantra. The crows, parrots, etc., exist alongside the humans as active participants in the action of the novel. Often, Shree uses the birds to jokingly pay her homage to the 'serious' feminist struggles and activism. Notably, there is "an elderly crowess with the heart of a poetess" who "had been one of the most badass feminists of her time, one who had fought and won the rights for mothers to attend meetings and also take part in community decisions" (378). Shree also refers to the centuries old tale of friendship between the Garuda and the Parrot narrated in the epic, Mahabharata. There are references to the great love stories of the region, such as Laila-Majnu, Shireen-Farhad. Shree thus recreates a holistic world, making the readers take notice of the birds and

animals they unconsciously share the world with. As such, she simultaneously connects her novel with multiple past and contemporary literary traditions, choosing thus to roam the hybrid spaces in between cultures.

The portrayal of Ma's obvious close bond with the transgender Rosie/Raza is rare in literature as Shree humanises those who are largely invisible in society. For hours, Ma and Rosie sit together chatting, and laughing, so much so that Beti is jealous, almost scandalised. The reality of community/society as a watching, policing, disciplining entity is rendered irrelevant as Ma establishes her own community with Rosie, sharing, laughing, applying beauty treatments, and getting clothes stitched by her other persona, Raza. Her circle of relations includes the crows, bugs, partridges, and other non-humans as well. Ma's idyllic world comes crashing down when Rosie the altruist is murdered by her tenants for greed and because they did not like a hijra residing in a neighbourhood of decent people. However, just as one expects the novel to be a tale about the problems faced by the transgender people, Shree puts the focus back on the women characters and the reality of geographical border between the two neighbouring nations. Ma, accompanied by Beti, embarks on a journey across the border to Pakistan. Now there is another twist as Ma or Shantiprabha gradually reveals herself to be Chanda of the past in love with and married to Anwar. Suddenly Beti realizes; Ma and not she is the unconventional woman with a secret past. Nor is, Bahu, Bade's wife who goes around wearing Reebok shoes with her sari. Bahu has her support system in her sympathising sons but otherwise is always jealous of Beti, and cribs endlessly about not being appreciated by her husband. Shree thus paints a realistic image of Indian families negotiating their roles, dealing with the boundaries of traditional stereotypes of identity but in this case, with the matriarch leading the rebellion against it all. Soon however, Shree returns to her theme of borders, this time, between the two nations.

With Ma deciding to journey to Pakistan, Shree portrays the disruption that redrawing of borders during partition of India caused in the life of ordinary people. The comprehensive impact gets magnified as Shree gathers around her narrative, numerous writers of partition including Khushwant Singh, Salman Rushdie, Mahadevi Verma, Intizaar Hussain, Manto, Krishna Sobti, Joginder Pal, Rahi

Masoom Raza, Bhisam Sahni, Rajinder Singh Bedi, etc. Shree records her presence among this august gathering thus compounding the values of positivity, humanism, and community, which every one of these stood for. There are references to various poets and musicians such as Bade Gulam Ali Khan, film personalities such as Ramanand Sagar, Madhubala, Dilip Kumar, and Amitabh Bachhan, etc. The community of literary writers and artists indicates alternatives to the existing political and 'official' solutions which have been quite useless and counter-productive to healing wounds of victims of partition. After all, as Shree writes, "Echoes and reverberations of melodies cross every border. Melodies change, music remains. Death comes, life goes on. A story is created, changes, flows. Free from this side to that." (682-83). Amidst it all, the requirement of a visa to visit her original home from which she, and numerous others were so violently uprooted effectively brings out the magnitude of injustice, indignation, and hurt experienced. Ma thunders, "Why should I have a visa? I never had before" (651), thus speaking up for countless victims of partition, women and children. After all, men have always fought wars, but women on both sides become the victim of violence, abductions, rapes, loot, plunder, and destruction. This has been the history of partition, and Shree, through Ma, goes on to voice the feminine perspective on the mindless creation of borders within the country.

In one of the most moving scenes, Ma delivers a speech on the topic of borders. Standing up with her cane spinning in her hand to enlighten the gathering of the Special officer Ali Anwar (also the son of Anwar, Ma's former husband), soldiers carrying guns, Nawaz Bhai, the sympathetic guard, "Four innocent murderers, some other bearded dudes," the crowd, and Beti, she says:

Borders? Do you know what a border is? ...It is something that surrounds an existence. It is a person's perimeter...However a border is not created to be removed. It is meant to illuminate both sides...A border does not enclose, it opens out...it enhances a personality. It gives strength. it doesn't tear about... (652)

Shree thus goes on to equate borders with heart, with love, 'ishq,' with fun, as a game rather than how it is projected every day as a display point for one-upmanship at the Wagah border. Ma/Shree, however, refuses to accept borders of hatred, for, after all, "There's only us. If we don't accept, this

boundary won't stay" (656). Shree thus subverts the concept of borders as she draws from the 'other' knowledge and wisdom that remains absent, silenced, and ignored. Shree writes, "the night of Chanda's and Anwar's tryst has not been recorded anywhere, neither in government records nor in personal diary." Shree's novel, however, records the beauty and honesty on display as Ma addresses the mute and paralysed figure of Anwar. There is no element of blame. In her refusal to assume the mantle of victimhood, expecting to be rescued by her man, Shree achieves the final blurring of boundaries of stereotypes of gender. Instead, she assumes equal responsibility for the way things turned out and goes on to claim agency, saying, "You didn't come,...I forgive you. I didn't come, do forgive me" (694). Though Ma's love story ends in tragedy, she gets shot and lies dead in the desert between India and Pakistan. Prior to that, however, she gets to have her say--to the silent figure of Anwar, as well as to everyone else. Partition, they say, has resulted in never-ending trauma that lies suppressed deep in the hearts of countless people. Years have gone by, but there has been no sense of closure since the event has been hardly talked about. Hence, while it cannot be achieved in a world continuing the path of polarisation, Shree does it in the world of literature. Ma's final words to Anwar contain the way out of the puzzle: to forgive and be forgiven, to survive, to go on living and not allow oneself to be confined, limited within borders. They must realise, "what happened was not our fault, but we must take responsibility. Forgiveness. The entirety of history and a personal experience all suffused in one word." (718). Shree thus suggests a way to deal with suppressed memory and the trauma of partition. Since the past cannot be altered, the only way forward is to recognise the injustice inflicted on the other by both sides and to forgive one another. Shree presents things as these are, as these should be, and as these can be. Above all, Shree, with her brilliantly narrated fable, demonstrates that the cultural history of inner life lies embedded in literature, arts, and music, which one must access to be sensitive towards society and to have a sense of self. History devoid of emotion and feelings is merely a record of dates and events, whereas literature and the arts provide the whole picture, an alternative having the potential to bring about positive change in individuals and communities.

To conclude, *Tomb of Sand* is a complex tale that employs multiple literary techniques, such as intertextuality, magic realism, irony, paradox, playfulness, etc., to create a narrative that questions and subverts several established notions. It critiques the ideas of borders as necessary for establishing religious, political, and social controls or as a point to claim superior differences from the other. Shree instead demonstrates how the woman is always surrounded by borders, but once she decides to go beyond, there is no looking back. She can re-script her identity and destiny. The numerous twists and turns and the chorus of narrating voices demand a responsible and tolerant reading of what otherwise is as fragmentary a narrative as a woman's life itself. However, all loose ends merge in the tale to leave a lasting impression long after the reading is over. To sum up, in Shree's words, "Sometimes when we read literature as literature, we realise that stories and tales and love don't always seek to blend themselves with the world. Sometimes they march to their own blend... But this is the world, it never lets up. The world is in dire need of literature because literature is a source of hope and life" (698). Shree's novel surely lives up to that.

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Emerging Out of Violence: A Study of Select Short Stories on the Partition of India

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Abstract: The Greek word *Tramatikos* for trauma means a severe wound to the body. Any emotional wound that leads to psychological injury or an event that causes distress can best be defined as trauma. Hence, it is undoubtedly an emotional response to a terrible event. Trauma theory examines how traumatic occurrences are processed. Trauma theory attempts to understand the different ways by which traumatic occurrences are demonstrated, processed, exposed and repressed through a variety of literary and historical texts. Trauma refers to the sudden intrusion of new and unexpected knowledge into someone's psyche, usually due to a sudden confrontation with violence or death. Keeping the trauma theory in view, the present paper will be based on the post-partition violence that has caused trauma to the victims of violence and the Holocaust. To validate the study, the short stories on partition, viz. "Separated from the Flock", "Post Box", and "Exile" will be analysed to know how acts of physical and mental violence—rapes, abductions, forced displacement and murders—leave permanent scars in the psyche of the main character that keeps on tormenting them even after the violence is over. The victims suffered distress, trauma, dishonour and disgrace, revealing that children and women, being the most vulnerable sections of society, are rendered helpless with no succour in sight.

Keywords: Abduction, Displacement, Memory, Partition, Psyche, Rape, Trauma

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th ed.) defines *trauma* as a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last a long time (1384). Etymologically, it is a Greek word *traumat*—trauma that means wound—the physical injury. Of late, trauma is used beyond that as it refers to emotional wounds that are irredeemable. Though physical injuries may heal with time, traumatic events can leave lasting psychological symptoms (Merriam-Webster). In literature and

Freud's texts the term is understood as a wound but upon the mind (Muhammad 1). The psychological reaction to emotional trauma now has an established name—Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD).

As far as literary theory is concerned, it examines the ways in which traumatic occurrences are processed by and through texts. The different ways by which traumatic occurrence are demonstrated, processed, exposed, and repressed throughout various literary and historical texts find mention in literary theory. The dominant concerns that define the field of trauma studies are depiction of psychological trauma in language and the role of memory in shaping individual and cultural identities. Michelle Balaev has rightly asserted, “Psychological trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in shaping individual and cultural identities are the central concerns that define the field of trauma studies” (360). Trauma studies explores the impact of trauma in literature and society by analysing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance (Mambrol).

Trauma theory relates to the study of literature on and about trauma and violence, identifying the connections (and disconnections) between theory and practice (Muhammad 4). Many psychologists, critics and theorists return to literature to describe traumatic experience. Freud himself turned to literature in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to describe traumatic experience for the simple reason as is described by Cathy Caruth:

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalyses, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literary and the psychoanalytical theory of traumatic experience precisely meet.

(3)

Different texts explore and speak about and through the profound story of traumatic experience. The texts engage with a central problem that emerges from a specific crisis's actual experience (Muhammad 4). The literature deals with the typical causes of trauma. The psychoanalysis trauma is caused by sexual abuse, employment discrimination, police brutality, bullying, domestic violence, catastrophic events, war, treachery, betray and sexual abuse (Heidarizadeh 789). The Partition

literature is replete with the catastrophic events resulting in both physical and mental violence that devastated the life of numberless innocent people especially women and children. History of the Partition is the history of violence and trauma. The violence that ensued the Partition of India left deep scars not on the women's bodies but also on their psyches. The Partition literature highlights how women and children became easy targets of the worst kind of violence with no succour in sight. That's why children and women have been targets of wide body of trauma theorists for being vulnerable to traumas especially sexual abuse. Those who were displaced forcibly were equally victims of violence resulting in trauma. In the present paper short stories have been selected as literary texts that perfectly apply to trauma theory interpretation.

The trauma caused by forced displacement from one's birthplace and consequential mental agony inflicted through past memories find mention in the short story "Separated from the Flock" (Ashraf 1). The story is a comprehensive portrayal of the anguish of leaving home. The narrator tells his own story of sufferings that resulted from his displacement from India triggered by the Partition of India. He suffers not because of material loss but the wounds left to his psyche are not healable. Though he is a Superintendent of Police in Pakistan and enjoys both Reputation and wealth, there are abrasions to his psyche that make his life more painful. His loss cannot be compensated. He has to pay the price in the form of uprootedness for being a Muslim. Though the Muslims get Pakistan as their 'own' country, this doesn't delight him. The uprootedness has resulted in deep, invisible gashes to his heart and mind. His longing for the lost home is so acute that he is always lost in memories. He holds the land dear where he learnt to speak the first words. The story brings out the trauma and poignancy of a lost home vibrantly.

The narrator shows a deep urge and yearning for the lost home when he is with his driver, Gulam Ali, on his way to a lake for duck hunting. He wants Gulam Ali not to remind him of his past because memories are painful to him. The violence that followed the Partition has devastated his life as he is separated from his land and dear ones. The memories of those good old days are more excruciating. Freud is correct in observing, "These experiences are stored at our particular

consciousness level and compulsively repeated without any verbal expression” Mandal and Singh 10256). On the contrary, he wants to share with Gulam Ali, “I no longer have any relationship with that part of the earth where my childhood was spent listening to my mother’s lullabies, where, as a boy, all the small things I beheld were dear to me—and where, in my youth, I first felt life’s upsurge and learnt to test my wings” (Ashraf 2). But he desists from saying anything to Gulam Ali as he feels Gulam Ali will not understand the pain of losing the place where one is born and brought up. The Partition has brought trauma and desperation with it to the narrator, “The hard deep lines of Partition have erased the signs of all other feelings—feelings which belong intimately to that place where a human being first opens his eyes on earth and catches a glimpse of the sky” (2-3). The world of memories becomes a haven for him where he takes shelter from the present sufferings. It is through the reeling memory that the wretchedness of the narrator is laid bare before us. All his near and dear ones have also migrated along with him, this doesn’t bring solace to him as he has left behind the world without which he feels incomplete. It is not only the family one wants. One longs for friends, environment and the memories. That is why nothing can “console” (3) him. The emotional loss that he bears is hard to be compensated with. It is hard for him to forget those good days and the girl that he loved in India. He failed to marry her. Both are separated. He has to pay the price of independence by sacrificing his love.

It is all owing to a rare coincidence that the narrator comes across his old friend, Nawab, during one of his hunting trips. Nawab, a decent and prosperous businessman, also suffers the pain of the Partition like the narrator in the form of displacement. His loss, like the narrator’s, is not material. He too suffers from the agony of being uprooted. Both the friends embrace each other and tears flow as they remember the childhood spent together in India. On seeing Nawab, the memories rage within the narrator like “uncontrollable wild fire” (11). Both the friends are victims of the same destiny. Both had been in love with young girls there. Both had to sacrifice their blissful love. Unfolding of their past love stories with an aching heart adds to the poignancy of their experience. They can never forget that land, those lanes, houses, fields, fairs, their friends, school and

their childhood. Both feel imprisoned by the circumstances and the changed reality. Going back is not viable in any way. The narrator says to himself:

... neither of us had any control over our lives; that we are helplessly trapped by circumstances over which we had no influence; that we were utterly defenseless... if I were to resign my job and go to India, how would my family survive; and, Nawab, if you were to neglect your factory and leave Pakistan, who would compensate you for loss...? Yes, both of us are paralysed, are unable to make a move.... (Ashraf 12)

This powerlessness to go back intensifies their agony and they feel shattered. Their business and job have become a hindrance between their past and present. They have relief only in memory where they can revisit their past, 'their childhood' and land of their dreams. Both are in the throes of suffering as both are 'separated from the flock.'

The grief-stricken psyche of the narrator and others of his ilk is exposed through the use of metaphors. The narrator and his friend are hunting ducks and when the ducks are shot at, their "wings are broken"; they beat the water frantically with their broken wings, "desperately trying to get away from the hunters" (14). The 'wings' are here used metaphorically. The wings of the narrator and Nawab are also broken as they are tied to their jobs and business. They, too, try frantically to get away but in vain. The ducks are migratory birds who have left their land behind like these refugees. But they will soon go back, when the season changes. But some ducks never reach their land, as their wings are broken or they get lost in the way. They, too, get "separated from the flock" (14). The life of the refugees is as excruciating as that of the ducks with broken wings. They, too, get lost and are separated from the flock. Both the friends feel like these birds with broken wings. The longing for the lost home tears their heart apart. The memories add to their trauma and shake their whole being.

The trauma of Gulam Ali's wife, Jameela and Vaziruddin's wife is more tormenting as they, too, are the victims of this uprootedness. During the Partition they had to migrate to Pakistan. Now they want visit India to see their homeland—the land of their dreams. Though they have no relative

there, they want to see the land where they had spent their childhood. The longing for that part of the country is so penetrating that they can do anything to see the lost homes. The husbands of these women consider their longing just a “whim” (4) and fail to realise the pain and trauma of uprootedness. They can never decipher their pull towards the past.

Vaziruddin’s wife has somehow saved some money to meet her expenses to visit India and has strenuously obtained a permit to visit India, to see her homeland, the place where she spent her childhood. But Vaziruddin cannot understand how intense is her longing to go to her village nor does he care for her feelings. First, he argues with her against her strong craving for visiting India but when she doesn’t agree with him, he thrashes her badly and throws her permit into the fire, thus shattering her chances of going back to the place she cherished. He does not want that his wife should go to India because, then, there will be no one to cook his meals. By burning the pass into the fire, he has clipped her ‘wings’ so that she may not ‘fly’. Similarly, Gulam Ali, too, wants that his wife should not go to India, as it will cost him some money. He does not want to spend money for her fare etc. The narrator is sad to know all this. He starts hating Gulam Ali and says to himself:

.... you and your friend will never understand what happens to a man who has been separated from the place where he was born, where he was suckled by his mother, and where he felt his father’s affectionate hand ruffle his hair. You won’t understand how strongly attached a man is to the place, where he has spent his childhood surrounded by daily acts of kindness and joy; you can never feel, Gulam Ali, how precious those moments of innocence are, how one nurtures them with one’s blood, how they are a part of everything that one has become.
(4-5)

The narrator himself, ironically, fails to help his driver’s wife Jameela who wants to visit India but for want of a permit cannot do so. Having known that the narrator, her husband’s boss, is a senior police officer she pleads before him to get her a permit issued so that she may go to India “to feel once again the spirit of the place where her mother used to sing her lullabies, to walk once again in the warmth of the village where she had flung her arms out in gladness to welcome her youth”

(6). Sadly, her wings are also sheared as her husband has already requested the narrator not to accede to her requests. Her dreams are shattered. Her condition is like those ducks with ‘dreams in their eyes’ that get killed and their dreams remain unfulfilled. The image of the ducks dying with ‘dreams in eyes’ intensifies the anguish of the sufferers. Jameela’s longing for the past is buried. She sheds her “last tears for her home and for her dreams” (17). The narrator is sad for not helping her. He just wants to tell her in pain:

Goodbye, sister. You’ll never again see that land where you grew into consciousness—hear its songs, swing from its trees on rainy days, play hide-and-seek in its chicken coops, dye your dupatta there in rainbow colours, collect flower with your childhood friends—never again will you see the place where you gathered tenderness in your hands and pressed it against your heart—Forget that place, sister...Why thrash your wings in vain, a hunter hidden in the shadow of the lake broke them a long time ago—There is nothing left now.
(17-18)

Undoubtedly, it cannot be denied that the selfish political and religious leaders were like hunters who had broken the wings of millions of people so that may not fly to the lands of their dreams. They have created a rift between people and forced them to live in the land where they have no one their ‘own’. Now they have lost everything and are forced to live in the “mirror house” (14) of their memories. These uprooted people have made “terrible sacrifices” (19).

The wounds inflicted to the psyches of the victims will never made good. They cannot go back to ‘their’ lost homes. There are so many hurdles in their way—material, jobs, and self-centered callous husbands—that block their way. They can only dream of those fields and friends. The narrator feels tortured to see that the pain has created millions of holes in their heart and soul. This distress comes out very distressingly in the following words, which the narrator wants to say to Nawab, his friend:

We are birds with broken wings and we can never fly back to those fields of desire—we are more helpless and defenseless than those birds because once their wings are broken, they are

ritually slaughtered—but people like us—our torment never ends, we die slowly, we are tortured at every moment of our lives, we are hunted without mercy and we can only beat our wings in the throes of death, but we cannot die.... (22)

Thus, for the narrator, like millions, the emotional losses are more painful than the material losses. Although these wounds are not visible, yet they keep on gnawing at their heart all life, refusing to heal.

The feeling of loathing and animosity had dazed the sensibility of the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims so much so that even innocent children were made targets of the worst kind of violence not only to their body but also to their psyche. Children who had no knowledge of religion and were unaware of the two-nation theory were subjected to rapes and murders. Numberless children were rendered orphans and what is more painful and shocking is that no history of the Partition has anything to say about the sufferings of children. Even after the Partition was over and rehabilitation drive took place, people were reluctant to accept the children born as a result of their mothers had been raped. Tragically enough, the two countries did not fight over children as they did over women (Butalia, 187).

“Post-Box” (Vatsayan 105), the story of a five-year-old boy, Roshan, is the most tragic one. He is rendered orphan due to the riots. His father had gone to bring his sister and he never returned while this small child had to witness the brutal and cruel act of his mother’s murder. The attackers first tried to abduct her and when she resisted, a man “finally managed to push her away from him, had thrown her down on the ground, and then smashed her face in with the blunt end of his axe” (107). When Roshan opened his eyes, he had seen that “her eyes, nose, jaws had been reduced to a bloody pulp” (107). This act of bearing witness is the testimony that is a necessary and vital response to the ongoing consequences of traumatic theory (Elissa 3). Trauma haunts the body-mind of its victim, an unspeakable terror expressed through the symptoms of trauma (Testimony creates the trauma it discovers). Nasrullah Mambrol in his article “Literary theory and criticism” quotes Caruth who argues that trauma is, “not locatable in the simple violent or original event in the

individual's past but only identified in the way it is precisely not known in the first instance returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Mandal and Singh 10256-57). This haunting memory inflict trauma on the victim. Such dreadful happenings made a permanent scar on Roshan's psyche that even an adult would be shattered at such harrowing happenings and here Roshan had to bear it all at the tender age of five. Freud's belief that any trauma is capable of triggering unsuccessful repressed emotions from past experience (Balut 2) seems true in the case of Roshan.

The child walked a long distance to reach the refugee camp. There were "dry wounds on his legs and his feet were swollen. He was bare headed... and his eyes, which still had the innocence of childhood seemed to be full of sufferings" (Vatsayan106). The child lives in the camp where "all the others were strangers to him" (108). He has no one to speak to. He has lost all his dear ones. But he still has a hope that one day his father would come to him. And so he writes a letter for his father and stands near the post box, and it is here that the narrator of the story finds him. He wants the narrator to help him post the letter. But the letter cannot be posted because there is no address on it. The child, of course, does not know where his father is. When the narrator tells him that the letter cannot be posted till he writes his father's address his eyes are filled with tears. He is disappointed but he still hopes that someone will one day "tell him how to send his letter to his father" (109). The innocent child is cherishing a hopeless hope of meeting his father someday makes his tragedy all the more painful and traumatic.

Women, regardless of their religion and caste, were rendered a vulnerable target to male violence during the Partition. Men of all the communities were equally involved in persecuting women and that confirms the truth that during the course of rioting, all communities were equally involved (Singh 154). Jamila Hashmi's "Exile" is a story of deep human significance full of trauma. The writer explains the true magnitude of the events accompanying the Partition by showing their physical and psychological impact on human life. The story brings out not only the irreparable physical loss, but also the emotional loss—the loss of personality under the stress of this traumatic event. The story is a portrayal of the narrator's life enjoying the bonds of love of her parents and

brother before the Partition took place. It is all about her childlike, calm, easy and happy life before and then a huge change leading to her battered life after the storm of the Partition. “Exile” movingly describes the impact of forceful dislocation through abduction, rape and marriage.

The traumatic and sad tale of her sufferings starts from the day she is abducted by a Sikh, Gurpal, who brings her to his home. The narrator in “Exile” at least finds a home, but under most painful circumstances. What can be more agonising for her than that the murderer of her parents becomes her husband. It is Gurpal who slaughters her parents and abducts her and drags her to his house. She is “pushed” in like an animal declaring, “Look Ma, I have brought you Bahu. She is tall and good-looking. Of all the girl who fell into our hands tonight, she was the prettiest” (40). She is too tired to lift even a finger and her feet are bruised and wounded since she had to walk barefoot for miles. Physical exhaustion and mental trauma make her fall at Ma’s feet in a heap. Even the cattle are surprised at her helplessness and miserable state as if she belongs to their category. “The cows and buffaloes, who were chained in the courtyard, stopped eating their fodder and turned to look at me in surprise,” says the narrator (40). Badi Ma “scrutinises” her from head to feet as if she is not a human being. She is not happy that a Bahu has come and her response is of indifference. She is rather satisfied as the maidservants have stopped working in the house and the narrator will be a good substitute for a maidservant as is clear from the statement of Gurpal who asserts, “At least, look at her. You won’t have to put up with the insolence of maidservants any more. She will be your slave. Order her to grind corn, fetch water. As far as I am concerned, you can ask her to do anything you wish. I have brought you a Bahu!” (40). The narrator is forcibly made a ‘Bahu’ without any matrimonial ceremony. No one greets her at the door with music, no songs are sung with beating drums and there is no dancing to celebrate her arrival. Neither is her hair smeared with oil nor is she decorated with jewels and fine clothes, nor is *mehndi* put on her hands. Her dreams of becoming a bride in real sense, bidding good-bye to her brother, sitting in a palanquin are shattered. She is made a Bahu by her abductor without applying “sindoor” in the parting of her hair. Ironically, she has become a bride! Her sorrow only increases when even Badi Ma, a woman herself, does not bother to

talk to her. She turns her back towards her in indifference and leaves. She suffers for nine long years. She has children from Gurpal but she has never accepted him as a husband. How can she forgive a man who has spoiled her life and broken her dreams?

It is one act of the abduction and ensuing atrocities on her that she feels alienated. She feels all alone even in the company of her family. It is the separation from her 'own' people that tortures her psyche the most. She is constantly anguished over the separation. She ponders, "The very fact of separation stands like a wall between people who once loved each-other. Once separated they are fated never to see each-other's faces again... They can never return to their past again" (41). The narrator lives in a state of exile.

It is through the use of myth that her trauma and dilemma are made clear. Though the author of the story, Jamila Hashmi, is a Muslim, she draws the metaphor of 'exile' from the *Ramayana*—the great Hindu epic. Like Sita she is abducted and separated from her dear ones. She also feels that she is living in Ravana's home. There is a good use of words, images, and metaphor that portray her life effectively. Her two children are returning from fair holding the images of Ravana reminding her that she has been living among wicked people like Ravana. The words like "darkness", "meander", "mist surrounding them", "empty sky", a "single star" trembling like the "flame of earthen lamp" which make her feel sad convey her traumatic and aching condition so clearly. She says, "In the wilderness of my house, I am like that lonely tree which neither blossoms nor bears fruit" (42). No body tries to soothe her afflicted soul, "After all, one can never know how much a wound hurts, until one is injured oneself" (42). Her loneliness intensifies her trauma and she feels like a "boat without oars". Since her abduction, as she says, "All the lights of my life were extinguished forever. Since then, no ray of light has gleamed in the wilderness that surrounds me" (43). Remembering about her past, her family and her home makes her feel lonelier. She remembers the days when she would feel safe in the company of her brother. She thinks, "those old bonds, strengthened by sorrow, have not snapped. In fact, they have become deeper and stronger. How can I ever forget my past?" (44) The

narrator is in a state of hysteria and is unable to forget the angst-ridden past that is etched deep in her mind. Sigmund Freud writes:

Any experience which calls up distressing affects—much as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain—may operate as a trauma of this kind; and whether it in fact does so depends naturally enough on the susceptibility of the person affected.... We must presume rather that the psychical trauma—or more precisely the memory of the trauma—acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work.... (4-5)

The position of the narrator of “Exile” is like “a tree and earth” whose bonds are so intact that it is difficult to separate them. Their roots are very deep. She feels that the page on which her life story has been written is so smudged with “black” ink, that it is difficult to find a single straight line one it. She feels lonely without her brother and for her “loneliness is hard to endure. Life is difficult” (45).

She dithers between hope and despair. She hopes that one day her brother will come to rescue her but then she also realizes that “the road to the other land is desolate and passes through a burial ground. There is no one there who waits for me. Whoever paid attention to Sita’s lament?” (45). She is right. Woman’s fate is to suffer and bear the burden of atrocities done by her own people as well as ‘others’. It is the memory of the past that shatters her inner self into shreds. There is something about her past—her memories—that haunts her. She thinks, “Often when I carry a basketful of cow dung or milk the cows, or burn *uplas*, I suddenly catch a familiar fragrance in the wind, or hear a familiar tune near me. They make me forget myself...they are from a country which lies forever beyond my reach” (47). When her brother does not come to help her, she feels sad and thinks, “Oh why do I stand waiting at the door? For whom? How much longer will I have to carry this dead corpse of my hope? Why do my eyes fill with tears when I find that the lane outside is desolate?” (52). She has to surrender before her fate.

Even though she tries to reconcile with her fate, accepts her wretchedness and decides not to lament over her past and also decides to look after her children, tormenting memories again tear her psyche apart. Time and again, her hope for better future ahead is overpowered by the agonising memories of abduction, rape, beatings by Gurpal's mother and Gurpal's abuses. Here Freud's views that "all neurosis was a result of previous traumatic experience" (Rick 2) fit to the life of the narrator of the story. She is unable to forget; "When Gurpal dragged me out of the house, I saw my father's body lying in a gutter and his grey head outside it. with his eyes shut and his head soaked in blood... Amma's heart had been pierced by a gleaming spear... I can still hear her screams. I was as helpless then as I am now" (Hashmi 49).

The scenes of violence very often get repeated through her memories. Undeniably, she is a victim of trauma and her mind is rendered a complex web of conflicting emotions. Here it can be concluded that the narrator is suffering from what the trauma theorists term as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)—one of the deadliest illnesses (Abubakar 119). And this stress is caused in her mind by the excruciating memories as she herself admits, "The heart is very stubborn. I don't know why it refuses to forget the past" (Hashmi 52). In the end, she is, thus, forced to accept the home of Ravana. It is nothing but her instinct for survival and love of children that she goes on living. She says, "Like everyone in this caravan of life, I have to keep on walking." Yet she is unable to forget her past and feels sad and says, "I don't know when my journey will ever end" (53).

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Tracing the Iconographic Shifts in the Retellings of the Mahabharata Stories Across Two Distinct Mediums

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Abstract: The research paper aims to examine the transformational process of adapting the *Mahabharata stories* across two distinct mediums. Specifically, it will analyse the transition from B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat* television series (1988-90) to its portrayal in Amruta Patil's graphic novel *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* (2012). The purpose of the research paper is to analyse the market trends that drive the iconographic shift in the retellings of *the Mahabharata*. It aims to examine the publication policies that govern their production as well as their cultural significance as commodities. The primary objective of the research paper is to evaluate the cultural significance of these two retellings as products as well as the interconnections between culture, religion, politics, and industry. This endeavour aims to address the primary research inquiries regarding the reasons and methods behind the evolution of the content, structure, and principles of these literary pieces. The study will also analyse both the graphic adaptation and the televised version of the epic in order to pinpoint their main parallels and differences with their literary progenitors. By applying the theories of Scott McCloud and Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, the research intends to recognise the potency of visuals and images in reconstructing cultural history. Therefore, the particular approach employed in this study will also analyse how the utilisation of B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat* as a tool for nationalising Indian culture is succeeded by its graphic depiction that caters to the globalised viewership.

Keywords: Graphic Novel, Religion, Culture, Politics, Adaptation, Technological Shifts

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are often regarded as two of the most ancient epics that have remained relevant throughout the ages. These epics have gained enormous popularity and profoundly impacted several domains, such as literature, historical narratives, and theological debates, particularly within the South Asian region. These epics have gone through innumerable alterations over the centuries, all of which possess their own validity and authenticity.

In relation to this evolutionary trajectory of the epics, Romila Thapar expresses her perspective that the epics “began as oral tradition, were more informally memorised [than the texts which formed the Vedic corpus] and frequently added to and were converted to their present textual form in the early first millennium AD” (Thapar 98). In essence, it can be asserted that these epics have provided abundant material for numerous verbal recensions, didactic verses, puppet shows, literary adaptations, dance forms, dramatic performances, critical exegesis, and orally transmitted narratives, all of which have greatly influenced the lives of countless individuals. The primary objective of this research paper is to examine the transformational process of adaptation of *the Mahabharata stories* across two distinct mediums. The study specifically examines the transition of the epic from its depiction in B.R. Chopra’s *Mahabharat* television series (1988-90) to its portrayal in Amruta Patil’s graphic novel *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* (2012). Both B.R. Chopra’s *Mahabharat* (1988-90) and Amruta Patil’s *Adi Parva* (2012) provide distinctive perspectives on *the Mahabharata*, so the prime objective of this research paper is to trace the variations in their mediums, visual aesthetics, narrative strategies, cultural influences and intended audience with an aim to trace the iconographic shifts in both retellings.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the historical backdrop surrounding the two mediums in which the epic was transformed is necessary. To begin with, it is essential first to analyse the market trends and publication policies that have prompted the iconographic shifts in the retellings of the epic in two distinct mediums. The inception of broadcasting across the nation can be traced back to 1959 when it began as an experimental initiative. During this period, television broadcasts focused primarily on educational and informative material, with the specific aim of catering to the

needs of young people and peasants. During the 1970s, Doordarshan, which had previously functioned as All India Radio's television division, transformed into an autonomous entity. After the successful execution of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) during 1975-76, television sets were allocated to specific villages, thereby expanding the range of programmes. Indian television made a significant turning point in 1982 when the 9th Asian Games were broadcast live in colour for the first time, prompting the installation of numerous additional transmitters throughout the country. This marked the beginning of the mainstream acceptance of television as a source of entertainment. In this particular scenario, the government has given its blessing for Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana* (1987-88) and B.R. Chopra's *Mahabharat* (1988-90) to be shown on television (Sengupta 152-53). The television series "*Mahabharat*," directed by B.R. Chopra, was broadcast on Doordarshan in a total of ninety-one episodes, spanning from October 2, 1988, to July 14, 1990.

On the other hand, Comic books, which have experienced varying degrees of success as a commercial enterprise in India, are well acquainted with the practice of reinterpreting Indian mythology and history. Comic books have had a well-established presence in India, with notable prominence during the 1970s and 1980s, primarily through the widely recognised *Amar Chitra Katha* series. Pran and Anant Pai are credited with pioneering the comic book industry in India (Jain 3). The gradual decline of ACK over the 1990s resulted in a noticeable void within the Indian comic book industry. However, publishers such as Campfire Comics have embarked on a comparable endeavour of acquainting the Indian audience with myths and history. The emergence of major publishing houses such as Penguin India and Harper Collins India, alongside newly founded publishing houses motivated by ideology and institutionally financed projects, has given rise to a distinct category of authors known as independent graphic novelists (Sharma 166-67).

The term "graphic novel" gained popularity in the 1980s with the publication of three major works: *Maus* (1986), *Watchmen* (1986-87), and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986). Orijit Sen's 1994 publication, *River of Stories*, is widely regarded as the pioneering Indian graphic narrative. Amruta

Patil's graphic novel, *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* (2012), aims to reclaim narratives that have been marginalised within the dominant discourse of *the Mahabharata*.

The shift from B.R. Chopra's interpretation of *the Mahabharata* to Amruta Patil's "*Adi Parva*" represents a significant change in the way the epic is depicted and comprehended across many artistic mediums and contextual frameworks. This transition signifies a substantial progression in the manner in which the epic narrative of *the Mahabharata* is recounted and analysed. The two retellings exhibit disparities in their media and their method, style, and emphasis on different facets of the narrative. This paper envisages an investigation into these iconographic shifts in the two renditions of the epic.

In order to evaluate the alterations in iconography, it is imperative to begin by examining the narrative techniques utilised in both renditions of the epic. *The Mahabharata* narrative has been deeply ingrained in India's cultural heritage. The timeless narrative has been revived for the medium of television, undergoing the processes of recording, reimagining, and serialisation. The process of serialising a story involves fragmenting the narrative into several distinct episodes. Every episode lays the groundwork for subsequent episodes. The aforementioned characteristics of serialisation are equally applicable to the telecast of *the Mahabharata* on Doordarshan. B.R. Chopra opted for an episodic framework, splitting the storyline into numerous episodes. This facilitated a more comprehensive examination of the narrative, characters, and occurrences. Serialisation strategically focused on the anticipatory nature of the audience, who exhibited patience in awe of witnessing their preferred narrative segment materialise on the television screen within the confines of their home environments. Doordarshan served as a platform wherein the core narrative of India was reiterated on a weekly basis, reinforcing the significance of *the Mahabharata* and offering a renewed depiction of the role of television (Mitra 101-102).

However, Amruta Patil, in her graphic rendition of the epic, has relinquished her authorial power by positioning herself as an agent for the narrative. She refers to herself as the contemporary 'sutradhar' of her work of fiction in order to adhere to the old Indian tradition of oral storytelling. Patil explains in the 'Author's Note' to *Parva* her inclination for the act of retelling stories by

emphasising that “Cosmic tales are like fish tanks in their need for continuous aeration” (Patil 259). One of the unique narrative techniques employed by the author involves shifting the voice of narration throughout the story. A female protagonist has been personified by the author, endowing her with the traits of the divine deity Ganga. From a mythological perspective, Ganga is renowned as the unemotional progenitor of all beings. The purpose of this personification is to retell the epic from the perspective of a woman. Another distinctiveness of this visual adaptation is evident in Patil’s deliberate choice to focus on retelling only the introductory book of *the Mahabharata*, known as the *Adi Parvam*, rather than attempting to encompass the entirety of the epic narrative. Patil raises questions in her vivid account of the epic’s first book. The primary emphasis of the narrative is on the *Astika Parvam*, which constitutes the 5th section of the *Adi Parvam*. This particular section of the epic recounts the tales pertaining to the conflict between reptiles and birds, as well as the event of the oceanic churning that led to the creation of the world. There is no cohesive storyline, meaning no central characters, protagonists, or antagonists exist. The fatal and immoral defects that humans and demi-gods are built of are the sole sources of characters, ideas, and morally instructive lessons to be gleaned from them (Singh 1-3).

In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the shifts in iconography within the two retellings of *the Mahabharata*, it is imperative to undertake an analysis of the linguistic elements, dialogues, characters, and other relevant factors. These factors contribute to the distinctiveness of each version in the broader array of retellings of the epic. The distinctiveness of *the Mahabharata* television series on Doordarshan is evident in its ability to effectively depict the narrative, surpassing other adaptations of *the Mahabharata* in terms of its impact and potency. The factors contributing to this phenomenon include the intricate nature of clothing, the linguistic elements employed, and the melodic compositions utilised. Television soap operas are commonly recognised for featuring recurring characters and their frequent appearances on a weekly basis. A similar occurrence was observed in the context of the television programme *Mahabharata* as well. The actors and actresses who assumed the roles of Krishna, Draupadi, and Arjun had minimal semiotic baggage associated

with them at the commencement of their performances. The majority of the individuals picked for the roles were sourced from a newly available pool of candidates, frequently consisting of individuals who had not previously garnered public exposure (Mitra 103).

The television series employs a metaphysical narrator named Samay, or Time, to provide comments on the societal issues prevalent within the nation-state. It has also incorporated social commentary at various junctures throughout its episodes. For instance, the Ekalavya story of arcs and the Game of Dice highlight that while the series provided opportunities for commentary and discourse on topics such as women's rights and casteism by employing aesthetic elements from the social melodrama genre, it simultaneously restricted and limited those opportunities. The serial employs colour schemes that bear resemblance to those commonly found in calendar art. The main characters in the serial, including Krishna, the Pandava brothers, Bhishma, Drona, and Kripacharya, are seen wearing garments in lighter shades, predominantly white and yellow. Conversely, the antagonists, such as Duryodhana and Shakuni, are portrayed donning darker and more intense hues, such as black and crimson. In the context of less significant characters, the television series had more creative freedom and incorporated additional layers of meaning through the actors' performances. Paintal, the actor portraying Shakuni, provided clarification regarding his decision to incorporate a limp into Shakuni's character. This addition was intended to serve as an outward manifestation of Shakuni's inherent deceitfulness, complementing the constant presence of a pair of dice in his hands. The background music underwent a modification upon the entrance of Shakuni on the screen, serving to convey the cunning nature of his character. In a similar vein, props assumed a notable role in conveying meaning on a surface level. Weapons, for instance, came to symbolise individual characters within the narrative. The mace, for example, represented Bhima and Duryodhana, while the spear was associated with Yudhishtira. Arjuna, Karna, and Bhishma, on the other hand, were identified with the bow and arrows, while Krishna was characterised by the *sudarśan chakra*, a divine whirling discus.

In his analysis of comic books as a medium and artistic form, McCloud delineates the core elements that constitute them, namely panels, conclusion, space between panels, temporal shifts, hues, and characters. The understanding of creative expression in comic books necessitates the inclusion of these essential components. McCloud's scholarly interest leads him to direct his analysis towards the study of iconography, a concept he deems fundamental to comprehending the essence of comics (Singh 10). According to McCloud (1993), the character or icon in a cartoon serves as a metaphorical vacuum that draws in our identity and awareness. This is accomplished by employing a reductionist approach to the depiction of words and recurring renditions of well-known concepts and visuals from culture. Consequently, the reader has the knack of discerning a distinct affinity or kinship with the fictional figure (36). The application of theoretical principles from McCloud to analyse *Adi Parva* exemplifies the potential for theory to be utilised in the analysis of graphic novels. The *Adi Parva* employs the use of hues to establish a clear differentiation between the past and the present. The present temporal context, during which Ganga is recounting her narrative, is depicted using contrasting tones of black and white in charcoal medium. The flashback storytelling is depicted using a colour palette consisting of pastel tones of blue, green, and yellow, which serve as symbols of opulence and abundance. However, this represents the general temporal scope of the novel. The novel demonstrates a unique approach to representing time. For instance, when Ganga says, "Vinata's wait was to be a long one" (Patil 47). Vinata is seen in close proximity to her two eggs, referred to as her "brood," which throw elongated shadows upon her, serving as a symbolic representation of her enduring and patient anticipation. In the very next panel, "Shadows lengthened and shortened, and the shapes of mountains changed" (Patil 47–48). The idea that "five hundred years" have passed is illustrated on a single panel of a single page, which captures and freezes the past as well as the present at the same time (Singh 11).

When analysing the composition of sections, frameworks, and gaps in *Parva*, one can discern that the artistic design and stylisation are intricately constructed with rigorous attention to detail and imaginative implementation. Gutters serve as symbolic representations of "gaps" that prompt readers

to engage their imagination and participate in creative conjecture. The reader is afforded the opportunity to exercise autonomy in constructing meaning through the various arrangements of panels and the gutter. In the particular episode where Ganga recounts her own narrative to the audience, a solitary frame depicting a 'splash' is observed. She says, "Eight times I was heavy with child. Seven times.... I lowered the babes into my watery body and set them free" (Patil 184). Nevertheless, in the following page, divided into three sections, the reader becomes fully absorbed in the dread of Ganga's next course of action: the act of immersing the eighth child into the river. The initial panel depicts aquatic creatures submerged in a body of water, while the subsequent panel portrays a newborn child enveloped in a pristine covering. Lastly, the third panel presents a back view of an individual, unmistakably identified as Shantanu, who has arrived to intervene and prevent Ganga from carrying out her plainly abhorrent action. Immediately after this scene, the reader undergoes a moment of "closure," during which they are capable of deriving a cohesive comprehension of the information they came across a few sections prior (Singh 12-13). Patil draws on the enduring Indian practice of transmitting epics through visual representations and adapts art to include digitally reproduced pictures, thereby contemporising the medium. Her work is characterised by sketched, drawn, and painted elements that demand a deep comprehension of the intricate layers of meaning conveyed through her deliberate selection of lines, colours, and graphiation. Patil's artistic style is distinguished by her inventive utilisation of multiple mediums and incorporation of miniature forms.

Patil's portrayal of the characters facilitates a greater sense of relatability for contemporary viewers. The attire of the many characters had to accurately represent Indian identities, whether they were national or regional. For instance, Gandhari is adorned in a kaftan, a garment that bears resemblance to the traditional costume of West and Central Asian regions. Adorned with traditional Kashmiri jewellery and situated inside a customary Central Asian interior design, the portrayal of Gandhari, the empress of Gandhar (said to correspond to present-day Kandahar), diverges significantly from her televised representation in the popular B.R. Chopra production. In the televised

adaptation, her appearance has been modified to align with Sanskritised and Hinduised clothes. The rationale behind the choice of attire for Kunti remains ambiguous, as she is depicted wearing a white saree with a crimson border, which is characteristic of Bengali tradition. The artwork seen on page 69, also known as the ‘splash’, portrays Garuda in a manner that bears resemblance to the artistic style of ancient Egyptian civilization. The backdrop of the artwork incorporates a mask that draws inspiration from the traditional practice of Southeast Asian shadow puppetry. Moreover, the appearance of the shadow puppet, which prominently looms as a backdrop in the artwork, holds symbolic importance as it represents the perpetual existence of the Creator (Singh 14-15).

Patil’s use of modern vocabulary, whether scientific or otherwise, adds a contemporary feel to the narrative of the Mahabharata, in addition to the numerous and multidisciplinary analyses of artworks and imagery. Both readers and creators of comics sought cultural authenticity in the depictions. The expression of Indianness was manifested through the use of numerous dialects. This deliberate blending of conventional and classical elements allows for the assimilation of mundane aspects with profound philosophical themes, thereby facilitating a temporal transformation of mythology into the present era. Contemporary terminologies, such as “multiverse”, “genetic data”, “blip”, “fractal”, “filaments”, “cosmos”, “positive particles”, and “velocity”, are employed alongside mythical terms like “indrajaal”, “adi”, “devas”, “asuras”, “tapas”, “kaalkoot”, “naglok”, and “yagna”, which Patil intentionally refrains from translating within the primary text (Singh 15).

Another element that elucidates the distinctiveness of the renditions of the epic in two distinct mediums is its form and structure. In the context of televised serialised programmes, it is customary to include a segment that serves as the structural framework for the episode. It is imperative to thoroughly analyse this particular segment of the serialised programmes. The episodes of *the Mahabharat* on Doordarshan commence with the emblem ‘B.R. TV’, symbolising the production entity responsible for the serials. The signature section immediately follows the aforementioned content. The trademark portion commences with a visual depiction of a battlefield, wherein combatants mounted on elephants are actively involved in armed conflict. Amidst the auditory

presence of resonating cymbals and clashing armour, the voice-over iteratively echoes the term '*Mahabharata*' three times, with each occurrence accompanied by the visual manifestation of the word on the screen, juxtaposed against the backdrop of the battlefield. Subsequently, the credits are shown. During the continuation of the credits, a voice-over is employed to reiterate the underlying essence of the narrative, which centres around the necessity of heavenly manifestations such as Krishna. Following the conclusion of the credits, the visual transition occurs when the image gradually fades into a depiction of the universe. Accompanying this visual shift is the emergence of an ethereal voice, representing the concept of time, which proceeds to deliver a concise introductory statement pertaining to the serial. Subsequently, the programme commences and endures for an approximate duration of 35 minutes. The conclusion of every episode is characterised by a musical composition that serves as the auditory accompaniment for the term '*Mahabharat*'. It also serves as a reminder to the audience that they have been engaged in the narrative of Bharat, which can be interpreted as a tribute to the heroic figures within the story. The advent of serialisation has facilitated the recurring presence of these images in Indian households. No other rendition of the epic exhibits a comparable level of organisation, wherein a distinct segment consistently reiterates the same themes in each narrative. Therefore, the process of serialisation plays a crucial role in the televised adaptation of *the Mahabharata*. The television series not only presents the narrative to the Indian audience on a weekly basis but also employs a repertoire of recognisable individuals, visuals, and melodies to reinforce a particular interpretation of *the Mahabharata* narrative (Mitra 104-107).

The narrative framework of the *Adi Parva* is characterised by its intricate nature. Patil adeptly avoids delving into the intricacies of the narrative style. The question with regard to historical precision concerning *the Mahabharata* has been the subject of thorough examination and remains influential in the ongoing politically charged dialogues surrounding Hindu belief systems. Patil adeptly traverses this historical shroud with a combination of simplicity and fluency. She avoids the narrative complexity found in the original epic by resolving it through the use of one vivid image.

This rendering portrays *the Mahabharata* as a unified narrative that encompasses various stories, which are conveyed by the Sutradhars (Singh 5). *Adi Parva* begins with Ganga saying:

There are some things your forefathers didn't want you to forget. So they sent the story down through the mouths of the sutradhar-storytellers who carry the thread. We are an unbroken lineage of storyteller nested within storyteller. When I open my mouth, you can hear the echo of story tellers past. (Patil 2-3)

The significant aspect in this instance is the lack of allusions to Naimisha, Saunaka, or Ganesha, who were actively involved in transcribing the epic by Vyas. In contrast to the original version, the retelling of the story commences with Ganga apprehending two colluding thieves who had intentions of pilfering a wandering cow. She then persuades them to serve as her listeners as she recounts a series of narratives (Patil 6).

The epic has undergone alterations on multiple occasions in order to accommodate the preferences of its readers or audiences. The involvement of the reader can be seen as a pivotal factor in the process of adapting the epic from its televised version to its portrayal in graphic form. The notable aspect of the television serials was the phenomenon of simultaneous viewership, wherein a vast number of individuals engaged in the collective consumption of a particular programme for a duration of four years. As the phenomenon of epic watching gained popularity, individuals and communication attempts were discouraged during the designated time frame of significance (Sunday 9:30-10:30 a.m.). Additionally, fuel stations ceased operations, and urban areas were devoid of activity as the entire nation congregated in front of their television screens to see the unfolding of their collective historical narrative (Sujala Singh 81-82). According to Rajagopal, the phenomenon of gods appearing on the television screen is often regarded by many individuals as a *darshan*, which is "what one partakes of when one sees a deity, or someone of exalted status ... the deity gives *darshan*, and the devotee takes *darshan*; one is 'touched' by *darshan*, and seeks it as a form of contact with the deity" (Rajagopal 93).

The incorporation of the reader as a significant literary tool in *Parva* aids in expanding the plot of this piece of work. Ganga's narratives are derived from the ambiguities and inquiries presented by the collective audience. Folks continuously submit inquiries to her in order to verify her authenticity. Similar to an exemplary *Sutradhar*, Ganga captivates the audience, compelling them to attentively absorb her words. The narrative's framework is effectively metaphorized through its image of the "Indrajaal" (Singh 7). Ganga states "Were you to look closely into the heart of any single ruby, you would see reflected in its polished surface every ruby in the Indrajaal... Infinite reflections" (Patil 100). The reader is presented with a collection of interconnected narratives. The audience depicted in the novel serves as an essential source of input that drives the development and reflection of the narrative. The novel does not imply any moral instructivism. The reader or audience is afforded the autonomy to interpret as they see fit (Singh 8). The narrative progresses by means of engaging "interactivity" between the storyteller and her audience (Patil 99).

Thus, the objective of rewriting the epics is to recognise the cyclical nature of time and the commonly used "history repeats itself" motif in order to adapt the narrative to mirror the current era. It may be argued that the retelling of famous narratives has two primary purposes. Firstly, it ensures the continued presence of these narratives in the collective consciousness of a specific region, group, race, or nation. Secondly, the act of retelling allows for intriguing opportunities to experiment with stories that already exist. By engaging in this process, the narratives can be transformed into a fresh collection of tales that captivate the creative faculties of both the artist and the audience.

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Madness Plagued by Memories in Elie Wiesel's *A Mad Desire to Dance*

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Abstract: Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, has written extensively on the crippling effect of traumatic memories on the victims of trauma. This paper is an attempt to unveil the psyche of a man whose mind is stuck in the web of memories through the textual analysis of Wiesel's novel *A Mad Desire to Dance*, published in 2009. A postmodernist text containing the elements of existentialism, this novel is a story of Doriel Waldman, a man with a traumatic background who turns to Dr. Therese Goldschmidt, a psychoanalyst for help. Doriel's story is often told in manic bursts and human conditions are elucidated in it through the interactions between the patient and his therapist. Using Freudian theory, she attempts to understand and heal him. She reveals that his madness is not simply insanity but a dysfunctional madness burdened with memory and fear, responsibility and uncertainty. This paper will answer the questions: How do memories of the Holocaust affect the survivors and what consequences does it bring forth? Is Doriel Waldman really mad or merely a victim of the horrible memories of his past? It will also raise the question of whether frenzied are really deprived of reason or whether they could even comprehend the incomprehensible to the 'so called' sane. All these and many more questions will be answered against the backdrop of the Holocaust and using Trauma Studies, Memory and Testimony Studies, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy) and existential phenomenology of R. D. Laing.

Keywords: Elie Wiesel, Psychoanalysis, Trauma Studies, PTSD, NET

In the postmodern era, trauma and memory have been two of the most discussed topics. Human history is replete with atrocities. Research across a wide range of disciplines shows and explains how atrocious and traumatic events can provoke powerful mental, emotional, spiritual, and physiological reactions in victims. Memories of such events often resurface in different forms, evoking the same

intense feeling as they did at the time of the traumatic event. The Holocaust, as a series of heinous acts, inflicted profound trauma upon the Jewish community and indelibly imprinted itself upon their collective consciousness. In recent decades, there has been a notable surge in the study and analysis of the profound impact of the Holocaust, as demonstrated through an array of literary works, cinematic productions, museum exhibitions, commemorative structures, and a wide range of cultural, social, and historical records. Since certain works of literature serve as a contemplative mirror of historical events, it is evident that the Holocaust, a profoundly tragic chapter in human history, has engendered a distinct literary genre aptly referred to as Holocaust literature.

Elie Wiesel, an eminent Holocaust survivor and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, has authored over fifty fiction and non-fiction books. His writings delve into the profound psychological and physical suffering endured by himself and countless others within the confines of concentration camps and even after their liberation. He has extensively expounded upon the intense and debilitating impact of traumatic recollections on those who have endured such harrowing experiences that they are often considered “mad” by society. The “madness” exhibited by such people is not actually madness but rather a reaction against the “collective neurosis” that permeates society. Such a person’s weird behaviour is the result of the uncommon experience he had, and these unusual experiences and behaviours are sometimes “part of a potentially orderly, natural sequence of experiences” (Laing, *The Divided Self* 102). Their behaviour appears peculiar to others because of the warped perspectives through which they observe it. In this context, madness serves as a final recourse for individuals who have been emotionally shattered due to societal mistreatment and a lack of empathy. Such a person perpetually dwells in a void populated with many pictures and visions hidden from the average person’s view.

This study centres around the examination of Elie Wiesel’s portrayal of madness in his work *A Mad Desire to Dance* through the lenses of Trauma Studies, Memory and Testimony Studies, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy). As presented in his work *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault’s concept of madness is utilised in examining mental trauma or

madness experienced by survivors. Since a person experiencing madness is likely to encounter bizarre, fantastical, and delirious visions, Foucault draws parallels between madness and two states: imagination and dreaming. The paper also makes reference to the existential phenomenology of Dr. R. D. Laing, who conducted research on schizophrenia and characterised it as “a diagnosis, a label applied by some people to others” (99).

From a clinical perspective, madness refers to a severe mental illness or psychotic disorder characterised by a loss of mental stability, the perception of unreal or imaginary phenomena, the expression of irrational thoughts, and the risk of posing a threat to oneself and others. Wiesel’s novel delves beyond the diagnostic framework of madness, offering a more profound exploration of this theme. The author confers a prophetic status upon his mentally unstable protagonists and elucidates society’s unsympathetic disposition towards them due to their possession of an enigmatic vision, which compels them to defy societal conventions in its pursuit. Wiesel characterises this particular form of madness as “redemptive,” contrasting it with clinical madness, which he describes as inherently “destructive.”

The novel *A Mad Desire to Dance* provides a comprehensive account of the psychological exploration undergone by the narrator, Doriel Waldman, under the guidance of psychotherapist Therese Goldschmidt. Doriel and his parents were survivors of the Holocaust. They managed to endure the harrowing conditions of the concentration camp, whereas his siblings could not come out alive. Only a few years after their liberation, he lost his parents in a car accident, and this event absolutely shattered him. Doriel was plagued by an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and loss. The memory of his parents haunted him. Therese (his therapist) had undergone a similar experience, as she also lost her parents. She offered him emotional support, advising him to avoid being burdened by the memories of his deceased parents. She continued, “Despair can have a kind of beauty provided it remains in the sphere of memory. Your memories paralyse you; mine do not” (Wiesel 34). He was referred to as “mad” by others, and he willingly embraced this label. The question he posed to his doctor was profound, “If the world tells me I’m mad, whereas I know I’m not, which of us is right?”

(42). Doriel thought his insanity was in “its terminal phase,” the kind of insanity “in which one can find refuge, if not salvation” (03). It could be described as “madness burdened with memories” of the Holocaust. He posed numerous questions on insanity, leading others to wonder whether or not he himself was insane. He inquired as to how his therapist would characterise a madman, “As a marble-faced stranger? Smiling but without joy, his nerves on edge; when he goes into a trance, his limbs move about and all his thoughts collide; time and again, he has electrical discharges, not in his brain but in his soul...?” He asserted that every individual possesses an inherent realm of insanity, and a mere stroke of destiny is sufficient to plunge us into that realm, from which there is no possibility of recovery (03). To him, lunacy was “a sensation resonant with futility” (05). As a Holocaust survivor, he endured a great deal of suffering, but he owed his survival solely to his mental illness, which served as a safe haven. He stated, “Like the dybbuk (a malicious possessing spirit of a dead person, in Jewish mythology that often changes bodies after accomplishing its goal), I take refuge in my madness as in a warm bed on a winter night” (18).

In his seminal work *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault characterises madness as a form of “knowledge” that elicits fascination. He writes, “It is knowledge, first, because all these absurd figures are in reality elements of a difficult, hermetic, esoteric learning” (21). In a broad sense, the author did not establish a connection between madness and the broader world or its hidden manifestations. Instead, the author attributed madness to the individual, specifically to their vulnerabilities, aspirations, and delusions. This perspective suggests that madness is not an external force but rather a product of human nature, as individuals create madness through their self-attachment and the illusions they maintain (26). Foucault’s analysis of madness aims to attain an in-depth understanding of the human condition, and Doriel’s madness can be better understood by taking recourse to the theory of Foucault.

Foucault’s discourse encompassed a comprehensive examination of four distinct manifestations of madness: Mania and Melancholia, Hysteria, and Hypochondria. People with maniacal tendencies exhibit violent behaviour and engage in “explosive gestures,” while their state

of delirium is characterised by a “continual vibration of the sensibility” (126). Melancholics exhibit an inclination towards prudence, sensibility, and a profound fondness for solitude. Hysteria and hypochondria were historically regarded as disorders of the nervous system, attributed to an excessive degree of sensibility leading to nervous shock or unconsciousness. According to medical professionals, women were believed to be more susceptible to hysteria due to their “softer” bodies. Hypochondria is the delusion that an individual is sick. Foucault views these conditions through the lens of morality and the external world. He asserts, “civilization, in a general way, constitutes a milieu favourable to the development of madness” (217).

Wiesel’s Doriel in *A Mad Desire to Dance* possessed the traits of a Melancholic and a Hypochondriac. He observed a significant “connection between solitude and madness,” and he viewed the insane as “less cunning but more experienced” (44). He referred to these individuals as solitary dreamers who possess the ability to anticipate the imminent catastrophe while concealing their true nature behind “the mask of madness” (77). According to his perspective, a madman, much like an author, “is embodied in several characters simultaneously. He is a Caesar and Cicero, Socrates and Plato, Moses and Joshua” (78). Doriel is classified as a Hypochondriac due to his delusional belief that he is insane. He sought the professional counsel of psychotherapist Dr. Therese Goldschmidt, who provided significant assistance to him in the process of making a confession and in coming out of that trauma.

Ronald David Laing, a highly prolific author, made significant contributions to the field of mental illness during the 1960s and 1970s. His writings challenged the prevailing psychiatric orthodoxy of that era. He referred to madness as a manifestation of anguish, serving as a creative or adaptive reaction to the prevailing state of insanity in the world and allowing one to seek refuge from the unbearable conditions. He did not explicitly negate the presence of the mental illness but rather adopted a distinct viewpoint in comparison to others, appreciating madness as a cathartic and transformative encounter. He posits that individuals exist within two distinct realms, namely the “inner” and “outer” worlds. Persons who are mocked by society often seek refuge in their own private

world, made up solely of “imagination, phantasy, reverie, dreams, memory.” Others may think they are mad since they’re always preoccupied with their own thoughts and activities (*The Politics of Experience* 18). According to him, a person’s skewed thoughts and eccentric behaviour may indicate mental illness; however, this is not always the case. This could be a society's hypothesis or maladaptive judgement based on its inability to comprehend the person’s psychological condition (*The Divided Self* 99). Wiesel also explores the concept of madness as a means to attain liberation, wherein all possibilities and actions are permissible. Laing says schizophrenia can be understood as a societal construct that serves to justify a series of social behaviours in which individuals labelled as schizophrenic are marginalised by others. These others are referred to as “legally sanctioned, medically empowered, and morally obliged” and assume responsibility for the well-being of the person labelled as schizophrenic (Laing 100). The so-called sane completely denigrate and humiliate such a person. He is deprived of all of his possessions and denied the ability to determine his own time and space. In a nutshell, he is “invalidated as a human being.” He is subjected to careful scrutiny until the label is removed, yet once a schizophrenic, always a schizophrenic (Laing 101).

In his book titled *The Divided Self*, Laing employed the term “Schizophrenic” to refer to individuals experiencing mental disorders and provided an existential-phenomenological analysis of their condition. He described ‘schizoid’ as “an individual the totality of whose experience is split,” and “is not able to experience himself ‘together with’ others or ‘at home in’ the world and feels himself in “despairing aloneness and isolation” (17). He labelled his investigation as existential phenomenology due to its aim to elucidate the essence of an individual's perception of their surroundings and self (17). He held the belief that a comprehensive understanding of madness could only be achieved within an existential framework. In an effort to enhance its comprehensibility, he introduced a set of conceptual terms, namely Ontological Insecurity, Embodied and Un-embodied Self, False Self, and Self-Consciousness. Such individuals are unable to perceive themselves in the world as “real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person” (39). They are afraid of becoming attached to anything or anybody because they believe that doing so will lead to a loss of

their “autonomy and identity” (44). They find solace in solitude because there is less chance of being misunderstood. In their effort to confront the external world and mitigate their personal despair, they construct a fabricated persona known as the ‘false self.’ Laing has been recognised as a social analyst, and his theoretical framework can be effectively applied to the analysis of the protagonist, Doriel Waldman, in Wiesel’s *A Mad Desire to Dance*. Doriel, who describes insanity as both beneficial and subversive, provides a comprehensive definition of insanity. He was also afraid of getting attached to anyone and invented a ‘false self’ for himself in order to avoid the people around him. His madness was nothing but a complex amalgamation of unforgettable memories. As he said, the course of insanity is constantly variable, “stumbles as it rises; tells lies while shouting “believe me”; forges ahead while stepping back; aims to please and displease simultaneously; seeks the company of others as a way of sublimating solitude” (6).

Survivors commonly experience a psychological condition known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), characterised by the intrusive re-experiencing of traumatic elements through nightmares, flashbacks, or somatic reactions. In her work titled *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth provides a description of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as an intense encounter with abrupt or calamitous occurrences, wherein the individual’s reaction to the event frequently manifests through uncontrollable and repetitive instances of hallucinations (57-58). According to Kolk, traumatic memories are fragmented remnants of overpowering experiences that require assimilation into preexisting cognitive frameworks and transformation into narrative discourse. In order to achieve successful resolution, it is essential for the traumatised individual to engage in frequent revisitation of the traumatic memory. (176)

Narrative exposure therapy is a useful therapeutic method. This process enables victims to articulate their experiences, allowing them to surmount their disillusionment. According to Schauer, it is a type of exposure in which trauma survivors tell their entire life story in chronological order to a trained counsellor or psychotherapist, who then records it, reads it back, and helps the survivor piece together their scattered traumatic memories (03). The NET model categorises memories into two

distinct components, namely Cold memory and Hot memory. Cold memory encompasses factual information and contextual details, whereas hot memory encompasses physiological sensations, emotions, and cognitive processes. It proposes that the neurobiological processes happening at the moment of a horrible occurrence enable Hot memory to be reflexively retrieved in PTSD but to lose all linkages to Cold memory. The purpose of NET is to place an event in its proper context by bridging the gap between cold and hot memories.

NET is a methodical and ongoing process. Schauer provides a comprehensive account of the process involved in this therapy. He refers to the first session as “Diagnosis and Psychoeducation” phase, during which the therapist gets an “overview of the traumatic history of the patient” and “explains to the patient that trauma symptoms are a common response to extreme and harmful experiences” (40). The second session is referred to as “Lifeline.” The lifeline serves as a symbolic representation of the life narrative of the victim. The survivors use a rope or string as a symbolic representation of the chronological progression of events in their lives, thereby delineating the trajectory of their entire life. In order to represent joyful occasions, flowers are commonly positioned on the rope, while stones are used to signify distressing and perilous life events such as assault, acts of violence, death, or accidents (Schauer 43). The third session is titled “Starting the Narration.” In order to connect the hot memory (feelings, sensations, and thoughts) to the cold memory (facts and events), it is the responsibility of the therapist to encourage the victim to speak in detail about the traumatic event. The final stage of this process, habituation, is a sense of relief or a decrease in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Without habituation, the entire procedure would be ineffective or incomplete. The retelling of traumatic events should not be halted or interrupted prior to habituation.

A psychiatrist’s assessment is given great weight when deciding whether or not a person is sane. If the patient is unable to communicate with the “sane” psychiatrist, the conclusion will always be that “there is something wrong with the patient, but not with the psychiatrist” (Laing, *The Politics of Experience* 90). The patients’ ideas or interpretations, which may be distorted and unorganised, should not be dismissed as devoid of meaning. Indeed, it is imperative to accurately interpret these

statements in order to comprehend their meaning and prevent the patient from becoming “enmeshed in a world of delusions and self- deception” (90). Remembering the past is healthy, but becoming stuck there can be counterproductive.

In *A Mad Desire to Dance*, Wiesel has explained the entire NET procedure to the point of “Habituation” through the detailed description of therapy sessions between Doriel and Therese. Doriel characterises her as “best at talking” while he is “best at keeping silent” (38), but she urges him to liberate his thoughts, permitting them to traverse the familiar and unfamiliar terrain of his memories. In order to alleviate his phobias and manias (45). She brought order to his chaotic life. He was incapable of organising his thoughts. There was no single direction to head towards or goal to work for. The universe lacked significance. At times, “a comma travels: it runs, runs between the words, and is impossible to catch” (181). The narrative account that he presents before his therapist demonstrates a distinct lack of linearity. To effectively elucidate the myriad of incidents he recounts, one must possess a commendable level of patience and a profound capacity for understanding. His memory exhibits intermittent shifts in both forward and backward directions. The convergence of his past and future occurs abruptly, resulting in a state of confusion. With him “everything occurs in spasms: spasms of anger, of decisions, of desires that last only an instant” (09).

Therese constantly pushes him to scour his past for new insights. She was confident that the incident she was seeking to uncover must exist somewhere, and she knew that giving up would be devastating for him. That may be “a forgotten gesture, a lost word, a wound. Deep under layers of memories, the meaning of what crushes and ruins her patient lies waiting for him since...” (Wiesel, *A Mad Desire* 215). So on her insistence, he flips through the years of his life, remembering each childhood memory and clinging to each new adolescent one. Then, it is only through “her attentiveness, her knowledge, her way of guiding [him] and arousing [his] memories of those [he] loved, and especially her silence” that he finds deliverance. Doriel shared a childhood experience about his mother in therapy, but Therese could not discern if it was real or a dream. Even psychologically healthy individuals can experience this. Over time, memories blur. People forget

actual events and ‘remember’ visions and fictitious incidents. This point is also emphasised by Schiraldi in his book discussing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One of the most problematic features of post-traumatic stress disorder, in his opinion, is the reliability of traumatic memories. Some recall the primary components of trauma accurately and consistently. Some vividly recall elements of the trauma. Some forget the experience completely, while others recall it to varied degrees. Spontaneous recall can happen. Psychotherapists and hypnotists sometimes induce recall. This remembrance is sometimes accurate and sometimes completely bogus. Therefore, analysing traumatic memories requires prudence (Schauer 47).

During the therapeutic process, Therese aims to alleviate his grief by actively engaging in his personal tragedy, a phenomenon known as ‘transference,’ with the intention of facilitating the release of his intense emotions. Transference is a commonly experienced phenomenon in this therapeutic process, often resulting in the patient developing strong feelings of affection or admiration towards the analyst. However, this process is inherently challenging as for victims “everything makes sense, whereas the world is in a thousand pieces. They live in an environment of organised, structured madness, frozen in mental acrobatics” (Wiesel, *A Mad Desire* 64). The psychotherapist bears the responsibility of deciphering the various forms of nonverbal cues, such as silences, gestures, and fragmented statements, due to the tendency of their patients minds to frequently wander. Doriel also acknowledges this, stating, “Then, with a great master as my guide, I understood we were given lips not just to cry out but also to sing and kiss” (67).

Therese encourages him to begin afresh to start a family. She probes, “Aren’t you afraid of departing from this world without leaving descendants, heirs, traces?” (Wiesel, *A Mad Desire* 236) He tells her about his insecurities and how he cannot seem to trust anyone. He isn’t prepared to send [his] children into a world where they are bound to die. For him, not having a family and children was a form of protest against God’s silence and humanity’s cruelty. He was relieved that his children would no longer be in danger as they would never be born (268). Therese’s therapy sessions drastically alter his perspective. He began his life with Liatt, with whom he also had children. Her

psychoanalysis or NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy) assists his arrival at the crossroads. This therapy induces in him a new realisation that only love can cure the deepest wounds, but this resolution is not easy to achieve. She makes a valiant effort to probe the depths of his psyche.

Thus, the individuals who typically are labelled as “mad” by society are depicted in a completely different light by Wiesel in this novel. The character of Doriel Waldmen is indeed a powerful one. By admitting that he was mad, he truly refuted the popular notion of what being mad is like. People find it simpler to describe the person like Doriel as “mad” and try to be ignorant about the horrifying reality rather than offering the traumatised persons the comfort and solace they need by listening to them. Wiesel does not confine his traumatised survivors to an uncommunicative condition, but rather offers them a chance to reconstruct their own language through the experience of madness and thus has used “madness” as a powerful weapon to communicate the uncommunicable and to indicate the un-indicated.

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Memory and Forgetting in Imaginative Dystopia

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Abstract: Through an interplay of repression and dissociation, the mind often obscures that which is either horrifying or just incongruous with a peaceful existence. Memory theorists such as Daniel L. Schacter delved into the ongoing argument about the reliability of traumatic memory (Schacter 276) while Jan Assmann in his seminal musings on Cultural Memory suggested that memories that are dissonant with one's present are often forgotten collectively in favour of communal and social harmony (Assmann J. 22). Assuming the essential fallibility and distorted, disjointed nature of traumatic memory, memory in Dystopian Fiction poses some interesting questions. Suppose social identity is created through collective memory, as Halbwachs suggests in the sense that past societies define the present, which describes future societies (Halbwachs 51). What defines a society that actively attempts to distance itself from and even forget the society of the past? My paper examines how memory manipulation and distortion function in Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* not in terms of the state-imposed political re-writing of history but rather on an individual level, how communal memory alterations impact personal memory. The paper hopes to conduct a study of how the early imaginative dystopias have contributed to the evolution of the genre and foregrounded the centrality of memory, history and archives. The paper argues that in the face of trauma, memory distortions act as an emollient between reality and the psyche allowing one to experience a sense of calm and stability where none exists.

Keywords: Memory, Dystopia, Identity, Memory Manipulation, History

Introduction

Memory and truth are two epistemic categories that often reflect reality irreconcilably contradictory. Neither remains constant in the face of social and political change or the general flow of time.

Nowhere is this truer than in the case of trauma and traumatic memories. While victim testimonies constitute the primary archival evidence for such events, these embodied testimonies are often distorted, reconstituted, and reshaped by the trauma. This unreliability of data, narrator, and even historical archival evidence often the result of deliberate silencing of the past by totalitarian regimes or even systematic destruction and recreation of the past by individuals to reconcile the drastic differences between the past and the present. Often, however, these can also be the result of the inaccuracies that characterise the human memory. Trauma, however, presents a particular case, since memory reconstruction in the face of trauma is often an admixture of remembering, forgetting, and reconstructing. The study of this process has become the preoccupation of historians, critics of memory studies, and political archivists who, in an act of sleuthing across time, aim to piece together ‘what really happened.’ These ontologically fragmented, neuro-biologically situated inquiries often reveal the malleable nature of truth and history:

After any revolution, history is rewritten, not just out of partisan zeal, but because the past has changed. Similarly, what we imagine we are working toward does a lot to define what we will consider doable action aimed at producing the future we want and preventing the future we fear. (Baccolini 520)

This inquiry is often explored objectively in the realm of dystopic fiction, where, unlike in the case of tumultuous human history, strategic disengagement with reality serves to disentangle the workings of individual and public memory. The purpose of my paper is twofold. First, my paper explores the idea of memory and its function in political dystopia by using two quintessential examples of his genre George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley’s *A Brave New World*. Second, and perhaps more importantly it attempts a revisionary look at the evolution of the genre from one that bemoans the fallibility of the human race, its corruptibility and its predilection to self-destructive violence to one that celebrates its resilience and intransigent drive for freedom in the face of oppressive forces.

Types of Dystopias: A Critical Survey

Baccolini makes a crucial distinction between two types of lenses used by dystopic fiction, imaginative and critical (521). Explaining this categorisation further, he cites the older dystopia (the example used in the essay is *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) where the protagonist and by extension, the reader, is a passive subject of fate and holds no agency to combat his own ultimate ruination. Thus, the dystopia is purely imaginative and serves to allow an altered perspective through which the reader may view their own reality. That, however, is where the function of such ‘imaginative’ dystopia stops. The more recent dystopic fiction on the other hand, (Baccolini cites Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Le Guin’s *The Telling*, and Butler’s *Kindred* and *Parable of the Sower*) are those where the most enduring aspects that stick to the reader’s/viewer’s imagination are the aspects of resistance. Within the speculative fiction of Marge Piercy, for example, the protagonist places herself within history and attempts to alter the future through her limited agency and action. “I am a dead woman now too... But I did fight them... I tried” (Piercy 181).

Piercy allows the protagonists hope and through their more ambiguous endings, maintains what she calls a “utopian impulse” within the text (Baccolini 521), highlighting the importance of resistance and dissent in overcoming and surviving a dystopia. But these seeds of revolt and opposition are sowed through the efforts of a penumbra of revolutionary zeal already existing in the earlier more fatalistic imaginative dystopias. Examples of these, as the paper will go on to argue, are the two that we are considering for the paper. Both imaginative and critical dystopic fiction use the dual tools of “estrangement and cognitive mapping” (Baccolini 521) but only one allows the reader agency, albeit vicariously, through the actions of the protagonist. Utopia, therefore, exists within dystopic fiction, albeit on the ‘outside’ as a suggestion or an absence (521). Dystopia often functions as an active warning against which the readers can contemplate their own futures and its various possibilities as well as threats.

While the two dystopias under discussion are, more imaginative rather than critical, I would argue that it is not possible to pigeonhole them into either category. Another distinction that Zaki

underlines as he sees in the critical work of Soren Baggesen, is that between a utopian and dystopian pessimism (Zaki 244) found within dystopia. Utopian pessimism, as defined by Baggesen is that which occurs ‘naturally’ due to historical forces (a perfect example of this may be the real-world dystopic realities of the rise of the Nazi party, Soviet surveillance, and militarism, Maoism, etc.). On the other hand, Dystopian pessimism, emphasises that it is the corrupt and corruptible nature of human beings that makes dystopia an inescapable future towards which mankind is headed. Both dystopic fictions serve as, in the words of Sheldon Wolin, “posting warnings” (qtd. in Zaki 244). It has also been pointed out by both Wolin and Zaki that these represent “covert utopian hope that readers will change the trajectory of their society” (244). Human nature may be deterministic and unchangeable, however, there is hope for the reader as these entail an optimistic assumption that the course of the future may be changed.

While critical dystopias in recent years have garnered much critical inquiry, the contributions made by imaginative dystopic fiction in the genesis and growth of the genre have largely been overlooked. This paper argues that the study of imaginative dystopias is critical to understanding the enduring significance of the genre in contemporary society. This is because they show evidence of nascent hope and utopic impulses that could possibly lend to a more critical study. Further, their treatment of memory as the central preoccupation of the genre sheds light on not just how narratives of the past are manipulated but also provides a framework through which these manipulations can be studied and the inaccuracies and obfuscations of the past can be reversed.

Memory, History, and Forgetting in Dystopic Fiction

Derrida, in his 1995 essay on archives successfully establishes a vital link between archives and those in power and even the nature of power itself. This, he does by going back to the etymological origins of the word “archive”, tracing it back to the Greek word “*arkheion*” which referred to “a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded” (Derrida 9). Therefore, the very origin of the word gives evidence of its association with political power. It was a testimony approved by the few ‘who commanded’ or, the official word. Since archives

are kept by a collective, public, or state body, they often reflect the hegemonic discourse. Therefore, they may often preserve certain records and documentation while ignoring or deliberately concealing and destroying others. In such cases, archives of the past may contradict memories of the past. Social upheavals, political oppression, and militant regimes may be reflected differently in archives. It is memory, therefore, that separates utopia from dystopia.

Kayışci Akkoyun also highlights the importance of memory in utopia and later in dystopia. For the former, he cites J. B. da Silva who asserted that “utopianism begins in memory” (Qtd. in Kayışci Akkoyun 63). Silva cites Plato’s theory of epistemology and his emphasis on the idea of ‘anamnesis’ in the formation of the perfect polis in the Republic to establish the link between memory and utopia. “Anamnesis”, according to Plato, hints at innate knowledge that is within mankind before birth, he hints at the fact that mankind has the imprint of perfection within him at birth and learning involves rediscovering this knowledge in life. The essay also mentions the importance of memory in Tomas More’s *Utopia* (63), since the commemoration of King Utopus and the whole tractate was based on Hythloday’s recollection. For the function of memory in dystopia, Akkoyun points out that, “totalitarian regimes and corporations reshape or sever the links between the past, the present, and the future” (Kayışci Akkoyun 62) and while his focus is on “oppositional recordkeeping” (62), the paper also underlines the complex cognitive clash between individual (private) memory and public (archival or collective) memory and how resistance in such regimes lies in the effort to preserve the latter from being overtaken, rewritten and subsumed by the latter. Foust, too, in his essay highlights the undeniable importance of memory as evidenced in the “central preoccupation with books, records, manuals, documents, dictionaries, and history” in dystopic fiction (86).

While totalitarian regimes aim to minimize the possibility of dissent by obliterating the link between the past and present through systematic manipulation and erasure of such memory archives, the dissenting protagonist often finds his means of preserving memory. In the opening chapter of his book, Carter F. Hanson quotes Tom Barnard who underlines the problem behind Utopias, calling them extraneous to reality; “What a cheat utopia are, no wonder people hate them. Engineer some

fresh start, an island, a new continent, dispossess them, give them a planet, sure! . . . So the utopias in books are pocket utopias too. Ahistorical, static, why should we read them?” (Qtd. Hanson, 20).

Hanson, too acknowledges the “problem of memory” within utopia which is, in own words, “the problem of utopias being sequestered from history” (Hanson 20). Further, critics like Baccolini emphasise the importance of placing oneself within history and making the past our own to allow oneself the agency to affect changes in the present and be more in charge of one’s future. Therefore, Dystopias play to a political agenda, inciting resistance and encouraging the reader to actively participate in public memory, adding dissonant voices of dissent and compliance into a progressively changeable history.

Dystopias seem sequestered from both history and political reality, however, unlike utopias, their obfuscation of memory, like its veiling of reality only serves to highlight its importance in framing the past, present, and future. Ironically, in an attempt to erase public memory, it often makes it appear all the more important and leads to “counter-narratives” (Kayaşci Akkoyun 64) of resistance. These counter-narratives entail individual accounts, witness statements, and victim testimonies that remember the past differently than the ‘official’ state-sponsored history. Akkoyun further admits that it was with the rise in Dystopic fiction that memory was given its real due importance in the construction of social and political reality:

[It was with the] rise of dystopian fiction that preservation, manipulation, and destruction of historical memory, archival politics, and the possibility of resistance through record keeping come to the foreground in line with the atrocities afflicting the twentieth century. (Kayaşci Akkoyun 64)

Therefore, Dystopia highlights the importance of memory through a cautionary display of what the world would be like without it. It encourages the protagonists within the text and the reader outside the text, to take a revisionary look at the ‘official’ versions of history. It normalises dissent against the reframing of history based on political agendas and bolsters the innate urge to archive individual experiences. As the author further notes about dystopia, they “portray how totalitarian regimes and

corporations reshape or altogether sever the links between the past, the present, and the future” (Kayaşci Akkoyun 64), thereby encouraging a distinction between “a narrative of the hegemonic order and a counter-narrative of resistance” in Baccolini and Moylan’s terms. (qtd. Kayaşci Akkoyun, 64).

As Ketelaar points out in his essay:

Records have power and are a power. They have power as instruments of authority and control: for effecting knowledge-power, control, surveillance and discipline-in too many cases for enforcing oppression too. The powers in society depend on record keeping. But records can also have the power to be instruments of empowerment and liberation. (Ketelaar 297)

Extending this argument further and applying it to the case of traumatic memories, Aleida Assmann points out that ‘truth’ is often directly associated with the memory of a victim in case of trauma (Assmann A. 1). Cathy Caruth, in her most seminal work on trauma and narrative posits that normal memory differs from traumatic memory just as everyday experiences differ from traumatic experiences (Caruth 117) in that traumatic experiences are ‘deferred’ and not fully grasped as they occur (117). Instead of following the rules of temporality, traumatic experiences often work using cyclic repetitions within the psyche of the victim (65). Caruth highlights the importance of literature (just like Freud) in understanding the complexity of trauma memory and its relationship with temporality (Caruth 3). The reason she cites this is that literature is often interested in the interplay between the known and the unknown (Caruth 3). This interplay is evidenced within the genre of dystopia.

Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic insight into the human mind have been frequently referenced by critics in their discussion on memory. Kayaşci Akkoyun employs Freud’s concept of the ‘death drive’ as a metaphor for the death of archives and the archivists in Dystopic fiction. As Freud says “the aim of all life is death” (Freud 32) so, arguably the end goal of memory is forgetting since all things instinctively march towards oblivion. Assmann presents a similar psychoanalytical argument for forgetting, this time by employing the Freudian concept of ‘belatedness’ (Assmann A.

4). Assmann expounds upon, the idea of ‘chosen amnesia’ which was introduced by Buckley-Zistel (qtd. in Assmann A. 11) by stating that, “it is not possible to neatly separate remembering and forgetting. Every act of remembrance, whether individual or collective, necessarily involves selective, partial, or otherwise biased forms of forgetting” (Assmann A. 5). In light of this, Assmann makes a compelling case for forgetting rather than remembering complex traumatic memories. To her, while remembering is a ‘social and cultural resource’ it is in forgetting that lies one’s ‘cultural achievement’ (53). She appraises the implications of memory thoroughly and concludes that forgetting mollifies the individual and makes him a better fit in a peaceful society. In cases of dystopia, the victims suffer a cognitive dissonance between the conflicting realities of their past and present. The only way to reconcile these contradictory realities is through forgetting. Assmann eventually makes the case for memory instead of forgetting but does admit that ‘short periods of forgetting’ (11) can help one acclimatise within a community and help deal with the emotional complexities of surviving a violent past.

Memory in Imaginative Dystopias: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World*

While Utopia takes recourse to myth-making, dystopia according to Foust is “fictive in the full sense of the word: it is a sceptical, provisional and historically rather than mythically oriented” (81) in its adherence to the narrative of human imperfection. Perhaps it is because it aims to demystify some ingrained societal practices and believes that ritual plays a vital role in Dystopia. One frequently played-out ritual in dystopia is that of punishment of the “political scapegoat” (81). In *Nineteen Eighty-Nine*, this scapegoat is Winston Smith; in *Brave New World*, it is shown to be John. Here, education is debased to become a tool for behavioural control, and an initial burst of revolt is followed by despair and compliance.

The training of or the control of public memory is just another method of control displayed in science fiction. In the words of George Orwell, “he who controls the present controls the past, and he who controls the past controls the future” (Orwell 24). Foust elaborates on Orwell’s aphorism by saying that:

The key to political control lies in manipulating memory; the past constitutes our collective memory, which lies in books containing the empirical record of historical events. Without a sense of the past, of history as a series of verifiable actions, the individual cannot form political judgments, since he has no standard against which to compare present events.”

(Foust 85)

Since knowledge of past events gives agency to the individual, “Collective human memory is the true enemy of the dystopian state” (Foust 85). Thus, Winston is involved with the systematic destruction of records in his government-appointed task in the “Ministry of Truth” to re-write history and rid it of its so-called ‘inaccuracies.’ However, he also begins to keep his own diary writing, which is a capital offence as it represents faithful records and individual memories that are antithetical to the objectives of the state. As Jan Assmann puts it, “cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth (Assmann J. 43)”. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* presents a world where inaccuracies are systematically assimilated into history, popular discourse, public media, and even myth. In the words of George Orwell, “All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary” (Orwell 28).

In the novel, the dissident protagonist Winston Smith does not remember his childhood, perhaps because his current dystopic hellscape is disparate from the memories of his home and mother. The state has impinged upon his memories till nothing has remained except the present “nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible” (Orwell 3). In the dystopic war-torn Oceania, Winston does not remember a time before the Party, since the past would serve only as a means of comparison and would be detrimental to the safety of the Party.

Winston’s seemingly insignificant act of defiance, writing a diary, would prove to have momentous reverberations. As Moylan points out, his act of writing was an attempt to ‘reappropriate language’ in order to ‘reconstruct an empowering memory’ (Moylan 170).

With the past suppressed and the present reduced to the empirica of daily life, dystopian subjects usually lose all recollection of the way things were before the new order, but by regaining language they also recover the ability to draw on the alternative truths of the past and "speak back" to hegemonic power (Moynan 170).

Winston ponders over the unreliability of his own mind in the face of the constant influx of falsehoods through media and language and concludes that the government of Oceania had uncovered the secret behind controlling the masses: "All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. 'Reality control', they called it: in Newspeak, 'doublethink'" (Orwell 24). This was the ability of an ideal citizen of a totalitarian regime to allow contradictions like knowledge and ignorance, truth and falsehoods to co-exist simultaneously within his consciousness (24). The hostility towards memory is evidenced by the fact that the documents to be destroyed were sent down tubes called "memory holes" (26). At the end of the hole, the documents dropped would be incinerated, leaving no trace behind. The tubes served as an unmistakable metaphor for the place of memory in a land of fabricated pasts. Winston's ability to retain memory that conflicts with the licensed 'truth' makes him an ideal candidate to serve as the 'political scapegoat' by the end of the novel. It was through memory that he seized agency, although the process can be called neither complex nor dignified, he retained his individuality in a world of rigorous homogeneity—a process that left him feeling isolated "Was he, then, alone in the possession of a memory?" (40). Alida Assmann has argued that forgetfulness makes the condition more tolerable and Orwell seems to agree "Why should one feel it to be intolerable unless one had some kind of ancestral memory that things had once been different?" (Orwell 41). But the forgetfulness is temporary and memory resurfaces despite all conditioning and trauma.

The party also strategically mythologizes the figure of Big Brother who is emblematic of the party and serves as the face behind which faceless and powerful maintain anonymity. His origin and his ideas are falsified and widely accepted such that "the lie passed into history and became truth" (24). Winston often refers to the time before Oceania with vague nostalgia, as if attempting to

recollect 'ancestral memory' (67). This possibly aligns closely with the aforementioned idea of "anamnesis" as it hints at innate thought and impulses towards freedom. These recollections appear as fragmented vignettes of laughter and warmth, where he remembers his mother's love in a time before hatred and fear (208). As Hanson points out, "Discovering through memory that life in the past was better than in the present, dystopian dissidents, while perhaps prone to nostalgia, find a utopian focal point in the past that channels their resistance" (10).

Finally caught by the panoptic party's many screens, Winston is tortured and brainwashed. He suffers from a cognitive break where he can no longer distinguish between the real and the implanted memories and comes to accept the narrative given to him by the State "History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right" (108). Despite his ultimate and inevitable psychological unravelling, Winston warrants a special place in the discussion of dystopia and memory. Despite Orwell's elitist scorn at the notion of proletariat revolt, there are impulses in the novel that elevate it from a manifesto of despair to a treatise on freedom and hope for a better future. Not only did Winston pave the way for the future generations of dissenters and rebels that were written into existence in dystopian literature, but he also established the enduring importance of individual memory as a bulwark against the archival machinery of totalitarianism. As evidenced by his conversation with O'Brien during a torture session:

[O'Brien:] 'Ashes,' he said. 'Not even identifiable ashes. Dust. It does not exist. It never existed.'

[Winston:] 'But it did exist! It does exist! It exists in memory. I remember it. You remember it.' (172)

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley shows a similar world where people are manipulated using conditioning and chemical supplements. This world entails a society where people are biologically engineered into classes ever since their birth:

Till at last the child's mind is these suggestions, and the sum of the suggestions is the child's mind. And not the child's mind only. The adult's mind too—all his life long. The mind that

judges and desires and decides—made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are our suggestions!" The Director almost shouted in his triumph. "Suggestions from the State."
(Huxley 13)

Individuality is completely eradicated through conditioning and drugs. Human constituents of the state are nothing more than cogs in the larger machinery of the State. This dehumanisation of the individual is seen by Theodore Adorno in his essay as a “contradictory production of contemporary capitalist culture” (qtd. in Moylan, 143). The condition of the subjects thus born and raised exposes a terrible truth about the contemporary capitalist, profit-driven enterprises that treat humanity as a means to an economic end. To this end, every resource that adds meaning and depth to humanity is strictly regulated and prohibited. In the famed, oft-repeated words of Ford, “History is bunk” (15), meaning that it adds no value to society and humanity’s wellbeing. With the status and class of a person predetermined at birth, there is a sinister undertone to “You really know where you are. For the first time in history” (3) as instead of words of liberation, they begin to drive home the lack of mobility and free will within this world. This conditioning is done to ensure identity, community, and stability. This brings to mind the words of Octavia Butler who says, “I’ve actually never projected an ideal society. I don’t believe that imperfect humans can form a perfect society” (qtd. in Zaki, 239). An attempt to enforce uniformity and perfection leads to a society that curtails free will in favour of compliance and homogeneity.

In *Brave New World*, the archives of the past are not destroyed or heavily guarded, rather through systematic conditioning, people are made to believe that whatever existed before their own known reality was perverse and unenviable. Not only that, the past is distanced from the present in a way that makes it appear almost disconnected and disjointed from reality. Widespread social and cultural institutions like marriage and religion are looked at through the lens of estrangement, hostility, and even disgust. The activities of the elderly, for example:

“Work, play—at sixty our powers and tastes are what they were at seventeen. Old men in the bad old days used to renounce, retire, take to religion, spend their time reading, thinking—thinking!”

"Idiots, swine!" Bernard Marx was saying to himself. (26)

These people are made to disassociate with their past as a time of ‘savagery’ that was now beneath them. All the while they use narcotics to replace the essential aspects of human entelechy that they lost along the way, morality, love, faith, etc. “Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your mortality about in a bottle. Christianity without tears—that’s what soma is” (102). The world is therefore one that has traded in memory and truth for narcotic-induced ‘happiness’ and an infantile existence as a part of a production line in a strictly utilitarian community. It is a hollow world devoid of art, culture, and all other facets of civilization that add depth and value to human life. “Our Ford himself did a great deal to shift the emphasis from truth and beauty to comfort and happiness. Mass production demanded the shift. Universal happiness keeps the wheels steadily turning; truth and beauty can’t” (98).

John represents these lost values through his frequent quotations from the 900 books of Shakespeare’s collected work that he has memories of. The book anchors him in a world that he does not understand and finds unfamiliar and anaesthetized against the memories of the ‘real.’ John’s short venture into this world ends in disaster and death, much like Winston, he is unable to affect any real change however, his attempts at reconciling his moralistic old-world ideals with the new-age amoral reality are noteworthy. As a failed ‘social experiment’ he highlights the importance of negotiating with the past for the sake of preserving collective human values that give life meaning.

Conclusion

Herbert Marcuse analyses the state of man in a totalitarian dystopia by saying that it silences “those needs which demand liberation . . . while it sustains and absolves the destructive power and repressive function of the affluent society” (7). The two texts discussed in the paper have been subject to considerable scrutiny by dystopian scholarship. The current paper attempts to locate them within the

origins of the genre by defining their preoccupations, functions, and shortcomings. They may view the totalitarian world that they depict from an imaginative lens rather than a critical one but their preoccupation with history alleviates them from passive observations on man's imperfection to active inquiries into the function of history, memory, archives, and the role of forgetting in oppressive regimes. As Marcuse points out, "suppression of history... It is suppression of the society's own past—and of its future, [and] inasmuch as this future invokes the qualitative change, the negation of the present" (97). Despite the defence for forgetting put forth by both Aleida Assmann and Cathy Caruth, it is memory that constitutes the finer aspects of humanity. While imaginative dystopias like *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may bring to light the fantastic demise of utopic aspirations, they serve as speculative discourse on the inimitable place of memory and forgetting in human civilization. It is an interplay between memory and forgetfulness that constitutes the basis of human action and agency and indeed comprises the fabric with which the tapestry of identity is weaved.

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Unveiling Caste Trauma: Thenmozhi Soundararajan's Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition

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Abstract: The book titled *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition*, authored by Thenmozhi Soundararajan, is a groundbreaking work that delves into the enduring trauma created by caste-based segregation. Soundararajan, a prominent Dalit American activist and a leading advocate in the struggle against caste discrimination combines a rigorous examination of the caste with reflections on recovery and resilience. While the historical context of Dalit oppression is well-known, this paper will critically analyse caste trauma from the perspectives of feminism, abolitionism, and the teachings of Dalit Buddhism, aiming for a more profound understanding of the interplay between historical trauma, generational trauma and liberation.

Keywords: Caste Apartheid, Trauma, Survivorship, Abolition, Diaspora, Resistance, Liberation

In her groundbreaking book *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Reflection on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition*, Thenmozhi Soundararajan introduces the concept of "Dalit" as synonymous with "brokenness." She eloquently states, "This brokenness stems from the profound loss of human potential to this violent system—a life not fully lived, and souls silenced, unable to sing their complete song" (Soundararajan 2). This depiction, she argues, is not merely figurative but a tangible consequence of enduring the relentless suffering imposed by the oppressive caste system—the world's oldest and most enduring dominator system, sanctioned by ancient scriptures and perpetuated

through egregious acts of violence. Throughout the centuries, Dalits have borne the weight of suffering, oppression, and trauma inflicted by this deeply entrenched social hierarchy.

As a leading figure in the Indian American Dalit rights movement, Thenmozhi Soundararajan brings a deeply personal and authentic perspective to her activism. Through her role as the founder of Equality Labs, the most prominent Dalit civil rights organisation in the United States, she not only offers scholarly insights but also draws from her own experiences as a Dalit woman. Soundararajan's book is structured into four distinct sections, which she terms meditations, providing readers with a framework for navigating the complexities of caste oppression and resilience.

In the first meditation of her book, Soundararajan narrates memories from her childhood and reflects on how she came to understand her Dalit identity. Although she did not directly encounter the discrimination that her ancestors faced, she vividly portrays the inheritance of the collective trauma associated with the term "Dalit." She defines this experience as being "broken" by the enduring weight of suffering and the oppressive caste system. She eloquently expresses the daily confrontation with caste in her house, family, and even within herself, emphasising the inescapable nature of this form of oppression, "I faced caste every day in my house, in my family, and in my own body. There is no escaping it" (Soundararajan 3). She delves into the intricate nature of trauma, defining it as an intergenerational affliction transmitted from one generation to the next.

Soundararajan emphasises the role of silence and secrecy in perpetuating this traumatic legacy, making a poignant plea for both the oppressor and the oppressed to take responsibility and address how trauma manifests. Drawing from Peter Levine's insights, she articulates that "trauma occurs when blocked energies from hurtful experiences cannot be released, underscoring the importance of empathetic witnesses in the healing process" (19).

The second meditation, titled *The Source of Caste* (41), explores the historical roots and mythological constructs that form the basis of the caste system. Soundararajan delves into the Vedic notions of Karma and Dharma, explaining how these concepts have historically shaped social hierarchies in India. The caste pyramid, she explains, is a complex framework based on the Vedic

notion of the perceived sacredness of different parts of the human body, with an individual's caste determined by their actions in past lives. She critically examines the caste hierarchy, highlighting the Brahminical patriarchy embedded in Hindu scriptures that perpetuates social, economic, and cultural marginalisation. She advocates for the transformation of institutions of faith that have historically been weaponised to harm marginalised communities. The narrative unveils the systemic injustices inherent in the caste system and emphasises the urgent need for change.

In the third section, *From Wounds to Liberation* (80), Soundararajan delves into the intersection of caste and gender. She introduces the concept of Brahminical patriarchy, defining it as "the ideology that the dominant caste adheres to in marginalising the caste-oppressed across various dimensions" (97). As a Dalit feminist, Soundararajan argues that caste cannot be eradicated without addressing patriarchy. She sheds light on how Hindu scriptures control interactions across caste, religion, sexuality, and love. The section also addresses the gendered nature of caste trauma, with a focus on caste and sexual violence, stress, and suicide resulting from "caste apartheid," and states, "Caste is trauma" (18). She contends that caste trauma is a fundamental barrier to Dalit liberation and insists on the necessity of addressing this trauma to achieve equality and liberation. Notably, she briefly mentions Dalit Buddhism, highlighting its significance for identity and resistance.

The book's final section marks a crucial shift in focus from exposing the wounds of caste to a plea for addressing and healing these "soul wounds." Soundararajan states that the historical trauma of caste creates soul wounds, and until these wounds are healed, the cycle of violence and trauma will persist. She argues that caste can only end when the soul is healed, offering a profound perspective on the cyclical nature of trauma within the Dalit community. She concurs with trauma therapist Resmaa Menakem's assertion that marginalised and oppressed individuals must perceive systems of exclusion through a trauma-informed lens. This approach entails acknowledging the racial soul wound that underpins persistent racial violence and marginalisation. Soul wounds, she explains, denote the profound, enduring anguish stemming from historical trauma, a term frequently associated with the intergenerational suffering experienced by Native Americans. The book's central argument

becomes clear as Soundararajan calls for attention to the emotional wounds of caste. She contends that the veiled nature and hushed conversations surrounding caste-based trauma create formidable barriers for Dalits seeking healing and recovery. Her narrative constructs a moving exploration of the systemic violence and trauma embedded in the caste structure, tracing its profound and enduring impacts on the lives of Dalits. Reflecting on the enduring struggles of the Dalit heritage, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, an eloquent advocate, shares on her Twitter page, Dalit Diva:

As the daughter of people oppressed for thousands of years, I am also the artefact of centuries of their love and resilience. In that, there is hope for everything. May a myriad of blossoms unfurl in your heart and mine for our liberation. (Dalit Diva)

This poignant expression encapsulates the indomitable spirit and collective optimism ingrained in the history of a community that has faced oppression and trauma on the mind and body across the ages.

Soundararajan's work posits the caste system as a form of intergenerational trauma, where the suffering of one generation is passed on to the next. This trauma, deeply rooted in discrimination, violence, and poverty, affects the collective consciousness and identity of the Dalit community. This sentiment is echoed perfectly in a review of *Trauma of Caste* by Mallikabooks, which aptly states:

The book not only sheds light on the continued violence and trauma faced by the caste-oppressed, spanning regions from South Asia to the global stage but also underscores how these wounds etch themselves into the very soul, persisting across generations."
(Mallikabooks)

The trauma, Soundararajan argues, manifests as deep soul scars carried forward through generations, impacting even those Dalits who may not have directly encountered caste-based discrimination. The censorship surrounding caste-based trauma, according to her, forms an additional layer of trauma itself. This becomes a significant barrier to seeking assistance and support, hindering the ability to process trauma and move forward in life. Leigh Gilmore, who holds a position as a professor in English and Gender Studies at Williams College, offers a definition of trauma as an experience that fundamentally alters one's sense of self due to violence, injury, or harm. She articulates; "Trauma is

not confined to a single, identifiable violent event in an individual's history but rather resides in the manner in which its unprocessed and initially incomprehensible nature resurfaces to unsettle the survivor at a later point" (Gilmore 1).

Dalit narratives, like Soundararajan's, challenge the dominant caste narrative, providing a compelling critique of the system and offering valuable insights into the real-life struggles faced by Dalits. These narratives serve as a means to comprehend the profound impact of caste on trauma and the journey toward healing. The book emphasises how the pervasive nature of the caste system makes it exceedingly challenging for Dalits to break free from the cycle of trauma, as they are persistently confronted with reminders of their marginalised status.

Jeffery Alexander's assertion that "whole communities can suffer atrocities, with traumatic effects reverberating through the fabric of the community and society for generations" (Alexander 30) aligns with Soundararajan's depiction of the long history of trauma endured by Dalits. The intergenerational transmission of trauma becomes a central theme, making it difficult for Dalits to heal, as they may feel constantly reliving the experiences of their ancestors.

The concepts of trauma and post-memory are intertwined in the analysis of caste-related trauma, which is defined as an intensely distressing experience with enduring effects on physical and mental well-being and finds resonance in the experiences of Dalits. Post-memory, as articulated by Marianne Hirsch, also the originator of the post-memory theory, characterises it as a distinct form of remembrance that is set apart from personal memory by the passage of generations. It further distinguishes itself from historical memory through its emotional and affective connections to the past. Hirsch succinctly defines the theory as "marked by generational distance and distinguished from history by the emotional resonance of its link to the past" (Hirsch 28–103). In the context of caste-related trauma, post-memory serves as a mechanism through which the experiences of Dalits are transmitted across successive generations. Soundararajan's personal reflections and the narratives of other Dalits documented in the text illustrate the impact of post-memory. Her parents' experience with caste trauma is shared by her within the text:

My mother never expected to engage in such a conversation while in America. The preceding generation, including my parents, carried a certain innocence. They held the belief that they had left behind the spectre of caste discrimination upon their arrival in the United States. They were enveloped in an ardent sense of hope, as they constituted the initial cohort to reap the benefits of affirmative action programmes. These programmes facilitated Dalits in obtaining advanced education and pursuing careers overseas, coinciding with a surge of South Asian immigration to the U.S. during the 1970s. (Soundararajan 22)

Dalit feminists, like Soundararajan, actively engage in resistance and recovery efforts related to caste-based trauma through various avenues. Soundararajan, in particular, is dedicated to increasing awareness about the issue, providing support services, and leveraging art and literature as tools to challenge the caste system. The adoption of Buddhism by Dalits, as discussed by her, represents a decisive rejection of the oppressive caste system and serves as a theoretical framework for Dalit resistance and empowerment. She also unfolds avenues through which Dalits can resist and recover from the clutches of caste-based trauma. Acknowledgement and active engagement with trauma have become crucial components of the Dalit liberation movement. Soundararajan's journey, from growing up with Hindu and Christian influences to adopting Buddhism as an adult, reflects the complexity of navigating caste identity. Her adoption of Buddhism becomes a symbolic act of breaking free from the challenges of her background, aligning with the Buddha's insights into suffering. Her call for Buddhists to recognise the impact of caste alongside racial disparities emphasises the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression. The teachings of Dalit Buddhism serve as a theoretical framework, offering insights into the resilience and empowerment sought by the Dalit community. As presented by her, the vision of a caste-free world underscores the Dalit feminist perspective on resistance and reclamation. Buddhism and its teaching as a path to liberation align with the rejection of the caste system and offer a way to heal from the soul wounds inflicted by centuries of discrimination. Her work serves as a testament to the multifaceted nature of Dalit resistance, encompassing cultural, spiritual, and socio-political dimensions.

Presently, Soundararajan is a compelling advocate for Dalit rights, utilising her influential voice for the cause. Her impact resonates on esteemed global platforms, where she has delivered compelling addresses on human rights and humanity. In an interview with The Hindu newspaper, Soundararajan stresses the importance of humanity today, “The responsibility to life is pervasive. It cannot simply be borne by the oppressed. We gain immensely when we return to the family of humanity” (Datta). Acknowledgement from reputable publications like The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and The Guardian validates the importance of her contributions. Awards, including the Just Films Fellowship from the Ford Foundation and the Visionary Award from the Asian American Legal Défense and Education Fund, emphasise her commitment and influence in combating caste discrimination. Soundararajan’s unwavering commitment to raising awareness and amplifying the voices of Dalits positions her as a critical figure in the ongoing struggle for a more just and equitable society. Her efforts contribute to the dismantling of the culture of silence surrounding caste-based trauma, encouraging open discussions and active engagement with the issues faced by the Dalit community.

In conclusion, Thenmozhi Soundararajan’s *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition* profoundly explores the lasting impacts of caste trauma on Dalit individuals. Through her personal experiences, scholarly analysis, and Dalit feminist perspective, Soundararajan offers valuable insights into the intergenerational nature of caste trauma. Her work is a call to action, urging readers to confront historical and systemic injustices, break the culture of silence, and actively work towards abolishing the caste system.

The book is an indispensable contribution to the discourse on caste and trauma, offering a pathway toward healing and liberation for the Dalit community. Soundararajan’s narrative goes beyond mere documentation of suffering; it becomes a meditation on survivorship, healing, and abolition. By combining personal reflections with a broader analysis of the caste system’s historical roots, she creates a comprehensive narrative that resonates with readers on both an emotional and intellectual level. The intersection of caste and trauma, as presented by Soundararajan, reveals the

profound challenges faced by Dalits and the urgency of addressing both the visible and invisible wounds inflicted by the caste system. The cyclical nature of trauma, the intergenerational transmission of pain, and the culture of silence are masterfully woven into a narrative that calls for empathy, understanding, and collective action.

Soundararajan's work serves as a powerful testament to the resilience of the Dalit community and their unwavering commitment to liberation. Through Dalit feminist resistance, engagement with Buddhism, and a nuanced exploration of trauma and post-memory, Soundararajan invites readers to participate in the collective journey toward healing. *The Trauma of Caste: A Dalit Feminist Meditation on Survivorship, Healing, and Abolition* stands as a beacon of hope, challenging not only the caste system itself but also the structures that sustain and perpetuate the trauma experienced by Dalits.

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Lesbian Literature in Poland: Authors, Reception and Social Presence

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Abstract: In Polish literature, lesbian motifs appear in the mid-nineteenth century, and further representations of this theme are occasional. Only after 1989 (the fall of the socialist countries in Europe) did the lesbian themes become clearer. However, the real eruption of Polish lesbian literature took place in the last two decades of the 21st century.

Polish literary studies on the lesbian motif show the creations of lesbian heroines contained in the works (healer, hidden lover, "full-fledged" partner, warrior) and point to the problem of the presence of lesbians in traditional Catholic society. Authors of both literary works and texts of literary criticism fight to reject the stereotype and stigma of lesbian love. Lesbian literature in Poland is becoming one of the forms of manifesting a woman's subjectivity, an expression of the right to freedom of belief and choice of life model.

Keywords: Polish Literature, Lesbian Literature, Stereotype, Stigma, Woman's Subjectivity, Life in Polish Culture

Terminological and Historical Notes

Before proceeding to the description of the issue, it is necessary to determine the meanings of the words used. Thus, lesbian literature in Poland can be defined as texts written by lesbians expressing lesbian experiences or reflecting a lesbian existential perspective (Faderman 49-59; Nadana-Sokołowska 270). The Polish context of lesbian literature is different from the phenomena occurring in multiracial, multiethnic or multilingual societies. In its mainstream, Polish culture contains, to a limited extent, issues that appear in postcolonial discourse. It has absolutely no sensitive issues associated with black women's brand of feminism.

Such a general definition requires a few additions, especially regarding the vague category of the experience of existence. Firstly, lesbian literature considers the perspective of a non-heteronormative woman not only through the social attitude of the actual author of the work but also through the fictional construction of the literary character. Literary creations present a different sensitivity and a different type of existential experience of the heroines. Cultural (clothing) or linguistic (sociolects) codes specific to the lesbian community are also introduced, which emphasise women's subjectivity. Secondly, the lesbian experience presented in literary descriptions concerns not only an individual example of interpersonal relationships but also shows lesbian love as a full-fledged model of interpersonal relationships. What is very important here is the belief that homosexuality is not a deviation from sexual life or a social dysfunction but one of the forms of contemporary human expression. Literature written from this perspective raises awareness of the phenomena of legal inequality (formalisation of same-sex relationships), disproportions in professional life (unfair wage system) and political responsibility (problems of communities or political parties). Thirdly, the lesbian existential perspective can be understood as an element of the socio-political feminist consciousness of contemporary women who treat the literature of sexual minorities as a record of the world they identify with. Literature written from this perspective raises awareness of the phenomena of legal inequality (formalisation of same-sex relationships), disproportions in professional life (unfair wage system) and political responsibility (problems of communities or political parties). Fourthly, the most important factor in qualifying a work as lesbian literature is the actual author, not literary critics or ordinary readers. In this point of view, only women can be considered as authors who "truly" write about the world of lesbians, and the voices of male authors can be a kind of complement to women's narratives. All the aspects of the existential experience mentioned above represented in literature are at least partially related to the demands of radical feminism expressed already in the 1970s by Adrienne Rich (Rich 1980).

The first signals in Polish literature related to the description of women's homosexuality appeared in the works of the 19th-century writer Narcyza Żmichowska (*Poganka*, eng. Pagan woman,

1846; *Biała Róża*, eng. White Rose, 1861). However, they were camouflaged to such an extent in the applied poetics of the romance-symbolic novel that in the era they appeared, they were not identified with the literary image of lesbian love. Also, later prose productions from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by Aniela Gruszecka (*Przygody w nieznanym kraju*, eng. Adventure in an Unknown Country, 1935) or even later ones by Anna Kowalska (*Safona*, eng. Sappho, 1959) were treated marginally as a kind of artistic experiment or a gesture of moral provocation. Such a reception cannot be too surprising. The situation of Polish culture in the 19th century, when Poles did not have their own free state and were subject to cultural and administrative pressure from Russia, Prussia or Austria-Hungary, was challenging, and there was no space here for the issue of gender identity. Equally unfavourable years came after Poland regained its independence in 1918 when, despite many avant-garde trends in Polish literature and the appearance of works with gay motifs, lesbian themes were almost absent. The period of the People's Republic of Poland (1948-1989), when Polish culture was under the influence of the socialist model of political and social life, did not change the situation of the absence of lesbian literature. The absence of a lesbian motif in Polish literature of that time can be explained by the apparent liberalism of socialism, which, on the one hand, postulated equal rights for women, encouraged political activity or granted them the right to abortion, but on the other hand, maintained the patriarchal model of society. Concerning literature, the representatives of socialist art criticism forbade writers from referring to homosexuality because, according to them, it showed the moral decline of man.

It was not until 1989 that works by Izabela Morska (Filipiak) (*Absolutna amnezja*, eng. Absolute amnesia; *Perszing*, eng. Pershing from the volume *Niebieska menażeria*, eng. The Blue Menagerie) and Ewa Schilling (*Lustro*, eng. *Mirror*; *Akacja*, eng. Acacia) appeared in Polish literature, which can be considered the first, so expressive and even programmatic examples of works by women authors writing about lesbian love. It was a time of deep reevaluation in Polish society, which could use the cultural goods of Western Europe without the restrictions of political or moral censorship. The socialist worldview is no longer the binding interpretation of moral behaviour, and

liberal attitudes, including feminism, have become increasingly more robust. Moreover, the Polish Catholic Church quickly lost its position as the only source of moral norms, and religious movements related to the New Age movement began to develop rapidly. In the context of cultural changes and the topic of homosexuality, a significant event in Poland was the year 2003 and the social campaign "Let them see us", which introduced the topic/image of gays and lesbians into the public social discourse. Billboards with photos of homosexual couples appeared on the streets, coming outs of famous figures of culture and art were published in the press, and media events were organised in which gender issues were discussed. In literary life, novels by Michał Witkowski (*Lubiewo*, eng. *Lubiewo*) and Magdalena Okoniewska (*Mój świat jest kobietą. Dziennik lesbijki*, eng. *My world is a woman. Diary of a lesbian*) appeared, which were always manifestations of work on homosexual topics. The literary image of a lesbian slowly ceased to be treated as a social provocation, and in the cultural reality of Poland in the 21st century, it is no longer considered an extravagance. Literature created by lesbians has been the subject of several literary studies, and in the socio-political dimension, the lesbian community has its place in Polish associations of sexual minorities (Adamowicz 81-90; Iwasiów; Cuber). Lesbians co-create the feminist movement in Poland (Kalinowski 173-192), having their leaders and engaging in public and artistic life (e.g. Sylwia Chutnik).

Heroines of Polish Lesbian Prose

Discussing some of the most significant examples of Polish lesbian literature, we can identify several artistic projections of Polish lesbians based on the heroines created in the works. Of course, these are literary constructions that can be described in more detail and more texts. However, it is worth pointing out the most expressive examples to determine their semantic functions (Mikołajczak). Here, however, it is worth pointing out the most expressive literary examples to determine their semantic functions and indicate their role in introducing a type of hero that is new to Polish literature.

The first type of lesbian heroine in a novel or short story is a healer who brings an improvement in the existential situation of another, usually unhappy, woman. The healing feature

sometimes has a mental dimension, and then the recipient of the help changes her style of thinking or comes out of mental depression. Sometimes, the healer changes the whole model of the life of the suffering and healed person, which causes the treated person to divorce her boyfriend-lover, divorce her husband, and change her job and place of residence. The positive figure of the healer appears in both the heterosexual and homosexual narratives of the healed heroine (*Lustro* and *Akacja* by Ewa Schilling). The healer interferes deeply in the life of such a woman who has disturbed relations with men. The lesbian heroine shows another suffocated and lost woman how much she lost her subjective "I" and how she erred, subordinating herself to the heterosexual social norm imposed by men. In still other cases of the novel, the heroine-healer can rescue a lost woman from a physical illness (*Jedno lato, drugie lato*, eng. *One summer, another summer*, by Małgorzata Wudarczyk, *Słońce*, eng. *Sun*, by Monika Mostowik). With her care, presence, joy of mind and style, she restores a lost woman's will to live and allows her to look at the future with optimism (*Alina i Teresa*, eng. *Alina and Teresa*, by Ewa Schilling, *Bumerang*, eng. *Boomerang*; *Kolce*, eng. *Spikes*, and by Monika Mostowik). The examples of lesbians in the novel refer to the ideas of homosexual marriages expressed by sexual minority communities, in which procreation is not the primary goal of the family. This does not mean that homosexual couples should give up having children. The lesbian love relationship is about mutual psychological understanding, mental support, the ability to realise one's personality, satisfaction of sexual desire and/or having children (Halberstam 317). Sometimes, such literary projections appear to be a modern fairy tale because lesbian healers appear suddenly in the lives of suffering women, and their character or physical characteristics are idealised. However, this idealistic-utopian aura of the narrative is intended to show the non-rational power of lesbian love (Jagose; Martindale).

The second type of projection of the positive lesbian heroine is the figure of a secret lover who, at the end of her partner's self-development process, is finally revealed to her family, friends and the world. The factor of private secrecy and the formula of social taboo is significant here because the authors of the quoted lesbian prose stigmatise the social habit of concealing behaviours unacceptable by the majority. Thus, they show that lesbian love is an unacceptable phenomenon and

brings public rejection. Non-heteronormative people must, therefore, hide their true and authentic feelings so that they do not destroy the values of the traditional family or prevent them from pursuing a professional career. At such a moment, the authors of Polish lesbian literature refer to the observations formulated by Michel Foucault, who pointed out how models of sexuality were (and still are) strongly related to the exercise of power and the provisions of state, religious and customary law. In addition, there is the issue of language and its constructions that stigmatise lesbian love (Foucault 81). Therefore, the heroines of Polish lesbian works experience cultural oppression and hide their lovers, sometimes all their lives, or at least as long as they do not undergo an internal transformation and readiness to face a hostile world (*W moich rękach*, eng. *In my Hands* by Monika Mostowik from the collection *Akrobatki*, eng. *Acrobats* and *Testament*, eng. *Testament*, by Inga Iwasiów from the collection *Smaki i dotyki*, eng. *Tastes and Touches*). In some works, the hidden lover supports the hesitant heroine of the work to come out and publicly reveal her sexual preferences, but sometimes she too lives with fear, fear and remorse. The need to socially hide homosexuals and their forced “invisibility” is the negative side of lesbian existence. They only get a substitute for happiness during secret meetings and trysts hidden from family or friends. The heroines wait for such moments intensively, routinely fulfilling their professional or family duties. Short moments of lesbian fulfilment, however, are paid for by the need to play a kind of game and assume the mask of a faithful wife or obedient daughter. Polish literature reflects the processes expressed in Western literatures much earlier (Zimmerman 451-475).

The third type of lesbian heroine projected in Polish prose is a fulfilled partner who leads the second heroine to start an openly homosexual life. This fulfilled partner is generally a woman who has decided to come out and openly expose her preferences. She is ready to accept the consequences of her decisions and courageously builds her relationship with another woman. At such a moment, the literature reflects discussions already taking place in the 1960s as part of the sexual revolution and concerned public discourse about sexual life (Wilton 509-510). It was then that the details of

sexual behaviour began to be described without prudishness (e.g. preferences in sexual intercourse techniques, specificity of experiencing female orgasm).

Moreover, this type of brave protagonist can be found in the novels *Moja Les* by Zofia Staniszevska and *Worse Feelings* by Urszula Ledzewicz. In the above-mentioned works, literary descriptions of fulfilled, "official" female homosexual relationships take two primary forms. The first of them shows a specific adaptation of the lesbian relationship to the roles that are encountered in traditional heteronormative relationships. Then one of the women fulfils the role or status of a "husband", while the other partner assumes the role or status of a "wife" (*Moje serce przechodniem jest...*, eng. My heart is a passer-by, by Aneta Fryśny). One of the women then becomes a person who takes care of her financial condition, and the other one takes care of domestic matters. Polish authors, however, do not describe in their works only a joyful and understanding reality. They can outline crises in relationships, the routine of living together, emotional quarrels and partings. Then, such works prove that lesbian prose is not only a therapeutic form for authors or readers. Contained in them: confusion, misunderstanding or uncertainty between lovers shows that the lesbian relationship is dynamic and requires activity and care for both parties in the relationship of partners. A different form of the novel with the creation of a fulfilled partner is a story in which the lesbian is based on the principle of equality and not on repeating the heterosexual model. The works of this group distance themselves from the stereotypes of male dominance and female submissiveness, pointing instead to the process of building a relationship in which harmony prevails. Then, the partners inspire each other to cook, feast, travel out of town, or talk about culture and art. It is in such relationships that sexual and psychological satisfaction is finally achieved, experienced by each of the parties.

The last literary construction that creates the type of heroine in Polish lesbian prose is a warrior, a dynamic woman fighting for her own happiness and for the rights of other women. Of course, this is not about the militaristic aspect of the term but about the metaphorical meaning, i.e. showing the heroine as a dynamic, rebellious woman fighting for her beloved and for the right to homosexual love in general terms. Such heroines appear in Ewa Schilling's *Codziennosc*, eng. Daily;

Inga Iwasiów's *Smaki i dotyki* or Aleksandra Mader's *Urwany film*, eng—Broken film. The figure of the lesbian warrior appears in many dynamic narrative shots. This type of creations can be associated with the slogans of radical feminism and showing women the harmfulness of the patriarchal social model and ways to combat it. Moreover, it is intended to encourage an active attitude of action and assistance within the environment of women in which "sisterhood" reigns, like in a manifest *The Woman-Identified Woman* (Blasius and Shane 399-400). In Polish literary works, first of all, she often breaks up emotional-erotic emotional systems dominated by a man. The warrior then points out to the other dominated woman that she should not continue to accept the discrimination. A positive solution would be a lesbian relationship, which, in the novel, gives equal rights in love. Secondly, the warrior, even if she does not eliminate the sick love relationship, seduces the woman, arouses fascination, waits for the chosen one's decision, and finally strives for sexual fulfilment. Very often, the literary projection of a warrior woman is associated with descriptions of the physical and mental attractiveness of this type of heroine, who may sometimes appear as a "manly" woman with short hair or a boyish figure. Another time, the warrior is endowed with the biological attributes of women, such as prominent breasts or sensual lips. Of course, writers of lesbian novels constantly put the physical characteristics of female warriors in interpretative brackets (Marks 354-355). The most important features of women fighting for lesbian love are independence of mind and civil courage.

Conclusion

Polish literature created by lesbians is a young tradition dating back to 1989. This does not mean, however, that social phenomena critical in Polish culture did not occur thanks to it. First of all, thanks to such authors as Izabela Filipiak or Ewa Szillig, Polish audiences had to deal with topics that had been almost absent until then. Secondly, literary proposals with lesbian protagonists or narrators caused a creative ferment among Polish studies of feminist criticism (Ewa et al.). They resulted not only in works on homoerotic literature but also stimulated the creation of studies formulated in the discourse of queer studies. Thirdly, lesbian literature understood not only in an artistic or critical sense, seems to be slowly penetrating political circles. It is no coincidence that the LGBTQ

community is constantly represented in the Equality Marches organised by the political opposition as a counterbalance to the right-wing circles of governments in Poland in the years 2015-2023 (Kim).

The lesbian literature discussed in this article, using popular literary genres, i.e. journals, short stories, moral novels or romances, shows female homosexuality not as a strangeness or degeneration but as one of the types of interpersonal relationships. Thus, it disenchant a supposedly aesthetically inappropriate or morally unacceptable topic. The authors of Polish lesbian literature wanted and still want to introduce a wider group of readers into the lesbian experience (Kraskowska 45-67; Packalén 427-435; Lisowska 251-265). Hence, the appearance in public life of coming outs, texts about social oppression and alienation or legal problems of sexual minorities. Finally, it is worth noting that the creation of various types of protagonists in Polish lesbian prose reduces the negative power of social stereotypes and allows us to see the diversity of people and the ways of life they lead.

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Religious Hypocrisy, Protection Acts and Trauma of Being an Aboriginal in Doris Kartinyeri's *Kick the Tin* and Glenyse Ward's *Wandering Girl*

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Abstract: The process of colonisation in various parts of the globe proliferated in multiple ways. It was not just the battle of “the steel and the stone”¹ as Jack Davis (1917-2000), the famous Australian Aboriginal dramatist, calls it, but also of “draining the colonised brain of any form or substance” (Fanon 149) through the imposition of religious and cultural supremacy of the so-called civilised over the savage. In Australia, too, the strategies of colonising the Aboriginal population varied from frontier wars, violent shootings, and beheadings to the more disruptive Assimilation policies, Protection Acts, and Christian missionary teachings. While the former strategies claimed lives instantaneously, the latter ones proved to be lifelong traumas to cope with. Assimilation aimed at removing the half-caste Aboriginal children from their biological parents and keeping them in the mission homes and, after that, with the white families as servants.

It is the pain, suffering and trauma of such children that this paper seeks to explore through the personal narratives of Doris Kartinyeri (1935-2007) and Glenyse Ward's (b.1949) *Kick the Tin* (2000) and *Wandering Girl* (1988), respectively. The paper exposes the devastating role played by Christian missionaries in adding to the woes of the members of stolen generations. The paper takes into account women's memoirs to expose not only the sexual abuse that Kartinyeri is subjected to but also the prejudiced/alienated treatment that Ward faces in a white family as a 'dark servant.' It also shows how writing had a healing purpose for Kartinyeri and how the wandering of both authors comes to an end only when they find their connections and the ultimate bonding of the family members. The journeys of both authors since infancy remain strewn with insurmountable sufferings, which they overcome with the sheer willpower and resilience of character.

Keywords: Trauma, Aboriginals, Protection Acts, Pain, Suffering, Missionaries

I

Missionaries, teachers, and government officials have believed that the best way to make black people behave like white people was to get hold of the children who had not yet learned Aboriginal life ways. They thought that children's minds were like a kind of blackboard on which the European secrets could be written.

(Read 1)

The colonisation process in various parts of the globe proliferated in multiple ways. It was not just the battle of “the steel and the stone”¹, as Jack Davis (1917-2000), the famous Australian Aboriginal dramatist, calls it, but also of “draining the colonised brain of any form or substance” (Fanon 149) through the imposition of religious and cultural supremacy of the so-called civilised over the savage. In Australia, too, the strategies of colonising the Aboriginal population varied from frontier wars, violent shootings, and beheadings to the more disruptive Assimilation policies, Protection Acts, and Christian missionary teachings. While the former strategies claimed lives instantaneously, the latter ones proved to be lifelong traumas to cope with.

“In all parts of the colony, men were bashed, women raped and children stolen from their families” (Reynolds et al. 178). Assimilation aimed at removing the half-caste Aboriginal children from their biological parents and keeping them in the mission homes and after that with the white families as servants. It is the pain and suffering of such children that this paper seeks to explore through the personal narratives of Doris Kartinyeri (1935-2007) and Glenyse Ward's (b. 1949) *Kick the Tin* (2000) and *Wandering Girl* (1988), respectively. The paper exposes the devastating role played by Christian missionaries in adding to the woes of the members of stolen generations. The paper takes into account women's memoirs to expose not only the sexual abuse that Kartinyeri is subjected to but also the prejudiced/alienated treatment that Ward faces in a white family as a ‘dark servant.’ It also shows how writing had a healing purpose for Kartinyeri and how the wandering of both authors comes to an end only when they find their connections and the ultimate bonding of the

family members. The journeys of both authors since infancy remain strewn with insurmountable sufferings, which they overcome with the sheer willpower and resilience of character.

Children were stolen because it was said that the Aboriginal culture was inferior, “Thousands—no, tens of thousands—of people were taken from their parents under misguided policies which held sway over decades, beliefs which arose from the view that Aboriginality is deficit, that Aboriginal culture and heritage are worthless” (Baume 285).

Doris Kartinyeri decided to write this memoir when she was in a hospital suffering from a long illness. Her daughter Jennadene encouraged her to pour her bitter-sweet memories into this work. She records how the very act of writing about her life from various mental institutions started “healing” (1) her as it was a therapeutic experience. Other Aboriginal writers like Eva Jonson (b. 1946), Jimmi Chi (1948-2017) and Sally Morgan (b. 1951) inspired her tremendously to weave her agonising experiences in *Kick the Tin*. She further acknowledges, “In writing this book, I have been fulfilled and healed of all my anguish and disillusion” (112). She also consults many other stolen brothers and sisters to record their claustrophobic experiences, giving the memoir more legitimacy.

The title *Kick the Tin* refers to a game that Kartinyeri played with other Aboriginal children at Colebrook Home. In the game, one child would keep the tin in her/his custody and simultaneously search the other hiding children. If any child would come and touch the tin before the searching one, it would imply defeat for the latter. The author painfully records that, like the tin, her life has also been “kicked about” (1). She laments that all the children have “scattered in different directions following their dreams and discovering their roots” (2). This going in different directions implies the scattering of many brothers and sisters due to the assimilation policies, which caused great havoc in the lives of Aboriginals. *Bringing Them Home*² (1997) report clearly brings many confidential submissions from such affected people for whom survival became too hard to attain. The report clearly tells how children were taken for no rhyme or reason, “A common practice was simply to remove the child forcibly, often in the absence of the parent but sometimes even by taking the child from the mother’s arms” (3). It was the most disruptive and devastating practice that left the victims

traumatic throughout their lives. “A dire consequence of these policies... was a generation of Aboriginal people cut off from their families, communities, and culture” (Cerwonka 12).

Both Kartinyeri and Ward were stolen in their infancy. While Doris Kartinyeri was stolen from the hospital itself when she was just one month old, Glenyse Ward was put into an orphanage at the age of one. Being stolen as young infants deprives them of any chance of remaining connected to their families. Their knowledge of Aboriginality, culture and identity remains abortive and surviving without having any Aboriginal roots disquiets them. The ill-treatment that is meted out to them at the missions and foster homes shatters them completely, as the pressure to be white is tremendous. Looking back and penning these bitter experiences of childhood gives authenticity to these memoirs as they stem from their lived experiences.

Doris Kartinyeri calls her birth a “life-shattering” experience for her family. Her mother dies of birth complications, and she is stolen from the Murray Bridge Hospital just one month after her birth and is never sent back to her family for fourteen years. Her mother dies partly because she is taken from Raukkan to the Murray Bridge Hospital “on the back of acute” (7), which causes higher temperature and eventual death. Sadly enough, when the narrator’s father goes to receive the baby, he is asked to sign a paper to keep her at the Colebrook Home until. He is misled as he assumes he is “signing the forms for child endowment” (8). In many cases, illiterate mothers were made to sign papers to give consent for the removal of their children. One survivor in Tasmania says, “[Mum] could not read or write, and obviously would not have understood the implications of what she was signing” (Anthony and Rijswijk 96). The police and Governments would also threaten the mothers that “if they did not consent to the adoption of their babies the father of the child would be prosecuted for carnal knowledge” (Anthony et al. 96). Such unnatural acts of the government prove too much for little Kartinyeri as she is stripped of the bliss of parental nurturing, family ties, Aboriginal heritage, and the privilege of growing up with her brothers and sisters. Though she acknowledges that the time spent at the Colebrook Home with other children was a bit enjoyable, it deprived her of “family

affection” (12). She rues, “How could anyone think that apologies or money could make for the lost years and the terrible trauma and emotional damage caused to my family?” (12).

The Colebrook Home came into existence in 1924, and the children survived there by simultaneously laughing and crying. From “many brothers and sisters”, Kartinyeri learns many languages and ways to survive. They all remain connected and develop bonds with each other as they are tied by what Adam Shoemaker calls “the shared experience” (233) of Aboriginality. Another contributing factor to their survival at home was the kindness of Sister Hyde and Sister Rutter. She feels grateful for these two ladies, “Being in the presence of these two ladies gave me a sense of security, belonging and love that I was unable to receive from my true family” (17). Living at Home was not a problem for her as long as these kinds of women were there, and she would even call the cook grandpa. Moreover, on spring afternoons, they were allowed to visit the hills, where they would search for wild food like bush tucker, berries, chow, maise, and yallacus. She notes how the propensity for searching for food was greater in them despite having been cut off from such cultural knowledge; “We had our heritage taken from us, but we still had the natural instinct for finding the right foods. None of the children suffered illness from the food we discovered” (26). It shows how the bush food, considered unhygienic by the whites, did not affect the health of these kids in any way.

Both the novelists critique Australian policy to use religion as a subtle tool of oppression and conversion of the Aboriginal children and people. Enforcement of religious practices on the native children leaves Kartinyeri traumatised. After the departure of both the Sisters, the new Superintendent and his wife impose strict religious discipline on the children, which she finds “most humiliating and embarrassing” (31). Even Catholic bishops in Australia acknowledged that:

The abhorrent practice of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families will remain forever a blight on our nation... There was an underlying view that conversion to Christianity required the weakening of the spiritual influence of Aboriginal elders and culture on the younger generation. This led almost inevitably to accepting the idea that the physical separation of Aboriginal children from those families who were not in

reserves or missions was necessary for their ultimate spiritual and material well-being. (*Irish Times* n.pag.)

The author hates Sunday the most, called the Lord's Day, when they are not allowed to play but only to worship and read the Bible, which she terms as "brainwashing" and questions "Is this called religion?" (31). Going for the Bible-based quiz each night and white men humiliatingly throwing lollies at them "like animals" deeply affects the little girl. Kartinyeri attacks these Christian institutions, which "rammed Christian beliefs into children, brainwashing them into a system that stripped them of their people, their culture, their beliefs, their rules, their traditions" (110). Though the Christian missionaries wanted to protect the Aboriginals from white violence and sexual abuse, they eventually did not only ensure conformance to Christian teachings but also, in many cases, punishments were put in place. Thus these "missions in many ways served to replace one system of oppression with another" (Chesterman and Galligan 37).

She dislikes how hygiene is practised in the Home, and their heads are shaved if any louse is found. To be hygienic is welcomed, but even needles are inserted in the children's ears, which causes infections also. She has to get both her feet operated as "a result of wearing poor shoes" (36). The washing and polishing of bedrooms and floors are other chores that the little children have to perform, along with washing the dishes. Little children are also punished for wetting their beds at night. Cold showers in winter, standing meals, and preparing food are other punishments that these kids have to suffer. She considers these punishments responsible for these young children's later ending up in "jails/gaol or mental institutions" (43).

Kartinyeri also foregrounds that the practice of removing children completely disrupted the families. In the case of the removal of very little babies, parents would never get to know who their kids were and vice-versa. She discusses the question of identity when, on one occasion, a full-blood Aboriginal claiming to be an Aboriginal girl's father is not recognised by his own daughter. Assimilation was thus carried out in such a way that children would themselves forget their identities in the due course of time. In a Christian Convention in Adelaide, the sight of Aboriginals at a station

fills the children with shame when they introduce themselves as their uncles and aunts. The author recalls with pain, “We hung our heads feeling shame” (42). Even Sally Morgan in *My Place* (1987) reveals that while she identified with Aboriginals, her little sister did not; “I don’t know much about them. They like animals, don’t they? We like animals [sic]” (Morgan 21). Children are thus so much so ingrained in Christianity that everything Aboriginal seems humiliating for them. Ann McGrath writes, “Association with their own Aboriginal parents and kin was said to be degrading or subjecting them to neglect” (2).

The whites present/introduce these Maru kids to other white children as orphans who had no families, which she terms as “another white lie” (54). In the strict religious atmosphere, no sexual education is imparted to these children, and she attacks the Colebrook Home as “a haven for sexual deviants” (54). At this place, the sexual promiscuity of the school staff finds its outlet in the little children who undergo sexual abuse. Kartinyeri is also forced into such “ungodly behaviour” of the same staff. When the time comes to leave the Colebrook Home, the stolen kids have to face countless ordeals. Some children receive very bad homecoming, others meet opposition, and others feel rootlessness, while only a few get reunited and succeed. As claimed by the whites, the children are not trained in skilled courses but are only prepared for domestic and manual work.

The *Bringing Them Home* speaks about the difficulties Stolen Generations faced afterwards:

Psychological and emotional damage renders many people less able to learn social skills and survival skills. Their ability to operate successfully in the world is impaired, causing low educational achievement, unemployment and consequent poverty. These, in turn, cause their own emotional distress, leading some to perpetrate violence, self-harm, substance abuse or anti-social behaviour. (178)

Ordeals for the Kartinyeri go unabated after the Colebrook Home; she is forced to stay with a white family with four kids. She is enrolled in a school to be instructed in cooking and partial teaching. During this time, she comes across Elsie, who turns out to be her cousin. However, she does not divulge about these secret visits to the white family. Just after a brief period, she is dropped out of

school by the white family to “look after the four kids, prepare meals and [do] general house-keeping” (60). She is paid no wages here in lieu of the work.

The author’s wandering does not end as she is further removed from the Edwardstown family to another house at Coromandel Valley. It is here that a lay minister of the church exposes himself to her and forces her into the dairy farm. He masturbates now and then before her, sexually abuses her whereby her innocence is violated. She condemns such religious preachers; “I had lost all my pride. My God! Are these people God’s people?” (62). Vivid cries emanating from the boys’ dormitory make her realise that even boys are not spared. Another girl, Bessie’s brother, is also raped, and when she goes to him, she finds him “lying in his cot, wet and alone, screaming his little heart out” (116), eventually causing the death of the boy. Kartinyeri thus questions the real objective of Christian missionaries who were trying to be the protectors but were dealing mighty blows to Aboriginal stolen children and their families; “I and many others were forced into believing in Christianity and at the same time confronted with sexual abuse. How does one justify the years of pain” (116). It is not only Kartinyeri, but another girl is also raped in the same home. When she turns sixteen, her molester leaves her at Malvern nursing home, where she starts doing chores in the kitchen, for which she is also paid. It is here that when her sister Doreen visits her, she feels another surge of pain. The Methodist Nursing Home here strictly warns her against keeping any contact with the full-blood Aborigines as she writes; “I should not have any contact with my family or visitors” (65).

Being a victim of sexual abuse at the hands of two people unsettles Kartinyeri during their teenage. Eventually, she has two children from a white man, but the relationship bitters, and they get divorced. Even her marriage to a man after this, ends in divorce after the birth of one baby. Like Sally Morgan in *My Place*, the author feels desperate to search for her people now and make connections. Her friend Margaret now takes her to Raukkan, where she had been stolen as an infant. She suffers lifelong for adjustments in life as her kids do not get fair treatment from other white kids at the school.

The biggest hurdle that the stolen Aboriginal children faced was fitting in the Aboriginal community. Their spilt identity mars their chances of leading a balanced and happy life now. The

author suffers the same problem of complete identification with the Aboriginals. She is ridiculed when she pronounces the Pitjantjatjara language incorrectly. Thereafter, she moved to the Murray Bridge, where the Nungas Housing Committee provided them with a comparatively better house. She takes numerous jobs to support her family: picking peas and grapes, working in a factory and cleaning the office. At this stage, when the news of her father's death reaches her, she feels utterly dejected; "I felt no emotions and couldn't cry. The emptiness I felt left me hollow. I really never got to know my father" (77). By 1983, she had worked as a secretary at the Murray Nunga's Club in Aboriginal alcohol programmes. She again encountered many difficulties in identifying with her family extended family and in learning the local Nunga language. The negative reception of the half-castes by the Aboriginals creates trouble, and since she speaks and acts differently, she is "treated as an outsider" (79). It leads her to take to drinking copiously to overcome this trauma of baffled/mixed identity, but it deteriorates her health.

Now, she begins to have mental illness attacks. These symptoms manifest in multiple ways—becoming oblivious to the surroundings in a park and nearly attacking her nephew Robert, making it incumbent for her to be admitted to the Glenside Hospital. Feelings of isolation and alienation wreck her. She compares her manic-depression with maggots as they destroy her by eating away her "body, mind and soul" (84). She recalls one episode during this mental illness as the most bizarre; "I was a full-blood Aboriginal lady walking with my dog, hunting and searching for a lost baby" (85). It is indicative of her agitated state of mind where even in her mental illness, she has this vision of considering herself as a full-blood Aboriginal, and her looking for her lost baby is reflective of Aboriginal mothers looking desperately for their lost children. When her mental illness is controlled by medication, she tries to put a stop to her life by overdosing or driving rashly. She ascribes such a pathetic state to the past abuse she had to suffer away from her family. Her loneliness becomes painful as she relives the past, and this trauma makes her take refuge in excessive alcoholism. Though she feels grateful to the Scottish psychiatrist Kenny, who helps her immensely in recuperation, she also simultaneously feels as to how a stranger could compass what happens inside the mind; "How was

she going to get inside this Maru head when she didn't know the Aboriginal culture that was stolen from me?" (98). Franz Fanon, in his last chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*, "Colonial War and Mental Disorders", also says that mental disorders are borne out of very bitter experiences, war being one of the major factors. Carmel Bird, in her Introduction to *Stolen Generations; Their Stories*, writes about the aftermaths of forced removal:

It is clear that subsequent generations continue to suffer the effects of the separations of the earlier generations and that these separations are largely to blame for the troubled lives of many Indigenous Australians today. The complex, ongoing and compounding effects of the separations result in a cycle of damage from which it is profoundly difficult to escape. (10)

Doris Kartinyeri affirms her unshakeable faith in Aboriginal spirituality, which acts as a strong force. She once saw visions of a foetus appearing repeatedly on the clock radio. Symbolically, this foetus was of her unborn child. It was a white man's child, which she had to abort as he did not want his honour to be sullied. Another incident of some mysterious spiritual force occurs when she visits the Murray Bridge to see Jacob, the newborn infant of her son John and his wife, Jennifer. Not in good health, she seats her five grandchildren in the car unbelted and feels as if she "was being driven by some power" (107). The third spiritual experience takes place when she places two flowers on the bed and forms a cross in the Murray Bridge Hospital. It was the same hospital and, who knows, the same bed where her mother had delivered her. She recalls; "It was a meaningful symbol for my soul, a sign of purity of connection, nothing was in the way between me and my mother" (108). She feels as if she were placing flowers on her mother's grave, which she had missed performing earlier. It reconnects her with her mother in the hospital now. These visions and rituals play an important role in Aboriginals' lives and guide them through trying times.

The author does not only resist through writing but also through active participation in the Aboriginal cause, as a complete sense of Aboriginality implies an "impetus towards action in both the social and political spheres" (Shoemaker 233). The Australian Government's decision to develop a bridge from Goolwa to Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island) affects the local Ngarrindjeri people. Since

the said project badly affected the Ngarrindjeri women's business, it became a world-known protest. As her culture and heritage were stolen from her, she did not know anything about these women's businesses. However, she believes in and identifies with the struggle of these women and reaches the site to join the protesting group. It is representative of the bonding between women where the sense of being Aboriginal melts away all other differences of tribal, cultural and dialectical identities.

There is a strong note of survival rings in nearly all Aboriginal life writings. Of course, many get decimated in the whole process of colonisation of Australia, but being alive and standing firm after facing so much speaks volumes about not only the resistance of the wronged people but also their stoicism and resilience. Doris Kartinyeri feels honoured to be invited to a conference in Alice Springs 1996. The event turns out to be emotionally quite overwhelming as it discusses the subject of stolen generations. She is invited to represent the stolen generations of South Australia. Photos of children who lived at the Colebrook Home from 1930 to 1969 are displayed, making the event a mix of pleasure and pain.

After forty years, Doris Kartinyeri's journey to the Colebrook Home further brims up the memories of the fourteen years she spent there as a child. It is the Blackwood Reconciliation Group that asks her to undertake this journey to this place where she was physically, sexually and mentally abused. Eventually, the Colebrook Home was developed into the Colebrook Memorial Site/Heritage and the memorials there since then "have touched many hearts" (129). The site is devoted to the memory of three hundred children who lived there during the turbulent years when the policy of assimilation was in full swing. The Fountain of Tears constructed at this site represents the tears of the stolen Aboriginal children as well as their parents. At this place, Doris Kartinyeri's face is engraved on a rock. Thousands of people gathered here on 30 May 1999 for the Journey of Healing, and a plaque was also dedicated to the benign influence of Sister Hyde and Sister Rutter. A poem by Doris Kartinyeri is embossed on a rock, which she calls "my rock", "to make the non-indigenous people and younger Nungas aware that this did happen" (131).

Furthermore, the Statue of the Grieving Mother and Aunt Muriel's Story unveil "32 years of separation" (131). For Doris Kartinyeri, this is a symbol of survival and an acknowledgement of the pangs of separation that Aboriginals suffered. The writer stands commemorated in the memoir itself, and she rightly claims, "I am a survivor, one with a sense of pride and dignity" (110).

II

Wandering Girl charts the unhappy journey of the author from infancy to adulthood, as most of her years during this time are spent in utter desperation, resulting in the unfair treatment she receives as a servant with a white family. At the age of one, she was taken from her Nyoogar parents and dumped in an orphanage, from where she is again transplanted to live at the Wandering Mission, a Catholic Mission run by nuns and priests of German descent. Little children here were punished for minor offences. Imprisoning the children in a dark room at night and darning socks till 2 am were a few punishments in place. After the age of six, children were given further duties of milking cows, collecting eggs, feeding the cattle and so on. Though such punishments were common, as Doris Kartinyeri also tells in *Kick the Tin*, Glenyse Ward still feels happy because of the good-natured nuns there. Though she misses her home at the time of Christmas, she does not have the option to go back to her family. She calls these nuns "real mums" (8) as they also miss their families in Germany. Moreover, the nuns remain humane in their treatment of the kids. When, at the age of sixteen, she is adopted by a white family, she expresses her love for the nuns; "I am going to miss these dear nuns" (13).

The foster home brings along many miseries to her. Discrimination starts from day one as her landlady, Mrs Bigelow, pours tea in beautiful cups for herself and her husband and in a tin mug for Ward. Her request to have tea in a cup is bluntly dismissed. Not only this, but she is also given a "dirty room" in a garage, and Mrs. Bigelow continues passing a "fierce tirade of orders" (15). She is treated like an outcast. It is reminiscent of Om Prakash Valmiki's (1950-2013) autobiography *Joothan* (2003), wherein Savita tells her lover Valmiki that they have kept separate mugs and glasses for Mahars and Muslims; "The SCs and the Muslims who come to our house, we keep their dishes separate. How can we feed them in the same dishes?" (97). It further implies that every culture has

its own downtrodden groups. Though the grounds of oppression vary, the nature of oppression remains nearly the same.

Many hard chores that she has to perform here dampen her spirits. Waking at 5 am in the dark and sweeping the pavement, going to the paddock, fetching two oranges from the orchard, and making juice for the landlady are a few demanding tasks that she is assigned. Her other works include polishing and shining silver and brassware, cleaning windows, woodwork, and fireplace bricks, and washing the carpet.

Moreover, when she goes to serve in the dining room, she is again dismissed, “I was not allowed in the dining room while any member of the family was there unless she rang the bell” (21). For her, it is again humiliating that she has to eat even her breakfast from a tin plate and is not offered the same bacon and eggs as her mistress was having but only *weeties*. Despite working so much, the differential and humiliating attitude towards her continues. She is not even allowed to be at the parties. When she once goes down to the party to help Mrs Bigelow, the latter scolds her, saying that she “had disgraced and embarrassed them” before their VIP friends. She painfully records, “I went to my room crying with shame and anger. I wondered what could be so bad about me” (29).

Apart from this, Mrs Bigelow shoos her out of the car as her hair is wet. She again humiliates her when she does not allow her to sit in the front seat. Moreover, she is asked to wash the seat she sits on when they reach home. Mrs. Bigelow represents such demanding white ladies whose list of works never comes to an end. It can be further seen when, on one Saturday, she goes out and orders her to do a plethora of odd jobs. Cleaning all shoes, locking the turkeys in the yard, collecting the eggs and stacking, cleaning the old shed and sixty preserving jars sink her heart as she complains; “I was beginning to feel a sense of debility creeping over me” (56). Martin Renes also writes about the demanding and unkind temperament of Mrs Bigelow, which Ward finds intolerable before the affection and attention she receives from the nuns, “She entertains warm memories of the mission’s Christian charity, which starkly contrast with the Bigelow environment, where the never-ending list of domestic chores at scant pay, daily drawn up by the mayor’s wife, is short shrift for economic

exploitation” (38). At another point in time, when she sits down to fix her injured foot, Mrs. Bigelow again pounces on her, “How dare you sit down when you have work to do? I won’t tolerate this behaviour, especially coming from my slave” (83).

Ward shows how a bond develops between an old man called Bill, a farm worker at Mrs. Bigelow’s house, with whom she shares everything. Bill is shocked to learn that she is given tea in the same type of tin mug in which he asks her to pour the tea for the cat. She reveals to him; “I’ve a mum, but I don’t know where she is. I’ll find her one day, I suppose. My dad I’ve never seen. He died when I was in the home [Wandering Mission]” (74). Sympathising with her, Bill helps her in chopping and stacking the wood. Their state of being alone and away from home binds them together, and they sing the famous Australian song “Waltzing Matilda”, which is also symbolically about a bushman who is away from home in search of food and work. Eventually, she expresses her gratitude to this old man, “I didn’t know how I would cope without him. He was making me see another side of life, and by thinking differently, I was becoming bolder towards the boss” (106). It is this “reliance on each other” (Shoemaker 252) which makes them both overcome their vicissitudes.

She is not only used as a slave by Mrs Bigelow, but even Bigelow’s daughter Janet treats her in the same fashion. Bigelow’s taking Ward to her daughter’s house in working clothes and handing over a list of duties to be done before she and her daughter return from the town is indicative of the cyclical nature of suffering at both ends. As mothers themselves and their children become the victims of being stolen, the white mother and her daughter become the cyclical class of oppressors. So, this oppressor-oppressed binary would not remain confined to one generation only but would pass to the children as well.

Eventually, when she meets Anne, another Aboriginal girl who spent time with Glenyse at the Mission, she feels emotionally overwhelmed. This meeting brings another sad facet of the Mission as Anne reveals that the priest didn’t like Glenyse’s letters and the latter reasons why she never received any letters back. It shows that the children and parents were kept ignorant of each other’s whereabouts in most of the cases, which further deprived the children of any connection with their

families. It completely left them rootless, hopeless and dejected even when they were set free after attaining the age of eighteen years, as there was no one to welcome them from their families.

The departure of old Billy from Mrs Bigelow's house fills her heart with unfathomable pain and triggers her to leave the racist landlady and the oppressive ambience of the house. This urge becomes more intense when she and her friend Anne are dropped off in the town by their respective landladies as they do not want them to be part of the Christmas celebrations. Broken and distressed, they visit a hill where a Christian nun welcomes them in, offering sweets and gifts, which brings out the compassionate trait of the nuns. Since she always receives only abuses from Mrs. Bigelow, she leaves the latter and goes to the house of another mission girl, Kaylene who secures for her a job at a hospital. Her leaving her bad-tempered owner is an act of resistance as she never receives humane treatment from her despite rendering countless services. Like Doris Kartinyeri, she also survives this hard time and eventually finds happiness in her husband Charlie and their son and daughter. She resolves to carve out a happy future for her children:

There'll be no washing other
People's dishes, or
Getting dropped off at bus stops,
For any of my children.
Kids will be given every opportunity [to be]
Equal in the one human
Race. (183)

To conclude it can be said that the Protection Acts and the policy of Assimilation ruined the lives of many other Aboriginal children like Ward and Kartinyeri. While some nuns like Rutter and Hyde were humane and sympathetic towards Kartinyeri in *Kick the Tin* and Genyse Ward in *Wandering Girl*, the sexual victimisation of Kartinyeri by the religious preachers and the punishments meted out to children by the so called 'godly people' and alienated, prejudiced treatment meted out to Ward by Mrs. Bigelow remain crushing experiences for both the authors. Dispersal after dispersal

lock these authors in “cultural death” (Renes 30) but timely family ties in marriage becomes a defence shield. All the efforts to disempower and deculturalise the Aborigines through these ill-conceived policies are contested by these writers. Moreover, it has been acknowledged now by the formal apology offered by Kevin Rudd in 2008 and reconciliation efforts at place. Though the trauma remains lingered and deep imprinted on their minds, the note of survival also rings throughout. Since the children were “emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically deprived, and scars might never heal” (Read 13), the legacy left by such policies and acknowledgement thereof is symbolic of guilt-ridden conscience of non-Aboriginal population.

Today, the legacy of these policies haunts the conscience of white Australia as it has haunted the memories of generations of Aboriginal families. The residue of unresolved anger and grief that blankets the Aboriginal community has had a devastating effect on the physical, emotional and mental being of so many (Wilkes v).

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The 'Reel' Meets the 'Real' in Vikramaditya Motwane's *Jubilee*

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Abstract: Cinema mirrors the society. It reflects the social and cultural milieu. Ella Shohat feels that cinema “could tell stories and chronicle events, like the historiographer.” Vikramaditya Motwane's web series, *Jubilee* (2023), depicts the Golden Era of Indian Cinema when a new India was emerging from the shackles of colonialism, only to witness a genocide of unimaginable proportions and dealing with the problems of a nation trying to survive in the post-world war political scenario. Motwane has presented this India rising to the new dawn after independence from more than three-century old British rule, only to wake up to the horrors of Partition and faced with the challenges presented by the rapidly changing world scenario in the post-world war world. The paper shall explore Motwane's presentation of India and Indian Cinema with all its complexities. It shall also study the technique of Cinema within Cinema, a text within a text, that Motwane has used to present the evolution of the craft of filmmaking in India, and how the 'reel' meets the 'real' as Motwane's 'story' is intermixed with 'fact'. The paper shall analyse how far Motwane has succeeded in presenting India and the Indian Cinema of the 1940s.

Keywords: Indian Cinema, History, Motwane, *Jubilee*, Memory, Historical Document, India 1950s, Partition

Cinema, a combination of the 'real' and 'reel', also serves as a socio-historical document of the contemporary world. As a mirror to society, it continues to serve as a significant historical account, even if not the most authentic one. Indian Cinema, more specifically the Hindi cinema in the post-independence era, grappled with numerous social, political, and economic issues looming large over

the sub-continent. India's independence has lent itself to varied stories on patriotic fervour, communal tensions, trauma, and human relationships.

Jubilee (2023), a web series created by Vikramaditya Motwane and Soumik Sen, depicts the Golden Era of Hindi Cinema from 1947 to 1953, when a new India was emerging from the shackles of colonialism, only to witness a genocide of unimaginable proportions, dealing with the problems of a nation trying to survive in the post-world war political scenario. It also showcases the impact of changing world politics on Indian Cinema, as the nation defined its position *vis à vis* America and Russia. Sarkar believes that the re-telling of the events of 1947 is a difficult task, and even after the passage of so many decades; “the corporeal, material, and psychic losses, the widespread sense of betrayal, the overwhelming dislocations—in short, the deep lacerations inflicted on one's sense of self and community—bring up intense and consuming passions” (Sarkar 9).

In *Jubilee*, Motwane has chosen to tell a story based in post-Independence India and narrate the story of Indian Cinema as it grew in the initial years after Independence. When you check out Indian Cinema in the 1940s, the first information that pops out on the internet is “1940: Film Advisory Board set up in Bombay to mobilise public support through war propaganda films. Himanshu Rai dies. Devika Rani takes over production control of Bombay Talkies.” No wonder when Motwane took to telling a story of Cinema in India in the mid-20th century, he weaves it around the lives of Himanshu Rai, the founder of Bombay Talkies, and Devika Rani, a leading lady of Indian films and wife of Himanshu Rai. *Jubilee* takes the audience through the paces of the Indian Cinema in its nascent stage. These were the years when India and Indian Cinema witnessed rapid changes as India emerged out of colonial rule in the post-World War world. The Partition was:

the single most traumatic event that witnessed insanity, surpassed only by the Nazi genocide. The bloody killings, the senseless violence, and the cruelty perpetrated by one another defied all norms of sane human behaviour. For decades, the subcontinent continued to harbour the wounds inflicted upon itself. Families were uprooted, individuals were left scarred, and an entire generation was forever doomed to live in the shadow of fear. (Rathor 8)

Ironically, this monumental tragedy, which impacted parts of Northern India, Punjab, and Bengal, also provided writers and filmmakers with a rich source of experience and might have even fired their resolve for a deeper commitment towards a newborn nation.

Motwane's canvas is huge, and he casts a wide net. The space afforded by the web series allows him to present post-independence India. It goes to his credit that Motwane makes full use of the scope of the OTT platform and presents a comprehensive view of the 'golden years' of Indian Cinema, the socio-political changes, the growing technology, and the class struggle as he weaves a story inspired by the lives of Himanshu Rai and Devika Rani.

For this purpose, Motwane brings in a masterful use of technology, cinematic technique and cinematography, music, locations, colour palette, characters, and carefully chosen innuendoes that take the audience back into the world of Cinema of the 1940s, both onscreen and offscreen. The result is that the 10-episode series, which was telecast in two parts seems a socio-historical document besides being a skilfully woven saga of the Indian Cinema as it grew in the first few decades after Independence.

Jubilee unfolds the story of Indian Cinema as it tells the tale of Binod Das and Jay Khanna, whose fortunes become inexplicably intertwined. Just a few weeks before India gains independence, Binod Das is sent by Shrikant Roy, the owner of Roy Talkies, to bring Jamshed Khan, an actor who has been chosen to be launched with the screen name "Madan Kumar" as the hero in Roy's upcoming production, *Sunghursh*. Motwane's presentation of the auditions for "Madan Kumar" in black and white, the costumes, the camera positioning, the entire process of shooting, and the reels that are systematically numbered and stored give the audience a view of behind the scenes well as transports the viewer to the cinema of the 1940s. Later, the picturisation of the song for *Sunghursh* with Madan Kumar and Sumitra Devi is undoubtedly a reminder of Himanshu Rai's *Achhut Kanya* featuring Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani, a tale of the relationship of a Brahmin boy and a girl from the untouchable caste. As destiny would have it, Binod Das meets Jay Khanna, a scriptwriter whose family owns a theatre company in Karachi and who is a friend of Jamshed Khan, on the train and

saves him from the police. Little do they realize that both have come to meet the same person, Jamshed Khan. Jay Khanna wants Jamshed Khan to come to Karachi to work with his theatre company. Jamshed Khan, who has been having an affair with Sumitra Kumari, wife of Shrikant Roy and the leading lady in his films, has also decided to leave for Karachi. A drama of deceit and manipulation unfolds as Sumitra Devi is forced to return to Calcutta, while Khan is killed by the rioters, but not before he realizes the true identity of Binod Das, and the latter unscrupulously leaves him at the mercy of the rioters to fulfil his ambitions to be Madan Kumar. Das succeeds in convincing Roy and gets launched as the superstar Madan Kumar.

Motwane recreates the 1940s with nuanced details. His characters remind one of the real-life film artists as he reveals the deep dark secrets and cinema's power to entertain and enchant. Radio and Cinema were the two major sources of entertainment and information. Indian cinema was dominated by Khannas and Kumars, and Motwane names his protagonists similarly. The actors chosen to play these roles are very much reminiscent of the simplicity of Ashok Kumar and the charm of Shashi Kapoor and Dev Anand. Ronak Kotecha feels that Motwane's:

careful recreation of that world through top-notch production values, detailed set pieces and art direction (by Priti Gole and Yogesh Bansod), elegant and relevant costume design (by Shruti Kapoor), and telling cinematography (by Pratik Shah) simply just enhance the overall experience, making it an immersive one. (Kotecha)

The Partition of India sees Jay Khanna arrive at the Bombay docks with his family to the challenges of living in the squalor of a refugee colony segregated into the 'Sindhi' and the 'Punjabi' quarters. Many films and TV series have been made on the struggles of the refugees at the time of Partition. *Buniyaad* (1986) and *Tamas* (1987) were major series to capture the trauma of partition. Motwane's story is not just about Partition but also Cinema. So, he presents the deprivation and trauma of the uprooted as Nilofer, a courtesan from Lucknow, escapes prostitution as she reaches Bombay only to grab opportunities in films in exchange for sexual favours, and Jay's struggle to find a job gets him involved in a crime. Jay Khanna's passion for filmmaking and his deep-rooted conviction in his script

see him through the toughest of times. His unbroken spirit in the days marked by hunger, shame, and an undignified existence speaks of the resilience of millions. It is his conviction that makes Shamsheer Walia agree to produce the film *Taxi Driver*. Jay Khanna and Shamsheer Walia are pitted against Binod Das are pitted against each other Shrikant Roy and Binod Das. Binod's film *Raj Mahal* with Nilofer is a flop, while Jay's *Baiju Awara* with Sumitra Devi is successful. Binod Das tries every bit possible from dealing with the Soviets behind Roy's back to betraying him to the government. He ends up losing everything as the sordid details of his role in Jamshed Khan's killing come to light, and his younger brother who runs away to escape falling prey to Binod's ambitions ends up begging on the street. Jay Khanna pays his debt to Binod by standing witness in his favor. But many lives lie ruined as Khanna is forced to make choices, Nilofer is left waiting at the altar and Binod ends up losing everything. The world of cinema seems to have left them deserted to deal with the betrayal of their promised dreams. One man's overriding ambition to become the superstar 'Madan Kumar' has disastrous consequences.

Motwane's multilayered and complex characters are caught in the vortex of a rapidly changing world where their desires, motivations, dreams, strengths, and vulnerabilities create a destiny that seems a forgone conclusion. *Jubilee* covers a lot of contemporary issues as it narrates the story of Indian cinema. In Jay Khanna's struggles to get a foothold in the film industry, his unwavering passion to make a film true to his convictions and his script, Motwane highlights the struggles of a newcomer, the shady deals, and the crime and politics in the world of film making. Binod Das has no qualms in leaving Jamshed Khan at the mercy of the rioters. The series also shows the murkiness behind the glamour associated with the world of cinema: the shallow relationships, the betrayals, and the disappointments. The piracy of film reels, the publicity gimmicks, the involvement of criminal elements, and the emotional breakdowns ending in painful suicides are presented side by side with the joy of creating magic on celluloid, with the passionate intensity to tell a story, the origin of Radio Ceylon, and the important milestones in filmmaking—the introduction of playback singing and cinemascope. The characters remain true to the director's vision of a complex portrayal of human

nature as Binod Das can save a stranger, Jay Khanna, and also cold-bloodedly witness the killing of Jamshed Khan. Nilofer easily shifts allegiance to Binod Das, leaving Jay Khanna after a hugely successful opening of Khanna's *Taxi Driver*. The world of popular commercial cinema comes alive with inflated egos, rivalries, publicity gimmicks and scandals, and the dealings with the black marketeers. It takes off the masks to reveal jealousy, greed, love, betrayal, guilt, extra-marital affairs, revenge, and compromises.

The series presents women from various strata of the Indian society. The docile wife Ratna Das who chooses to ignore the escapades of her husband but does not hesitate to help her brother-in-law, presents the Indian woman devoted to her husband and the family. Kiran is similarly the obedient daughter and a very middle-class girl whose dreams do not go beyond marriage. The two ambitious women, Sumitra Devi and Nilofer, further the thought that women cannot have it all and have to sacrifice love and even dignity for the sake of success. But the tragic outcome of manipulations and greed has no respect for individuals whether men or women. Sumitra Devi and Himanshu Rai meet a similar fate, as do Nilofer, Jay, and Binod Das. Ratna and Kiran, without many options, are the passive observers whose lives are forever changed by the decisions that men make. They seemed to have resigned to their fate. These women characters are no doubt reminiscent of the Indian women in the mid-20th century. But they remain mere stereotypes, and the 'reel' does not present the reality of women who played crucial roles in the freedom struggle, nor does it showcase the cinema of the 1950s when films like *Mother India* (1957) were being made.

In the first few decades after the Independence, India witnessed an inclination towards Nehruvian Socialism. The Hindi film industry was enriched by the contribution of many members of IPTA, the cultural wing of the Communist Party of India, and the Progressive Writers' Association. Raj Kapoor's *Barsaat*, *Awara*, *Shri 420*, and *Jis Desh main Ganga Behti Hai* not only propagated the 'leftist' ideology but even benefitted with the very successful musical score, which was in no small measure adapted from the Russian folk music, and became hugely popular in the erstwhile Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. In *Jubilee*, Jay Khanna's *Taxi Driver* is a homage to this kind of cinema.

Motwane goes further than merely paying homage to successful Hindi films Raj Kapoor's *Awara* and Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zameen* and reveals a deliberate attempt by the Russians to control Indian film production houses to spread their ideology and the lengths to which they could go to sideline the Americans. All along the series, Motwane has alluded to various incidents and events associated with the film industry, like the making of *Mugal-E-Azam*, which almost gives the series a feel of a well-documented historical account. Motwane disclosed that in *Jubilee*:

there are a lot of Easter eggs planted throughout, but the tribute comes from a sense of nostalgia of like, oh, this character can be based on so and so but also looks like so and so but also feels like so and so. That is deliberate, to evoke that sense of nostalgia. Otherwise, all of them are unique personalities who could have been there at that point in time.
(Jhunjhunwala)

Motwane's *Jubilee* is more a drama set in a particular period, and the director himself agrees that the movie world is "just a backdrop that propels the story forward. The drama is primary. It is a drama set in the movie world; it's not a show about the movies with a certain amount of drama."
(Jhunjhunwala).

A photograph speaks a million words, and these moving photographs in cinema create a deep impression. So much so that, sometimes, the 'reel' overshadows the 'real'. Cinema is a fine blend of the real and the imagined. It is not merely a re-created memory but a re-creation of a past moment through the vision of its creator. The popular media might present a seamless blending of the lived and the imagined realities, but it is a matter of debate if mere historical accounts or academic discourses can do justice to the plethora of emotions, fears, and anxieties, the collective consciousness, the sense of loss, the emotional distress, as well as, the hope, the opportunities and the changing social and political paradigms which marked the initial decades in the post-independence India. The present generation that has not lived the trauma of Partition and not experienced the world not facilitated by technology and resources experiences the emotional reality through these cinematic documents. Bhaskar Sarkar suggests that "memory now consists of not just the fragmentary

impressions in our minds, tinged with our fantasies, but also the myriad traces in archival documents, recorded testimonials, film footage.” (*Mourning* 12). The impact of cinema is such that the trauma of the Holocaust and Auschwitz finds a very 'real' documentation in Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) and Mark Herman's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2008). Cinema, as such, becomes a popular medium through which people experience and even attempt to make sense of the experienced situation. Popular visual culture, films, and television series are necessarily 'created realities' and, as such, cannot have the legitimacy of historical documents, news reports, autobiographical writings, and letters. But they certainly bring forth those dimensions of experience that remain unsaid and undocumented. *Jubilee* is a story set in the first decade after Independence, and post-independence India is merely the setting for the story. Like the series *Tamas* or *Buniyaad*, it is not based on the Partition and its aftermath. But it attempts to draw a realistic picture of the times, even though the 'reel' deviates from 'real' at times. *Jubilee*, with its meticulously created sets and the attention to the finest details supported by a retro soundtrack, comes very close to a 'real' experience of India and Indian Cinema of the 1940s.

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Violence, Child Sexual Abuse and Trauma in Rituparna Chatterjee's *The Water Phoenix*

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Abstract The present research paper aims to explore Rituparna Chatterjee's memoir, *The Water Phoenix* (2020). *The Water Phoenix* (2020) is a candid memoir revolving around bullying and child sexual abuse the author suffered from. It also focuses on her attempts to heal from the trauma. The present paper tries to analyse how traumatic events and suffering are portrayed in the memoir. The analysis shows that the author can describe traumatic events but not the traumatic effects. It is observed that the author has given much importance to place while revising the memory of traumatic events. It is also seen that the disruption caused by traumatic events is the primary factor for the reorientation of perception and meaning related to the places mentioned in the memoir. It depicts the author's continuous metaphoric journey from Eden to Hell. As she cannot express the traumatic effects, she uses the characters and settings from children's literature as images. It shows that she was stuck at the age of six when she underwent violence and sexual abuse. Moreover, she is making use of the exposure she has got by reading very few children's stories at a young age.

When it comes to life narratives, most of the research is done to analyse trauma caused by violence, partition and caste/race injustice in the Indian context. Indian memoirs dealing with sexual abuse, and especially those dealing with child sexual abuse, have hardly received the same kind of attention. Thus, the present research is a modest attempt to fill this research gap.

Keywords: Violence, Child Sexual Abuse, Trauma, Memoir, Memory

The biggest thing I did to overcome the trauma was to write.

—Rituparna Chatterjee

Introduction

Expressing trauma helps people heal. Many choose writing as a way to recollect and express their past, and they witness change after writing. Authors try to abreact and come to terms with their experiences, often using fictional narratives, while fewer people give the world a bold and honest account of their suffering through memoirs. In a memoir, the author narrates his/her personal experiences and memories. Memoirs talking about the vices in society make the readers aware of the harsh reality of society. In recent times, many victims of child sexual abuse have started to give an account of the abuse and trauma through memoirs. Earlier, this abuse and trauma were either suppressed or expressed fictionally. Nevertheless, even so, the study of child sexual abuse memoirs is not paid the attention it deserves.

The mention of violence and child sexual abuse in Bengali memoirs or life narratives leads us to the very beginning of the Bengali life narrative. Rassundari Devi is regarded as the pioneer of Bengali autobiography because of her work, *Aamar Jiban* (My Life) (1876). It is the first full-length autobiography in the Bengali language and also the first autobiography written by an Indian woman. It talks about Indian women's status, her longing for education and a new identity in the 19th century. As a child bride, she was exposed to sexual encounters quite early in life. That her consent was not required in this brings into focus the reality that she had no right over her body and its functions as her body was being used for reproduction. Another critical autobiography by a Bengali woman writer is *Aamar Kathaa* (1913). This is the memoir of Binodini Das, a Bengali actress. It gives an account of her personal and professional life with a faint shade of trauma caused by a broken love affair and the loss of loved ones around her. Dr. Haimabati Sen recalls her life as a child bride in *Dr. Haimabati Sen: From a Child Widow to a Lady Doctor* (2000). She had to bear indecent exposure to her drunk husband having sex with prostitutes, and later, she was sexually abused by her husband. There are many such Bengali women's life narratives that either give incidental references or show themes of

violence and child sexual abuse. The partition of India greatly affected Bengali literature as people started writing memoirs and autobiographies narrating how the partition affected their lives. We find accounts of women's suffering and trauma caused by molestation, rape, abduction, etc., in partition memoirs like Sunanda Sikdar's *Dayamoyeer Katha* (2012). A few anthologies of interviews and accounts of such women are also available, such as *The Other Side of Silence* (2017) by Urvashi Butalia, *No Woman's Land: Women from Pakistan, India & Bangladesh Write on The Partition of India* (2004) by Ritu Menon, etc. In the contemporary era, Rituparna Chatterjee's memoir *The Water Phoenix* (2020) stands out because it is completely centred on different forms of violence and the trauma caused by it.

The present paper aims to study the representation of traumatic events and effects in Rituparna Chatterjee's memoir, *The Water Phoenix: A Memoir of Childhood Abuse, Healing and Forgiveness* (2020), the winner of the national LAADLI Media and Advertising Award for gender sensitivity (non-fiction). The memoir portrays how the author's life altered after losing her mother when she was around five years old. Then she got transferred from one place to another, seeking home and affection, trying to belong somewhere. As a motherless child, in her search for a safe place to live, she got trapped in the labyrinth of bullying, sexual abuse and physical violence and suffered from the uninvited and invisible scar of trauma. The memoir is a spontaneous and conscious recall of the traumatic events the author faced and the trauma that accompanied her throughout her life until she courageously decided to put an end to it.

The Plot of *The Water Phoenix* (2020)

Rituparna Chatterjee's memoir, *The Water Phoenix*, is based on a series of acts of violence, child sexual abuse and trauma, which the author suffered from at a very young age. The narration begins with the description of the author's home, family and the Peepul tree in her garden at Nandurbar, where her family is posted through her father's railway job. Soon, she discovers that no one informed her of her mother's illness and death and her own medical condition of having a hole in her heart. Her father's inability to look after her amidst his job makes the author take shelter in her aunt's home,

where her two male cousins severely bully her. She becomes subject to scolding and physical violence by her aunt and is raped by her uncle at the age of six. Unable to complain anything to her father after seeing him neglect the bullying account, she has no choice but to endure everything quietly. When finally rescued from this hellish house, she spends some time at Nandurbar and Vapi. There, too, she is not safe as she is abused by her sports teacher, Sir, and her father's friends-cum-visitors at home as well as on trains. She is finally sent to a hostel and then to a boarding school at Vapi from 4th to 10th grade, where she feels at ease around women, even if she is emotionally abused and bullied by fellow hostel mates, teachers and caretakers.

Meanwhile, she confronts the same uncle at their ancestral house in Calcutta during her 12th birthday and is sexually abused yet again. She tries her best to protect herself from possible abuse, especially during her college days. Later in life, some four years after college, she finally finds love, family and a world of her own. However, she keeps feeling guilty for not being able to give enough in any relationship as the trauma continues to haunt her. Then, with the help of meditation, Reiki, etc., she finally realised that trauma was something that she had brought upon herself. She finally comes to terms with her traumatic past and decides to love herself fully. In the end, she forgives her uncle, gets over it ultimately, and starts a new life with her family.

Discussion: Portrayal of Traumatic Events

It is hard to represent traumatic events and their effects, but Chatterjee has tried her best to give a bold account of bullying, violence and child sexual abuse. That is rare as Indian society considers child sexual abuse a taboo topic. She uses graphic and sensory details to describe traumatic events, which help the readers connect with the narrator and visualise the scenes easily. She tries to recount and put in words what her senses feel whenever she faces physical violence. For instance, at the age of six, her cousins lock her in the bathroom with her 'worst terror ever—a big fat gecko'. She describes her immediate responses as screaming, feeling breathless, and her face feeling hot. In another incident, when Uncle P, the bullies' father, takes her and the boys to a public swimming pool every Sunday, the bullies are busy enjoying swimming, and she finally gets some freedom from them. After

a few Sunday visits to the swimming pool, things change. Her uncle takes her to bathe after swimming and rapes her, which she describes in the following words:

I cried softly, with the soap burning my eyes and the pain tearing through me. I focused on watching with my eyes closed, tracing the pain through to the source. Without my realising it, my hand intuitively followed, touching the source of the pain. It turned out to be something soft, yet hard. A fleshy cylinder-like object had entered where I would normally pee from and never touch otherwise. Instinctively, I hit it, trying to remove it like a weak magnet from a metal door and unknowingly pinched it in the process. An even harder slap on my burning, wet cheek. That's when I realised it was P. (25)

The author chooses to tell the readers about her experience with graphic description rather than withholding it or leaving it to the imagination of the readers.

Similarly, she describes the traumatic accounts of physical violence by her cousins and her aunt, emotional violence by her hostel-mates in Vapi and sexual assault by Uncle P twice, once at his home and again during her 12th birthday at the Ancestral House in Calcutta. After returning to Nandurbar, she is abused by one of her father's railway friends, Gandhi Gandhidham's Uncle and in her home at Vapi, by her sports teacher, S sir, who comes to visit her father as his friend and some other friends of her father during their stay when she was a 3rd grader. She was also abused during her train journeys and then in the boarding school in 6th grade by a blind guitar teacher. Later, she is abused by Roadside Romeos on Bombay streets at night during her college days. Here, it is important to note that her father remains uninvolved, unconcerned, and ignorant towards his daughter's life. He is equally responsible for her traumatic life, as neglect is yet another form of violence.

The Role of Place

Almost ten places from Nandurbar, Calcutta, Central India, Valsad, Vapi, Mumbai, and San Fransisco become settings for the memoir. These places are given much importance in narrative recall. Two of the five parts of the memoir: 'Part II: Boarding School' and 'Part III: Bombay' and five chapters: 'The Swimming Pool', 'In the Bardo', 'Up the Ridge', 'Hostel Days' and 'La La Land' are named

after places. The author has capitalised the common names of places like ‘House of Fears’ (for the aunt’s home) and ‘Ancestral House’ (at Calcutta) to highlight the importance of different places where the traumatic events occur. The traumatic events change her perspective towards the places that once held greater socio-cultural and emotional value for her as most of these places become the site for the traumatic events.

This is observed constantly in the memoir. When sent to her aunt’s house, she is excited to be at a new place where she thinks she will be treated as royalty. The motherly affection she seeks from her aunt and her longing to consider it ‘home’ hint that she has positive emotional values attached to the people and place. Soon enough, ironically, she is treated as a powerless person, a prey that can be bullied and abused without the fear of being discovered by the world as she is taking shelter under their roof. Her Sunday visits to the swimming pool serve as a break from being bullied, so she starts considering the swimming pool her safe zone. She mentions; “I was delightfully left alone... being completely and absolutely 100 per cent, 500 per cent sure that I was safe and indeed forgotten... I remembered a freedom I had not felt in so long that I had forgotten existed. From then onwards, I loved the pool” (23).

However, soon, she is almost dragged to death in water by an unknown hand and is later raped by Uncle P, and her perception of her safe zone turns into a horror place. She does not step into the swimming pool for the next 22 years because of the traumatic memories. There is another thing to be taken into consideration here: objects like soap, used by P to bathe her, make her anxious in the future, but she somehow manages to come to terms with those objects by repeatedly telling herself that it was not the soap’s fault. She is not able to do so with the swimming pool as it was a meaningful place for her that soon turned into a place where she was raped.

The same is observed in the case of Nandurbar. At the beginning of the story, Nandurbar is portrayed as Eden as she recounts her childhood memories like any other toddler. But later, when she comes back from her aunt’s house, she feels; “Nandurbar didn't feel like home anymore. My peepul felt aloof, and the Homeless Peacock/Water Phoenix had disappeared” (41).

Sense of loss is conveyed through these lines as her psychological condition is reflected through her changed perception towards the same things that made her happy. The same happens when she often travels by train, enjoying the ‘Comfort Food’ provided by Indian Railways, a sense of relief from trauma. It, too, becomes a danger zone as unknown ‘Hands’ try to touch her improperly to add to her trauma. At one point, she realises, having lived in both Eden and Hell, I had now learned that:

1. Heaven never lasted.

2. Hell was always around the corner. (53)

This remains the core theme throughout the memoir. The continuous metaphoric journey from Eden to Hell constructs the storyline of memories, giving utmost importance to the places and the value they hold for her. It can be seen at almost all the places mentioned in the memoir, such as Nandurbar, aunt’s house, the Swimming Pool, the hostel where she first finds comfort but later wants to run away from, the Ancestral House which is described as the epitome of their family history, affection, tradition and culture and with her emotional attachment towards her relatives and her family history and tradition which turns out to be another setting for her sexual abuse by P on her 12th birthday. Thus, the ‘Eden to Hell’ journey or the repetitive designation technique used by the author conveys the shift in perception and reorientation caused by traumatic events.

Portrayal of Traumatic Suffering: Use of Imagery

It is observed that while an attempt is made to recreate the physical traumatic events through sharp language using imagism and graphic description, there seems to be a lack of ability to express her mental suffering. Thus, the author uses different narrative techniques, especially imagery to portray mental suffering. There are multiple responses to the trauma she is suffering from, which seems to become more and more severe and worse as the plot advances. At first, the effect of being bullied by her cousins makes her live in constant terror, as if she is being watched. Soon, this powerlessness turns into hatred towards the bullies. Her trauma worsens after being raped by Uncle P, as she mentions; “Unknown to me and even to himself, P planted a Tentacle in me. Over the years, this

foreign Tentacle would branch out, slowly revealing its alien tentacular characteristics in places completely unrelated, swallowing me whole, alive from my own insides” (26).

The author puts forward ‘the Tentacle’ image using anthropomorphism technique and by describing the various roles the Tentacle performs throughout her life. Like trauma, it brings her anxiety and panic attacks, vulnerability and powerlessness, rejection and abandonment at times, like the amygdala, it warns her and sends signals to the brain for defence movement against similar dangers she had been through before. It grows bigger and moves through her body the next two times the same uncle abuses her again. And so does it activate when ‘S sir’ and more strange hands (the personified hands as she does not know who the abusers were) sexually abuse her. This brings forth the function of trauma as unpredictable and uncontrollable. Animal imagery is not limited to ‘Tentacle’ inserted by P. She mentions Gandhi’s Uncle’s ‘porcupine kiss’, which is prickly and can hurt and the ‘octopus kiss’ of S Sir that almost gags her to death. However, Tentacle is extensively treated as the significant imagery. The tentacle, thus, symbolises a feeling of powerlessness, an unseen force that influences the mind of the girl, creating a feeling of being trapped, controlled and strangled by trauma.

There is also a mention of a gecko as her worst fear since childhood and also as a symbol that foreshadows the sexual abuse on her 12th birthday. Another important image is of an imaginary panther she sees when she is alone in the dark in her 6th grade. It is one of her hallucinations:

The unforgettable brightness of the big panther's eyes had been tattooed into my memory. In a flash, I knew why. If you took away their brilliance, they were similar to P's cruel, dull, snot-coloured eyes. It was why I hated cats and all things feline-eyed. The beast I had somehow miraculously escaped wasn't so horrific itself as its eyes were. (169)

Here, she makes it clear that she was not afraid of the panther but was frightened by its eyes, which resembled the eyes of her abuser. This tells us that the animals that resemble the perpetrators or their actions are seen to be portrayed in a negative light.

This animal imagery stands in contrast to the mention of the other animals in the memoir, which are depicted in a more positive light. In an incident after her schooling, she witnessed a two-foot white owl that visited her on and off in the middle of Bombay city. This imaginary owl is contrasted with the imagery of the panther. She feels that the owl is there to comfort her and has the ability to heal her and bring positive changes like:

It passed on something which turned my hair curly, my mind calm, my colour different. It took away the need to dress for Saudi Arabia. It returned what a panther had once taken my ability to eat animals. Everybody noticed the effects. Nobody noticed the god that had caused them. (220)

She sees these changes in a positive light, like being able to wear any kind of dress instead of adding layers of clothes covering her whole body and being able to eat meat. It was something that she was unable to do before. The hallucination of the owl is optimistic, which shows her attempt to heal through positive imagination.

She finds it divine to be around animals. First, she has a pet puppy at home, and then during her boarding days, a toad almost becomes her pet. There is also a rat she helps to get out of a small puddle, pigs whom she secretly feeds, and her witnessing the familial bond between langurs during a langur birth in 7th grade. Such animals are seen in a positive light as they are lonely, helpless or craving affection, just like her. Thus, she is trying to give them everything that she needs from others for herself.

Moreover, the most essential image in the memoir is that of the Water Phoenix, whom she first recognises as a homeless peacock living at the topmost part of her Peepul. The Water Phoenix makes her see the world through its eyes in her dream, and in the end, she realises that the Water Phoenix is no one else but her future self. It is revealed only at the end of the memoir to give a dramatic effect to the text. As the concluding remark signifies, she has helped herself to heal from her trauma. Thus, the water phoenix that visited experiencing—I is the narrator—I. Traumatic effects

are hard to express, even for adults. The author had bottled up her suffering inside since the age of six when she was exposed to only a couple of fictional stories from children's literature.

Thus, to try to express herself, she uses animal imagery concerning the fictional stories of *Alice in the Borderland* and *Gulliver's Travels*. The author mentions that *Alice in the Borderland* has been her favourite book; she read it around 64 times in her childhood. She feels that her life after being bullied and raped becomes like Alice, who is stuck in a strange world. Just like Alice, the author also sees an imaginary world. She uses animal imagery in positive and negative senses. Thus, her opinions, choices and imaginations have become binary, good or bad, positive or negative. This hints that the author is emotionally stuck throughout her life, even at the age of six, even when she has grown up. This can be because she has never shared her suffering and its cause with anyone else. As she has no other way of expressing herself or no one else to listen to her, she is only making use of whatever literary world of imagination she was exposed to as a six-year-old girl. It led her to create an imaginary world around her, out of loneliness, in which she can try to express herself.

Like imagery, the use of magic realism is also signalled by the mention of animals and birds from fantasy worlds like the panther, the white owl, the Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland*, the Water Phoenix, etc., and the places like Lilliput and other places from *Gulliver's Travels*. The whole chapter, 'Grown-up hood', portrays her hallucinations causing anxiety attacks and panic attacks that become so severe and often lead to making her see an entirely parallel universe of fantasy after getting married and settling abroad in San Francisco:

I was driving to Stanford at rush hour, for an interview. Without warning, like an accident, the road turned into an infinite cobweb of white roots, invincible veins of time sticking out of a floor they had rendered invisible. Everything-fellow rush-hour passengers in their metal boxes, buildings, natural trees-transformed into giant glistening trees with skirts of mysteriously glittery fluff in a shade of white I could not place. I walked around, dressed in a skirt of the same mysterious glittery fluff in a shade of white I could not place, happy as the teddy bear clouds in the Mountain View sky above my car. There were two of me! In

two places! At the same time! I looked at Me. Me looked at I... One was the physical world, the other a magical world which defied all the laws of time and space. (245-247)

The use of magic realism can also be the result of Chatterjee being a big fan of Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie's writings, which are associated with magic realism. It is observed that the literary influence on the author has played an essential role in helping her express her feelings.

One of the major responses to child sexual abuse trauma is suicidal ideation, which is reflected in the memoir. It is the willingness and attempts to commit suicide to end the suffering of the traumatic events. The author seems to consider herself dead, living in bardo (as she mentions it often) after being sexually abused. Bardo is a Buddhist concept meaning a threshold between death and rebirth. She finds herself separated from her own body when 'S sir' is abusing her. It shows the disintegration of mind, body and identity and the soul's homelessness as one of the traumagenic constructs put forth by Lev-Wiesel (Lev-Wiesel, 2015). The two chapters, 'The Obsidian Fishbowl' and 'Seppuku', lead us closer to her suicidal ideation. 'The Obsidian Fishbowl' begins in Bombay as she departs from the boarding. She suffers from the effects of trauma as she puts on weight and puts on layers of clothes even in summer to make herself look as flat as possible not to attract attention. She lives without growth and hope, without knowing where the liquid darkness would end in an obsidian bowl. She finds herself being a magnet to the stories of other people's sexual abuse that she overhears, which adds to her unstable psychological condition. It leads us to the next chapter, 'Seppuku', where she lists down ways of committing suicide and the possible outcomes of each. She is attracted to Japanese words like 'Kamikazee', 'Harikiri' and 'Seppuku' (her favourite one), which are different terms for different kinds of suicides that are considered honourable. She once tried to commit suicide after her 12th birthday by consuming Baygon Spray, which she throws up, saying, "but my body chose its poison, spitting out this insecticide, choosing tentacle poison instead, the 100 per cent guaranteed killer of childhood, over insect poison" (194).

The other effects of trauma are portrayed using flash-forward and flashback techniques as the story goes back and forth in time, making the readers compare her comfort zone at Peepul tree in the

repetitive flashback of her memories with the experiencing-I's present and also with her future self as there are fleeting references like, 'Decades later, I'd discover...', 'Years later, I'd discover...'. It gives the readers access to realise how the traumatic incident changed her life and how her life is after healing. The irony is applied while showing the effects of traumatic events on the author's life, choices and behavioural aspects. What is expected from a typical child's behaviour, a girl's craving for affection, and many other things can hardly be seen throughout the recollection. A six-year-old kid could have complained, made excuses or thrown a tantrum and obstinately left the aunt's home that brought her suffering. However, this girl does not do so. She chooses to suffer in silence. When living at the boarding school, during holidays, everybody else would leave with their parents. Only a few would stay because of some issues, but Chatterjee was one of them who constantly stayed back. At first, she was saddened because of it, but later, she preferred staying at the hostel, as it meant staying safe. She either wanted to stay alone or with a bunch of women around her. She wanted to stay safe once she realised that violence and abuse could take place again.

The author has made a substantial use of imagery in the memoir. After being bullied by her cousins, she describes her life as a prey getting attacked by her predators every now and then. In 'The Obsidian Fishbowl', she describes herself as a goldfish in an obsidian fishbowl as she tries to keep herself safe within the walls. She guards herself well by not staying out late, hanging out with at least a half-dozen girls around, and wearing oversized clothes covering the entire body to make herself look as flat as possible in all seasons. She makes sure not to attract anyone's attention. Then, the mysterious water phoenix whom she met where everything, the story or the recollection of her memory started. It is revealed only at the end of the memoir to give dramatic effect to the concluding remark and signify that she had helped herself to heal from her trauma.

As it is a memoir written after being healed from the trauma, it is the plain sight that the author is revising her memories. The remembrance is highly constructed based on socio-cultural and emotional narratives. The traumatic incident of violence, abuse, etc., had ended years ago. However,

the remembrance and recall of it were unconscious and continuous throughout the author's life, which she finally realises as she comes to terms with her trauma.

Conclusion

After closely reading and analysing *The Water Phoenix* by Rituparna Chatterjee under the lens of Trauma Studies, the researchers conclude that writing about trauma is therapeutic to come to terms with the trauma. The author has tried to express or portray traumatic events like violence and child sexual abuse explicitly using graphical details, which is an achievement in itself, being an Indian memoir. Although the traumatic incidents are portrayed in detail, the author is unable to do the same to portray mental suffering. She has expressed the mental suffering and the traumatic effects on the psyche by employing various narrative techniques like landscape imagery, sensory details, imagery, symbolism, anthropomorphism, flashback and flash-forward, irony, magic realism, etc. The author makes use of imagery in positive as well as negative senses. The imagery brings us closer to concluding that the author is stuck at the age of six as she mentions different images from children's literature that she had read. It is the age when she went through the traumatic events. Place is an important contextual factor. It is given the highest importance in narrative recall as the setting becomes a key factor in the memoir. The continuous metaphoric journey from Eden to Hell constructs the storyline of memories. We can see the recurrent examples of such journey at her aunt's home, the swimming pool, her own homes at Nandurbar and Vapi, the hostel and the boarding, Ancestral House in Calcutta, at almost all the places that are there in the memoir. Social, cultural and emotional values are attributed to each place, and the concretion of such values shapes the memory and the value of traumatic events. Such attributed values become a reason for the importance of each place and the traumatic event it foregrounds. It leads to a reorientation of perception, one of the effects of trauma, because of the meaning related to a place before and after the traumatic event.

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Individual and Collective Trauma in Han Kang's *Human Acts*: An Analysis from the Perspective of the Pluralistic Model of Trauma Theory

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Abstract: The first-wave critics of trauma literature perceived trauma as an unrepresentable experience and reveals the inherent contradiction of language and the experience. However, *Human Acts* by Han Kang is undoubtedly a novel that uses the potential of language to the utmost level for recreating/representing/re-voicing the traumatising experience of the pain, suffering and engulfing bereavement brought by the horrific violence of the massacre of civilians in 1980 in Gwangju Uprising in South Korea. In this novel, Kang grapples with the violence through the perspectives of the victims and the survivors. The Man Booker Prize winner author tells the story from multiple perspectives, and the narration is in the second person, the day in the life of Dong Ho, who tries to get the dead body of his friend, ending up at the help desk to organising and identification of dead bodies of people who were killed in broad day light suddenly turns out even more violent for himself and his life ends before it had started. The novel begins and moves around Dong-Ho, progresses beyond him and tells the tale from other perspectives and includes the tales of those who survived this massacre and those who couldn't. The paper aims at studying the scope and extent with which Kang demonstrates the violence and the resultant trauma. It examines the ways the novel can be analysed from the contemporary trauma theory model that is pluralist and reveals the diversity of values and perceptions that change over time to define trauma's impact. By doing so, the paper also studies the relationship between individual and collective experiences of violence and suffering of the extreme experience at the centre of the novel, which is also of great interest to the cultural studies-oriented approach of the contemporary understanding of trauma theories.

Keywords: Trauma Theory, Memory, Pluralistic Model, Literature and Memory, Gwangju Uprising

Some of those who came to slaughter us did so with the memory of those previous times, when committing such actions in wartime had won them a handsome reward. It happened in Gwangju just

as it did on Jeju Island, in Kwanthung and Nanjing, in Bosnia and all across the American continent when it was still known as the New World, with such a uniform brutality it's as though it is imprinted in our genetic code.

—(Kang 141)

Trauma and memory theories have been emphasising the fact that traumatic experiences are overwhelming, alienating, amnesiac and, most of the time, far from comprehensive. Therefore, the pluralistic model of contemporary studies in trauma theory focuses on historiographic, testimonial and representational approaches that help reinterpretation, reconfiguration and reconciliation of the blurred and often buried traces of memory and psychological wounds. Moreover, these approaches also add to the understanding of the oppressions of power and the universality of the brutal and cruel suppressions of humanity during historical events which have left generations with wounds in their hearts and souls.

The theory devised on the point of transhistorical trauma upholds trauma as a constant, repetitive and ever-present part of an individual's existence. Transhistorical approach-based trauma theory also focuses on the causal relationship between the event and individual events and the group to study the impact, effects and pathological responses of these tormenting memories. Such approach and analysis also add to the functions of literature of representation, understanding and interpretation of human existence and human relationships. These theories indicate that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender due to the timeless, repetitious, and infectious characteristics of traumatic experience and memory. Conversely, individual trauma can be passed to others of the same ethnic, racial, or gender group who did not experience the actual event. Still, because they share social or biological similarities, the traumatic experience of the individual and group become one. This leads to the claim that trauma narratives can recreate and abreact the experience of those who were not

there-the reader, listener, or witness can experience the historical experience first-hand (Felman et al., qtd. Hartman 544).

Another interesting aspect of transhistorical trauma is that the protagonist is an individual who presents a personal traumatic memory that represents a collective trauma of a group or a generation. The first-wave critics of trauma literature perceived trauma as an unrepresentable experience and reveals the inherent contradiction of language and the experience. However, *Human Acts* by Han Kang is undoubtedly a novel that uses the potential of language to the utmost level for recreating/representing/re-voicing the traumatising experience of the pain, suffering and engulfing bereavement brought by the horrific violence of the massacre of civilians in 1980 in Gwangju Uprising in South Korea. As Michell Balaev says:

We can see that the trauma novel provides a picture of an individual that suffers but paints it in such a way as to suggest that this protagonist is an 'every person' figure. Indeed, a significance purpose of protagonist is often to reference a historical period in which group of people of a particular race, culture or gender, have experienced a massive trauma. (Balaev 8)

Published in 2014, *Human Acts* begins with the incident of mass murders of students that took place in South Korea. The Gwangju Uprising took place a year after General Park's assassination. By May 1980, there was a rising clash between the authoritarian regime and people demanding greater democratisation. This clash reached its peak when students of Jeonnam University decided to a silent protest, authorities responded brutally, and students were beaten and fired upon. This resulted in greater outrage among civilians, and people across the city protested and took to the streets. Special forces were sent to contain the situation; however, these soldiers perpetrated more horrible brutalities and went on a killing spree. The protest that began on 18th May 1980 was oppressed and deflected by 27th May 1980, leaving the city with dead bodies and wounds in the hearts of the survivors. The official figure of the people killed during this uprising was declared to be 200. However, according to the foreign press, it was more than 2000 people who were killed in the open firing by the

militia. Han Kang centres her novel on this historical event to voice out the pain and suffering of the dead, the trauma of the bereaved, and other survivors and the painful shadow of the memories and wounds of this brutality of 1980 that looms large on the consciousness of the people of South Korea till date. Her representational and multi-perspective approach to the trauma also enables the reader to reimagine, reconcile and reinterpret the historical fact that has affected a people for generations.

In this novel, Kang grapples with the violence through the perspectives of the victims who lost their lives and the survivors, some who were imprisoned and some who lost their friends and family during the massacre. The novelist employs and engages with all aspects of contemporary trauma theory through her craftsmanship in various manners. We can list them as follows:

The diversity of extreme emotional experiences through the innovative narrative is a striking feature of the novel. The rich language, metaphors and graphic details of violence, pain and suffering are employed to capture the essence of the extreme emotional experiences each characters go through.

Some memories never heal. Rather than fading with the passage of time, those memories become the only things that are left behind when all is abraded. The world darkens, like electric bulbs going out one by one. (Kang 140)

The graphic memories etched in the minds of survivors traumatise them continuously. The characters are shown living with the trauma every day; the effect and the efforts to deal with these memories are shown manifesting with each passing day. The pain is presented through pristine language and Kang seamlessly switches the narrative in first, second and third view. These shifts in view also enhance and enable the rendition of experiences ranging from highly subjective and personal to distant and objective. Her language is unflinching and emotionally charged yet never melodramatic or bordering on sentimentalism. Her storytelling is gut-wrenching yet engaging and empathetic. The innovations in her narrative style enrich the trauma's rendition and enhance the inclusion of various interpretations.

The graphic details of the events are provided by a novel use of different narrators. They are also introduced as the Boy, the Boy's Friend, the editor, the prisoner, the factory girl and the boy's mother. The point of view also shifts accordingly, which also keeps shifting the subjectivity and agency of the narrator. Thus, these multi-narrator aspects of the novel functions as a provider of knowledge through trauma, similar to Geoffrey Hartman's suggestion in "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies." He says that through trauma theory, "We gain a clearer view of the relation of literature to mental functioning in several key areas, including reference, subjectivity and narration" (Hartman 547).

One can certainly observe that Kang provides such a clearer and sharper view of the reference, subjectivity and narration through her use of various narrators and viewpoints in the novel. Different narrators help provide multiple perspectives of such historical events of violence on different individuals. The dead describe the kind of pain and suffering they felt while dying, their unfulfilled desires and dreams, the way death engulfed their body, the distorted bodies and the sense of helplessness all are captured through the dead who describe the event after they are dead.

The survivors like Eun Shook and Kim not only narrate the incidents from the third person perspective but also provide the missing links of the plot and missing facts about the event and even what happened to these dead and their friends and relatives after they were dead. Thus, these seemingly jagged narratives narrated through different narrators make the incident and the trauma more comprehensive and multidimensional. Each survivor has taken a different approach and is shown managing, failing and struggling to survive or return to the everyday life, which often happens to a generation that has seen, witnessed and suffered such historic traumatic experiences. Deborah Smith aptly sums up the craftsmanship of the author in this context, "The novel is equally unusual in delving into complex background of the democratisation movement, though Han Kang's style is always to do this obliquely, through the experiences of her characters, rather than presenting a dry historical account" (Smith 3).

The novel begins with Dong-Ho, a teenage boy volunteering for the identification and handing over of the dead bodies, and introduces us to various characters whose lives intersect or connect with Dong-Ho and the uprising. This profoundly complex and poignant novel spans across generations through a web of stories by the narrators whose lives were lost/changed/affected/altered due to the Gwangju Uprising.

Another technique used by the novelist to represent the trauma that can be viewed from a pluralistic model of trauma theory is the use of a nonlinear plot. This technique is also a manifestation of the nature of traumatic memories. Moreover, they provide a kind of multi-dimensional understanding and extent of suffering from three references of time—one moment before the massacre, the moments of the massacre and the plight of the survivors and the relatives after the massacre with a hindsight and perspective of all the players and characters in these points of time. The trauma theory focuses on the abreactive model of trauma, which is used to assert the position that traumatic experience produces a temporal gap and a dissolution of the self. This also is well explored and well represented through this nonlinear plot where the self is continuously torn between present and past. This nonlinearity of events is a representation of a trauma survivor's mental state. The flashbacks, hallucinations, fears, associations and denial manifesting in the survivors are also well captured and represented through this deviation from the linear time frame in the novel.

The death of Dong-Ho sets the novel into motion, and it is the same incident around which Kang sums up her story and ends the novel. But within these two points of time, Kang takes readers to a span of time that transcends generations. From the heap of bodies lying to rot in the heat at a gymnasium in 1980, the novel shifts to the phase of the authoritarian and strict militia regime narrated through the editor's experiences in 1985. Following next are chapters of the novel that narrate the story of a character that describes his life in the 1990s when he relives the torture of his prison experiences immediately after the uprising. His fractured psyche is further jolted, and his self is further tormented when he becomes a part of academic research. The prisoner had suffered physical and emotional torture during the imprisonment and had been forced to live and behave like an animal with his fellow

cellmate. The horrors of the past and his self-hatred are compounded by his guilt for having survived that massacre where his friends and comrades had died. The letter from the researcher who had interviewed the survivor also deepened many wounds for the prisoner. His emotional and cognitive chaos, represented through his disjointed sense of self and his mental state, sums up his division of consciousness that remarkably represents the traumatic experience and memory. Through this narrative, Kang also provides us with the length and depth of the scars such incidents leave on the survivors and the continuous emotional and psychological terrors experienced after such catastrophes. The chapters set in 2002 on the character of the former factory girl reveal the continuation of brutality against people who demand democracy and rights. Her struggles and the brutality she suffered represent the struggles of humanity. Her estrangement and loss of self and identity represent the effects and outcomes of trauma that disrupt and dissolve self and identity.

From this point, Kang takes a leap in the novel and the concluding chapters are set in 2010, where Dong-Ho's mother and brother narrate their personal loss, the need for justice and the painful memories associated with the catastrophe. These narrators also represent the trauma of a generation that had witnessed the massacre and their daily struggle to reconcile with the loss and failure to find a closure to their loss and wounds.

There is a continuous play with time and place in the novel, which also keeps the reader challenged and engaged. This compression of time and place is an exact representation of the state of the trauma where the victims lose or fail to keep track of time, and they constantly manoeuvre their lives in terms of shifting between past and present. The novel deals with various references of time, namely 1980, 1985, 1990, 2002 and 2010 which are also important years in the history of the nation. But these references to time keep intermingling and sliding back and forth according to the mental state of each narrator and often manifest in the style of stream-of-consciousness narratives. Because the memories of these characters do not allow them to be where they are in a steadfast manner, they are continuously pulled and pushed into the past and the present. Because,

“Some memories never heal. Rather than fading with the passage of time, those memories become the only things that are left behind when all is abraded. The world darkens, like electric bulbs going out one by one” (Kang 140).

Those who have survived were tortured so brutally that their lives are devastated, their bodies stamped with scars, emotions reduced to a dark abyss, and psychologically, they all are fractured and fragmented. The kids who survived these tortures are shown continuously in a state of fright, haunted by nightmares and unable to have any social-emotional anchors. Yoon’s letter to Kim indicates that two out of ten survivors have already committed suicide, and the remaining eight are continuously shown thinking about death and the memories of the dead. Kim says, “I wait for death to come and wash me clean, to release me from the memory of those other, squalid deaths, which haunt my days and night” (Kang 141).

Graphic and upsetting details of death are a towering feature of the novel. This novel is about death, destruction and devastation. Gwangju Uprising is the central event of the story, and it entails the murky history of mass slaughter in 1980. Appreciating Kang’s exposition of the novel, Deborah Smith says:

Shoot-outs, heroism, David and Goliath-this is the Gwangju Uprising as it has already been told in countless films, and a lesser writer might have been tempted to start with such superficially gripping tropes. Han Kang starts with bodies. Piled up, reeking, unclaimed and thus unburied, they present both a logistical and ontological dilemma. (Smith 2)

The decaying bodies in the gym, the dumping of dead bodies by soldiers after they take over the city, the exact description of slow decomposing observed and painfully described by Jong De’s soul with clinical precision and poetic poignance, the episodes where relatives later on find their dead and at the time when those missing bodies that have been reduced to mere skeletons were exhumed, identified and reburied add to the function of representation of suffering and pain during such mass slaughter and the trauma that it creates. Language functions as an artistic expression, and Kang

provides voice to the scars and the suffering of even the dead who are left with no voice when Jong De's soul says:

I think of the festering wound in my side,
Of the bullet that tore in there.
The strange chill, the seeming blunt force, of that initial impact,
That instantly became a lump of fire churning my insides,
Of the hole it made in my other side, where
It flew out and tagged my hot blood behind it,
Of the barrel, it was blasted out of.
Of smooth trigger.
OF the eye that had me in its sights
Of the eyes of the one who gave the order to fire. (Kang 61)

Dead and death constantly haunt the ones who are left behind. There is a constant lingering sense of shame and guilt for having survived those torture while others died in the mass execution or afterwards. The sense of pride for being part of such a revolution is completely missing due to the trauma and memory that have engulfed the lives of the survivors.

The seven slaps to Eun Shook-the editor and her struggle to erase that memory from her mind only lead her back to the tormenting memory of the night of the student uprising. Through her character and detailed introspective recollection, Kang shows how the suffering and pain of such events become unending and the memories, instead of healing or fading, constantly gnaw at the living. Thus, trauma and traumatic memories are manifested through a series of complex and painful memories of the survivors and the dead. "I 'm fighting, alone, every day. I fight with the hell that I survived. I fight the fact of my own humanity. I fight with the idea that death is the only way of escaping the fact" (Kang 142).

The survivors are also shown often deprived of the expressions, and they find their language failing them when it comes to the expression of their experiences. At one point, the novel highlights

this old concept of trauma theory, which views trauma memories as indescribable through language. “As though your mother tongue has been rendered opaque, a meaningless jumble of sounds” (Kang 178). The play, the script, and the heavy-handed censorship of the publication of the script that Eun Shook’s chapter is woven around also show the power of language and expression through art, which any suppressive regime has always warded and constantly stamped upon.

Thus, through individuals, Kang creates a kaleidoscopic view that captures the trauma in individuals and in society. She also brings in her own story and how she was connected and witnessed this catastrophe. Dong-Ho’s house was the same house where she had lived before her family moved to Seoul. Though none of her family or close relatives was lost in this uprising she had overheard about the uprising and the death of Dong-Ho whose family had bought Kang’s house in Gwangju. Towards the end, wherein she meets Dong-Ho’s mother and brother, the reader is able to see her connection to the story of the boy. Through this story, Kang also ruminates on the questions of the nature of violence and war, the resilience of the human spirit, the effects of memories and trauma and the terrible price of atrocities. This remarkable rendering of the trauma in her novel is aptly appreciated by Aram Mrjoian in the following words:

Through eloquent prose and meticulous attention to detail, the author explores the deeply rooted psychological trauma that persists long after the physical wounds have healed. Han Kang examines the concept of memory and its role in shaping individual identities, posing fundamental questions about the nature of human existence and resilience in the face of profound loss. (Mrjoian)

Thus, the Man Booker Prize winner author tells the story from multiple perspectives and the narration is in the first, second and third person through various narrators: the day in the life of Dong-Ho, who tries to get the dead body of his friend ends up at the help desk for organising and identification of dead bodies of people who were killed in broad day light suddenly turns out even more violent for himself and his life ends before it had started. The novel that begins and revolves around Dong-Ho progresses beyond him and also tells the tale from other perspectives and includes the tales of those

who survived this massacre and those who couldn't. Through this, Kang demonstrates the violence and the resultant trauma in a succinct and shocking way. As discussed, the novel engages and employs various aspects of the contemporary trauma theory model that is pluralist and reveals the diversity of values and perceptions that change over time to define trauma's impact. By doing so, the author also unfolds the relationship between individual and collective experiences of violence and suffering of the extreme experience at the centre of the novel which is also of great interest to the cultural studies-oriented approach to contemporary understanding of trauma theories. More importantly, the novel, like all trauma narratives, shocks and disturbs with an intense yet soft cry to ponder over the perils and destruction created by such historical events driven by megalomania, power hunger and greed of the leaders across the history of the world and raises a moot question, "Bearing that in mind, the question which remains to us is this: what is humanity? What do we have to do to keep humanity as one thing and not the another?" (Kang 100).

To sum up, one can say that *Human Acts* is an artistic answer to the horrors of the history. The novelist has successfully created a narrative that voice out the shock and sorrow her hometown was subjected to by the military law in 1980 massacre and which was not even memorialised till 1997. One of the purposes of trauma theory and literature is also to represent and reinterpret individual and collective trauma to make life more meaningful and enhance understanding about humanity. Literature and art is also a tool of resilience and reconciliation during the troubled time. *Human Acts* performs this role of representation, resilience and reconciliation achieving an artistic surfeit reclaiming life. Kang's work reiterates the negative capability of songs, here, literature as:

"In the dark times

Will there also be singing?

Yes, there will also be singing.

About the dark times."

— Bertolt Brecht motto to *Svendborg Poems*, 1939

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The Spiritual Idealisation of Death in the Post-Covid Times Through the Selected Works of Keats, Andre Gide's Novel *Strait Is the Gate* and J.M. Synge's Play *Riders to the Sea*

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Abstract: Freud, in his 1918 work "Reflections on War and Death," observed, "We cannot, indeed, imagine our own death; whenever we try to do so, we find that we survive ourselves as spectators." This paper argues that a life spiritually inclined towards redemption accepts death without any aesthetic or moral constraints. The theme of death has played a prominent role in the writings of Keats, Gide's novel *Strait is the Gate* and Synge's play *Riders to the Sea*. In the aforementioned works, I will try to investigate the following questions-How do these writers maintain a naturalist philosophy of life and a spiritual philosophy of death? How does a reconciliation with human mortality differ in terms of conviction? Is there anything called 'absence of death'? If so, then why did Keats visualise his death in his literary works? How did the character of Alissa from Gide's novel represent 'Death' as a steady, unavoidable reality and, later on, embrace it as a fulfilling experience? How the character, Maurya, described her life with the shades of 'grey' but accepted death as the ultimate keystone in the play *Riders to the Sea*. Through capturing the whole thanatological spectrum depicted by the aforementioned writers, this paper aims to establish the fundamental connection between death, the quest of living with a mental crisis (especially post-covid) and, finally, study the manner in which death helps in strengthening the psycho-cultural connections between the natural grief and the community to which it belongs through a spiritual idealisation of death.

Keywords: Death, Spiritual, Ideal, Grief, Psycho-Cultural Connection

Death, in the pre-pandemic world, has been a collapse of time, a scattering that has happened in one's life, which not only explains the seven stages of grief but also identifies the emotional voice of a person- the tearful sight and the matured self. Grief is an inseparable element when we talk about

death, and we don't know where the grief might take us. Several scholars have argued that the grief of "holding on tight" and the sensible logic of "letting go" has been a painful experience for many. The dilemma of suffering and the attachment to the sufferer makes the whole concept of death a complicated theme. Previous studies examined death as a grave concept, a sordid experience where internal thoughts, sufferings, and guilt torture an individual self. However, the question is, what are we grieving for, the lost body or the liberated soul? Are we grieving because our expectations from the dead person are shattered? Are we grieving because we cannot accept the sudden departure of a dead person? Are we grieving because we suddenly started feeling isolated from the world and united by the grief? We have created a world where we laughed, cried and shared pains. Nevertheless, we need to realise that Life and Death have been a continuous cycle of seasons, and Keats, in his poem, "To Autumn", has beautifully alluded to the philosophy of life and death.

Several studies have shown that death is a difficult thing to digest. Nevertheless, we need to realise that it is not the concept of death which is painful. It is the misconception that death is painful. The complex emotional and intellectual reactions to the idea and the reality of death and dying are painful. Our mind is full of sore thoughts when it comes to death, but if I analyse the works of John Keats, Andre Gide, John Middleton Synge, and many other writers with a similar mindset, we will see that every death is beautiful and it brings a new brim of hope. My aim is not to categorise death as good, bad, non-religious or depressing—my motto is to establish that just like no grief is painless, it is subjective. Similarly, no death is ominous. In this paper, I want to analyse grief and death from a wider perspective—first, what are we grieving about? and second, whom are we grieving for—the one who is dead and will soon take a rebirth for a better life or are we grieving for a body that had no identity? From a spiritual angle, a soul leaves for the heavenly abode and not the body, so are we mourning for a human body that was having an existential crisis in this soul-conscious world? The unaccomplished desires and the incomplete conversations blame the paucity of time, but we need to think—who is to be blamed seriously in reality? Is it not us? We feel it is too early or too depressing

to talk about death or grief. We postpone those feelings with “we will see when it happens,” but when it happens, we look for distractions to suppress our grief and blame death easily.

When we talk about the philosophy of death, we need to trace back to the death philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. Death, to Kierkegaard, was not just an end. It was a beautiful enigma. He praises the remembrance of the dead as the purest, freest and most unselfish act of love. For Kierkegaard, death is an invaluable aid for understanding life; ‘No thinker grasps life as death does’, and only death can provide, as Charles Taylor puts it, “the privileged site from which the meaning of life can be grasped, a vantage point, beyond the confusion and dispersal of living” (Stokes and Buben 68). Death is, for Kierkegaard, a deeply instructive and indeed upbuilding concept—provided, paradoxically, that we do not waste time thinking about what death is and what comes after it. Death is ‘the schoolmaster of earnestness’, but instead of teaching us about itself, it teaches us about who and what we are and which questions we don’t have time to ask. In the 21st century, especially post-covid, people are scared to talk about death. They suffer from death denial syndrome because of ‘epistemic foolhardiness’ (Stokes and Buben 68). The absence of compelling evidence to believe that intellectual knowledge about death requires courage and might help in solving the ‘existential dimension of doubt’ is a necessary factor to combat the central challenge of our time. Scholars like Climacus, however, differentiate between his death and other’s death. But Muench argues, if an articulate and highly educated ‘idler’ with ample time to investigate such matters has failed to understand death, can readers be sure they have understood it themselves? (Stokes and Buben 68). Climacus realised his doubt and exclaimed, “My dying is by no means something in general; for others, my dying is some such thing. Nor am I for myself some such thing in general; perhaps for others, I am some such thing in general. But if the task is to become subjective, then every subject becomes for himself exactly the opposite of some such thing in general” (Stokes and Buben 68). Kierkegaard, however, believed that death should not be exceptional for anyone, be it the self or the others in general, because when we contemplate individual mortality, they suddenly point to an irreducible, ineffable particularity about ourselves that is threatened by death. There should not be

any seismic shift in the vision about one's death. There should be no difference between seeing the subject of the thought "I will die" as an abstract token and seeing it as me; the object of my self-regarding concern and affective identification should not be demarcated from others. Such non-deductive immediacy is characteristic of how, for Kierkegaard, we truly see ourselves in imagined presentations of our possible futures.

Kierkegaard's philosophy tells us to be prepared for death. It never asks us to constantly think about death, as Merold Westphal notes—what does thinking about death in every moment look like? It surely cannot mean, as Merold Westphal notes, that at all moments, death is the thematic object of my consciousness, as if "whenever offered a penny for my thoughts, I could answer, I am thinking about my death and immortality" (Westphal 109-10). Edward F. Mooney agrees—were death an obsessive and explicit focus that always floods one's awareness' then such a thought would 'ruin' life. Instead of 'dwelling' on death, Mooney takes Climacus to recommend "having the thought of death [...] with requisite salience and intensity, at the ready every moment" (Mooney 135). The thought of death, then, individuates us in ways that cannot be easily expressed yet, which are utterly decisive for subjectivity. Climacus insists that he has not understood what it means to die. In the 21st century, we all are so confused, and our doubts have turned negative.

The theme of death lacks compelling evidence that provokes subjective deepening. Death is a reasonable exchange for bringing balance to an ostensibly grateful universe, but a reluctant acceptance of the inevitability of death is seen as a problem by many individuals. If we analyse the poem "When I have fears that I may cease to Be" by John Keats, we will notice that in this poem, Keats was scared of death, but he was never afraid to die. The pain of separating from his brother, the trauma of separating himself from his lover, Fanny and the unaccomplished desire to prove his literary calibre before the world compelled him to worry about death. Keats was never afraid to die, and he was not ready to die so early. Keats wanted to be remembered posthumously because of his words and his poetry, but he was unsure of his greatness. His literary farsightedness can be read in the following lines:

“And when I feel, fair creature of an hour
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love—then on the shore
Of the wide world, I stand alone and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.” (9-14)

These lines took us back to the time when Covid-19 took away many innocent lives. Many people had so many dreams to achieve and so many promises to fulfil; some had emotions invested, and some had EMIs pending. Some wanted to enjoy with their family and enjoy their marriage, but COVID-19 shattered all dreams. These lines show how beautifully Keats explains the uncertainty of life and shatters the concept of the future. Keats wanted the readers to embrace the present and not waste too much time planning for the future because there is no future, at least not a planned one. He thought he could live an adorable life with his family and Fanny, but nothing worked out. As a reader, we postpone a lot of things because we believe that we have a lot of time, but in reality, we have no time at all. Therefore, Keats teaches us to accept every opportunity provided by life. It's better to accept fate than not try at all. At least there will be no regret. In another poem, *Ode to the Nightingale*, Keats tries to find his solace in a beautiful nightingale. But he also accepts that everything beautiful cannot be immortal. This can be associated with his love for Fanny Brawne, Keats' nightingale. Keats longed for Fanny's presence in his life. Being a passionate lover, he desperately wanted Fanny to love him, but that day never arrived. Like an aimless wanderer and hopeless lover, he waited until his last day just to accept that nothing lasts forever, neither his love for Fanny nor his desire to earn literary glory, “Tis not through envy of thy happy lot; But being too happy in thine happiness” (5-6).

These lines reflect Keats' selfless love for Fanny, he was happy in 'her' happiness. Keats is the epitome of a Petrarchan lover who believes in loving one woman, his Fanny, even though he knows she left him with a deep sense of loss and made him forcibly accept a seeming reassurance that 'everything' inevitably fades. The beautiful struggle between leaving everything on time and not

being able to accept the final call for death makes us lose the inevitable victory between Imaginary and Reality. It is difficult for us to bid adieu to someone we love immensely, some leave us intentionally, and some leave us because of destiny, but ultimately, we suffer because we cannot disregard attachment. In spiritual history, 'attachment' is considered one of the vices, but human psychology fails to accept this reality. We cannot accept the separation from our loved ones, and unfortunately, that starts our anxiety. Covid-19 taught us nothing good or beautiful can last forever. We want to remember the times of lockdown as a vision or a dream. But all of us have to rethink the final question that Keats asks in this poem, "Do I wake or sleep?" (Keats 80). The typical human nature to remain asleep when we need to be conscious and finally resist the inevitability of death as a 'waking dream' needs to be redefined sooner.

Death can be studied as a deep sense of duty and debt. In Andre Gide's novel, *Strait is the Gate*, the character of Alissa portrays the definition of self-sacrificial and spiritual acceptance of death. When Alissa talks about learning the piano or reading a book in a foreign language, she says what she likes is the "slight difficulty that lies in the pursuit of their meaning and feeling the unconscious pride of overcoming this difficulty, and of overcoming it more and more successfully, adds to my intellectual pleasure a certain spiritual containment, which it seems to me I cannot do without" (Gide 56). Alissa loved Jerome, but she believed in the power of spirituality. Spirituality, just like the earth, has the power of gravity. It helps us to remain grounded. Alissa is attached to Jerome, but her attachment for Jerome indicates a very different pleasure "I no longer get any joy out of that part of life that has to be lived without him. My virtue is all only to please him" (Gide 58). She was detached from the consciousness of the body by considering all humans, including Jerome, a soul, to remain in her 'flying state'. This state of Alissa is called the meditative idealisation of original virtues, where she is willing to eschew her love for Jerome but also sacrifices her love for her sister by considering her a better match for Jerome. Some readers presented Alissa as selfish, whereas others presented her as the goddess of sacrifice, but I read the character of Alissa very differently. Alissa had been embracing pain since her childhood. She had to sacrifice every little thing

in life. When Jerome entered her life, she felt loved and wanted, for the first time in her life. She wanted to spend time with Jerome, but at the same time, she didn't want to possess him. The moment she realised that it would be impossible for her to survive without Jerome, she pushed him away. The divine love and sustenance that God has been offering Alissa automatically radiated all around, thereby helping her to create and survive in the divine land of *Satyuga*, once again upon the earth. Gide's title comes from the book of St Matthew, "Enter ye in at the strait gate—for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it" (Gide 3). The passage makes a strong impact on Jerome but perhaps makes an even stronger and contrary one on Alissa. Jerome accepted Alissa, and he was aware of her spiritual beliefs, but it was difficult for him to love Alissa from a distance. He wanted a perfect love story, but Alissa's virtuous resistance to love affected him psychologically. Alissa, on the other hand, preferred a calm life, closed off rather than opened up. Jerome wanted to travel the world with his only world, Alissa, but she was too scared to visualise the boundless experiences of life with Jerome. Her spiritual inclination constantly reminds her that she is an incorporeal self-effulgent light- her soul is immortal, and her purpose in life should be to spread the divine points of light. In this world, the life and death cycle has been just another costume in a drama to her. Alissa wanted to play her part in the drama and leave the old world, which was on the verge of destruction. Her emotional turmoil since her mother left compelled her to accept the principle of 'me and me alone'. She wanted to fly away from this mortal body and reach her original abode of peace. Alissa never wanted Jerome to confiscate himself in her spiritually inclined, claustrophobic world, and therefore, she wanted him to live a happy life with her sister. She wanted to connect with the Almighty and rise to the level of deity-hood, being worship-worthy, pure, completely vice-less and righteous with the inculcation of 16 degrees of purity.

As Alissa says, quoting another religious philosopher, Pascal, "we do not feel our bonds as long as we follow willingly him who leads; but as soon as we begin to resist and to draw away, then indeed we suffer" (Gide 72). This means that Alissa willingly sacrificed her love for Jerome, but she

did not sacrifice herself; in other words, she chose to become her own shadow instead of Jerome's. Sartre, in his essay, *Being and Nothingness*, exclaims, "Thus we are perpetually *threatened* by the annihilation of our actual choice and perpetually threatened with choosing ourselves-and consequently with becoming-other than we are," similarly, Andre Gide puts it in *Journals* (Gide 86). "The thought of death pursues me with a strange insistence. Every time I make a gesture, how many times already? I compute, how many times more? And full of despair I feel the turn of the year rushing towards me" (Gide 88). Alissa is caught in a religious problem of self-consistent and human affection in places with Pascal and Kierkegaard, both figures fascinated by renunciation. Jerome is a man of sensuality. He considers Alissa to be the best chapter of his life; even after her death, he has lived with her thoughts. He exclaims, "And indeed I felt happy with her, so perfectly happy, that the one desire in my mind was that it should differ in nothing from hers, and already I wished for nothing beyond her smile, and to walk with her thus, hand in hand, along a sun-warmed flower-bordered path" (Gide 68). He compares Alissa's beauty with the beautiful world of nature and treats her as the only calm of this universe, "Fear, care, the slightest stir of emotion even, evaporated in her smile, melted away in the delightful intimacy, like the mist in the perfect blueness of the sky" (Gide 67). Nobody could love Alissa the way Jerome loved her, and nobody could sacrifice her happiness for Jerome the way Alissa did. This love story resembles Camus' remarks in *Summer in Algiers*:

When I have been away from this country for some time, I imagine its dusks as promises of happiness. On the hills looking down over the town, there are paths among the mastic-trees and olive-trees. And it is towards them that my heart then turns. I can see sheaves of black birds rising up against the green horizon. In the sky, suddenly emptied of its sun, something releases its hold. A whole flock of red cloud stretches up until it melts into the air. (Gide 95)

The Epicurean dilemma, 'Earnestness is that you think death and that you are thinking it as your lot, and that you are then doing what death is indeed unable to do—namely, that you are and death also is' (Stokes and Buben 68) must be replaced with Kierkegaardian insight. The doubt as an existential crisis about the radical scepticism of death compels us to investigate the earnestness, which, if not

solved, might also result in an individual crisis. We need to understand that *Earnestness* is not simply living each moment as if it's your last, but the more complex attitude of 'the living of each day as if it were the last and also the first in a long life'. "To fill the gap between intellectual courage and epistemic foolhardiness, we need to believe that 'if death is night, then life is day...'" (Stokes and Buben 68). This thought introduces us to Maurya, the sorrowful protagonist in Synge's one-act play, *Riders to the Sea*. Maurya, an epitome of love and a helpless mother, lost all her boys in the hands of the destructive sea. Bartley, her last son, left her for the sea despite repeated signals from fate. Maurya knew she wouldn't be able to see her son anymore, so she tried to stop him. Death comes to Maurya with a formal invitation, and every time, she has to accept it, though unwillingly. She never denied the intricate relationship between human will and predestination. Maurya resembled the great traditional protagonists in her heroic power of endurance and spiritual transcendence over her suffering and other crises in life.

Pain, a melancholic term entrenched with emotions, is a qualitative concept. It should not be boundless. In *Riders to the Sea*, Maurya adopts the principle of stoicism after the death of Bartley. She declares with a challenge, "There's no harm the sea can do to me" (Synge 57). Maurya knew the philosophy of Karma, and with her supernatural vision, she could visualise that life on earth had come to the extreme point of degradation and was poised for major destruction. She never denied death, but she was unable to accept the perpetual battle between the life-giver and the destroyer, between the mother and the destructive sea. The colour 'grey' symbolises the death of Maurya's death as well—the death of her innocence, the death of her happiness, the death of her hopes and desires. Maurya has been emancipated from the everlasting cycle of suffering and bereavement. She had reached a certain point in her life where 'no grief' along with 'no one's grief' could affect her in any way. Maurya has been compelled to withdraw her sympathy from the sufferings of mankind—"I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening" (Synge 56). The spiritual transition from misery to a profound tragic transcendence helped her to become a self-sovereign spiritual authority. This mesmerising spiritual transformation portrays Maurya as a mastermind alliance that radiates a

wave of positive spiritual vibrations across the globe and presents death as the ultimate super-sensuous joy, peace and bliss.

It is evident that the soul's journey is repetitive and follows the cycle of *birth, death, and rebirth*. This conclusion is supported by the example of the sacrificing soul of Alissa, the intense longing for fame and love that Keats' soul yearned for, and the melancholic soul of Maurya, who breaks down every day, constantly reminded of the dreariness of her life. The texts gift us with protagonists who continue to accept life according to the repetition of the cycle of *birth, death and rebirth*. Death is a part of life. It's not an exception to life- the soul takes the body to explore, enjoy and experience. Alissa made us realise that without the soul, the body is useless. Death, to many, is still a cultural illusion of taming. Many people believe in the paradox of mortality- perpetual denial and conquering death. Maurya pushed us to research the accurate ways of interrogating death as an important cultural and historical period that shaped the attitude towards death and dying in different typical ways. Keats, by placing death within the lexical, emotional, and intellectual corpus of the reader, instigated us to analyse seriously: What is scary—Is it the concept of death or the loneliness that surrounds us after losing a near one? This paper, with the help of the specific characters who believed in the power of spirituality, aims to dispel the inner darkness to apprehend the real truth about death. With an urgent need for a paradigm shift in our thought patterns, I feel this paper will help us lead a life from self-transformation to world transformation in a proactive way. The seismic shift in the thought pattern- from impure to pure, from negative to positive and from evil to good will help us to explore the thanatological spectrum of the world more consciously.

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Revisiting the History to Reclaim Identities: A Critical Analysis of Syangtan and Tamang's Texts

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Abstract: The indigenous *Tamang* community incorporates an arduous history of marginalisation since they were categorised as 'enslavable alcohol drinkers' and unremittingly exploited by the *Rana* and *Shah* rulers of Nepal. Junga Bahadur Rana's *Muluki Ain* (The Country Code, 1854) adopted Hindu religious values and validated caste-based social hierarchy dominated the *Tamang* community and rejected their identities. However, after the latest democratic movement of 2006, each peripheral community, including the *Tamang*, started rigorously raising their voice and fore-fronted the issue of their identity. In this regard, the paper critically analyses Raju Syangtan's poem "What does Pipa mean?" (2023) and Subas Tamang's painting "Study of History IV" (2021), which extensively portray *Tamang's* history of marginalisation and consistent effort to reclaim their identity. Both texts unfold the plights and predicaments of the *Tamangs* when the state devalued them as mere porters, subdued their voices and pushed them towards the margin. Moreover, they revisit the past and raise questions against the state authority, which becomes instrumental to their identity claim. To analyse the structural marginalisation of the *Tamangs*, I have employed Michel Foucault's concept of "power" along with Stuart Hall's idea of "representation and misrepresentation" as theoretical backing.

Keywords: Indigenous Community, Tamang, Marginalisation, Resistance, Identity Reclaim

Introduction

The indigenous *Tamang* community of Nepal has a long history of state domination and marginalisation. They suffered due to the implementation of Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana's

Muluki Ain (The Country Code), which authenticated the Hindu social system and caste hierarchy. The state-enforced caste division provided higher status to Brahmin and Chhetri, whereas *Dalit* (untouchable) and some other groups, including the *Tamang*, were placed at the lower rank in the social structure. Even though the *Tamangs* were not untouchable, they were placed just an inch above the *Dalit* when the nation preserved every right to regulate their life. Since *Muluki Ain* categorised them as ‘enslavable alcohol drinkers’, the ruling class and elites got full authority to control and even enslave them.

Consequently, the state law itself became instrumental in the structural oppression and unremitting sufferings of the *Tamang* community. In this context, the paper concentrates on “What does Pipa mean?” (2023), a poem by Raju Syangtan and “Study of History IV” (2021), a painting by Subas Tamang, to critically analyse how these creative works revisit the *Tamang’s* history and reclaim their identity. Regarding structural power-game as a vital means to misrepresentation and domination of the Tamangs, I have employed Michel Foucault’s (1978) concept of “power” and Stuart Hall’s (1997) idea of “representation” as theoretical support.

Raju Syantana is a poet from the indigenous *Tamang* community who has been raising their voice against structural biases towards the *Tamangs* through his poems. Mainly, his poems concentrate on marginalised communities, their issues of subjugation and their strong voice for equality, justice and identity. His latest anthology of poems, *O Pengdorje!* (2023), has been a critically acclaimed collection that mainly raises the voice of the *Tamangs* and peripheral groups. Similarly, Subas Tamang is a renowned visual artist from the *Tamang* community of Nepal who has exhibited his art in solo exhibitions that trace out the predicaments and history of marginalisation of the community. His latest solo exhibition, *History, Memory, Identity* (2021), has profusely portrayed several measures of state domination on the *Tamangs* and their identity claim. Both *Syangtan* and *Tamang* have conspicuously explained the power game, the horrid experiences of *Tamangs* and their resisting voices through their creative works. I have selected them since they not only unveil the issue of *Tamang’s* marginalisation but also provide ample space to explore the issue of identity.

Concentrating on the issue of the Tamang community, this paper focuses on revisiting the terrible past, painful memories and the issue of their identity claim exhibited in the creative expression of *Syangtan* and *Tamang*.

Revisiting the History

Autocratic ruler Junga Bahadur Rana's *Muluki Ain* had not only established a social hierarchy based on castes but also immensely exploited untouchable and indigenous communities. Among the indigenous people, the *Tamang* had suffered massively due to the biased state law and the attitude of the rulers. They were not even allowed to write their caste, '*Tamang*'. In this regard, Raj Kumar Dikpal states that the documents of the Shah era had addressed today's *Tamangs* as '*Murmi/Bhotiya*' (43). The *Tamangs* had to resist and wait for eight decades to regain their real caste with social validation. Related to this issue, András Hófer reminds the history when they were allowed to write their caste, "A decree signed by king Tribhuwan and the then Rana Prime Minister Bhim Samser lays down that, instead of the hitherto employed designations Lama and Bhote, henceforth the designation *Tamang* from among the caste of the Bhote (12 Tamang Jatika bhoteko jat) shall not be called *Lama* (or) *Bhote* in documents...but shall be called *Tamang*" (125). There onwards, the *Tamangs* were officially permitted to write their caste '*Tamang*' in 1932; otherwise, they were addressed with derogatory terms and represented quite negatively.

During the Rana regime, the *Tamangs* were prohibited from joining any prestigious governmental posts and services. They got no chance of recruitment in the army. In this context, D. B. Lama shares the bitter reality that his father had to change his caste from Lalitman Lama to 'Lalitman Ghale' to join the army (9). In those days, the other ethnic communities, such as Rai, Limbu, Gurung, and Magar, had easy access to the army, whereas the *Tamangs* were excluded entirely. The ones who wanted the job were compelled to change their caste to meet the minimum requirement secretly. It shows structural brutality that had crushed the dignity of the *Tamangs* and impelled them to sacrifice their real caste. Different researchers have focused on similar issues and pointed out the historical injustices and negative portrayal of the *Tamangs*. Francis Buchanan

Hamilton has unveiled a dominating state attitude towards the community. He describes that the doctrines of *Lamas (Tamangs)*, who were called *Murmi* and *Bhotiya*, were unacceptable to *Gorkhalese*, that they were taken as thieves and therefore not permitted to enter the Kathmandu valley (49). Hamilton's explanation exposes the austere Hindu rulers' hegemony, who deliberately excluded the *Tamang* community and devalued them, disseminating several misrepresentations and negativity about them.

The issue of representation and misrepresentation of people, communities or places articulate imbalanced power relationships. The one who holds power has the full authority to represent or stereotype the other groups. Fore-fronting the case of representation of Black people, Hall sheds light upon the representation and stereotyping of Blacks. He argues that representation is a complex business dealing with the 'differences' (226). Typically, 'difference' invokes negative feelings for others. Therefore, it splits and divides the people.

Similarly, Hall highlights the danger of representing some groups through stereotyping. As he argues, "Stereotypes get hold of the few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognised' characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, ...stereotypes reduce, essentialises, naturalises and fixes 'difference'" (258). Hall has taken the case of Black people; however, in the context of Nepal, the indigenous *Tamang* community has been stereotyped as less intelligent and only valid for physical labour. There are several stereotypical and derogatory perspectives about the *Tamangs*; for instance, they are generally understood as 'aggressive,' 'angry,' 'unintellectual' and 'pigheaded.' Such representation and images deplete their real personality to just fixed characteristics, which is equally disrespectful to the whole community. The power centres play a huge role in the formation of such negative images of the particular caste or community. Several institutions in society regulate power over people with or without their knowledge. Foucault claims that power is present at every level of the social body, which is utilised by very diverse institutions and becomes the factor of segregation and social hierarchisation (141). In fact, several social institutions, from family to prison, disseminate power and control people. In a

similar manner, every state and power bloc exercises power upon less powerful and marginal people. For centuries, the Shah and the Rana rulers of Nepal exercised excessive power, exploited the indigenous *Tamang* community and forced them to be labourers and *Pipa* (a porter and the lowest rank in the army).

Visual artist Subas Tamang revisits the past and traces the unimaginably painful time his ancestors had come across. His painting 'Study of History IV' visualises the enslavement and hard labour of his forefathers, who were compelled to carry the Rana's cars and walk along innumerable hills and mountains to land in Kathmandu valley.



Fig 1. 'Study of History IV' by Subas Tamang

Until Tribhuvan Highway was constructed in 1956, Kathmandu valley was isolated and unlinked to *Terai* through roadways. The *Rana* and *Shah* nobilities hired robust and sturdy *Tamang* porters to carry every necessary goods for the capital, including cars. The porters who carried the cars through the steep hills of *Bhimphedi* to *Thankot* were mostly *Tamangs*. It was due to the state law and the

structural domination that a particular caste group was involved in such hard labour. The *Rana* rulers continuously assigned the *Tamangs* as porter and forced them into compulsory labour. Several writers and researchers have discussed their involvement in such toil. Among them, Dor Bahadur Bista internalises the *Tamangs*' condition and narrates their perspective, "During the *Rana* period, they assigned us as porters and for low-level jobs inside and outside their palace. Even in the army, they used to recruit us only for load carrying battalion" (42). Bista's description comprehends the biased state attitudes towards the *Tamangs*. It seems they were only taken as physical bodies, which comply with their misunderstanding or misrepresentations of the *Tamang* community as less brainy and, therefore, are only suitable for physical works. In this regard, *Tamang's* painting conspicuously narrates the story of the *Tamang* people's predicaments, helplessness, and suffering.

The artist has chosen black and grey colours, most probably to shed light upon the arduous journey and hardship of the *Tamang* porters. Most of them are sparsely dressed and barefoot. The high-raised position of the car and the stooped shoulders of the porters symbolise the *Tamangs*' lowly and brutally crushed position. Nadine Plachta and Subas Tamang portray the actual condition of the car carrier porters. They postulate:

Sixty-four men, most of them *Tamangs* from villages of Makwanpur district, were hired to balance the vehicle on their shoulders. Sweat dripped down their weathered faces. Loose shirts and pants were gridded with cotton cloths around their waists. Some men walked barefoot, while others had made slippers woven from straw. They earned less than a rupee for the whole treacherous eight-day journey, which traversed two steep mountain passes.
(25)

Plachta and *Tamang* depict the heart-wrenching conditions and circumstances of the *Tamang* porters, who were paid less despite their bone-breaking labour for more than a week. The last car carrier in Nepal, Dhan Bahadur Gole, shared his car-carrying experience and about payment to Suraj Kumar Bhujel. He describes that he carried the cars for two decades when he received only five anna (less than a rupee) for each carrying (2nd paragraph). The rulers were so exploitative toward the *Tamangs*

that they could enforce them to work either for free or with meager wages. Moreover, they compelled the community to serve them based on biased *Muluki Ain*, which categorised the *Tamangs* as an ‘enslavable’ group. Consequently, they had to provide their free service to their masters without any complaints. *Tamang’s* painting vividly visualises the hardship and sufferings of the *Tamang* people, who spilt their sweat and blood for the luxurious life of the aristocratic Rana rulers and the royalties.

Reclaiming the Identity

After the downfall of the Rana regime in 1951, Nepal received democracy and also witnessed the novel consciousness of the common people. From there onward, people started raising strong voices for their space, rights, and freedom. However, it did not last long since King Mahendra imposed a *panchayat* system (no party system) through a coup d’état in December 1960. His action revived the authoritarian Hindu ruling system, which was based on caste hierarchy and the exclusion of several castes and communities. However, the marginalised people from different castes and communities were united to tackle the newly developed political scenario and also to resist the autocratic ruler. In this regard, Mahendra Lawati posits, “The CHHEM (Caste Hill Hindu Elite Males) consolidated their hold with the consolidation of the state and inequality as well as the exclusion of numerous ethnic, caste, religious and linguistic group began or became consolidated during this period” (2). The solidarity of several groups, on the one hand, became instrumental in the restoration of democracy, whereas, on the other hand, it made people aware of the issue of identity. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the mobilisation of ethnic groups accelerated. Lawati’s opinion is more appropriate to recall the rise of ethnic voices during the 1990s and the new millennium. He states that many ethnic organisations built cultural capital by reasserting their religious culture and also spreading the discourses related to their rights (15). It was after the 2005 democratic movement the indigenous community became more vocal about the issue of their identity. The marginalised people started consistently raising questions against the authorities and the power blocs. Syangtan’s poem “What does ‘Pipa’ mean?” captures dissenting voices of the marginalised *Tamang* community, which have been presented through several questions.

Syangtan's poem portrays the enslaved and oppressed condition of the *Tamangs* as well as their realisation of past sufferings. Several socio-political changes and, mainly, the second democratic movement of 2005/06 have implanted resisting consciousness in every marginalised caste, group, and community. After the historical movement, the *Tamang* community started questioning the authority and raising their voices of dissent. The poem narrates the story of a *Tamang* child who is born to be a labourer or a porter, just like his father and forefathers. He is the descendant of the same caste group who were enforced into compulsory labour by the *Rana* rulers in the past. David Holmberg and Kathryn S. March's research on the ethnic *Tamang* community has revealed the state's oppression of them. Especially *Nuwakot* and *Rasuwa* districts are principally inhabited by the ethnic community known as *Tamang*, who were brought under the compulsory labour system named *rakam* for the production of paper, charcoal and the necessary things for the state. In this regard, Holmberg and March depict:

Tamang villagers from these regions were required to work in royal fruit plantations to produce paper for the administration, to cut fodder and transport herding stations which supplied clarified butter to royal palaces, to act as regular porters for the military and civil administrations, and to produce and grind charcoal for the production of gunpowder at a factory in Nuwakot. These forms of compulsory labour were known locally as *byengi rakam...* (11)

It clarifies the fact that the *Rana* rulers and the state agents had brutally exploited the *Tamang* community for the production and transportation of necessary things to the capital. The *Tamangs* were always under state surveillance, and they could not escape their fate. Consequently, they were deprived of economic resources and remained in poverty and socially backward conditions. Nowadays, they don't work in royal herds or fruit plantations; nonetheless, they are compelled to move from their village to *Yambu* (Kathmandu) in search of some labour work due to the lack of resource reach and education. The bitter fact is that even today, most of the porters, labourers and rickshaw pullers in Kathmandu are the *Tamangs*. Because of the state bias, the ethnic *Tamang*

community had suffered in the past, which has been continuing. *Syangtan*, in his poem, presents the same reality:

Today, in my house
a chained baby has been born
... ..
He cannot go to school.
Instead, he will be compelled to go to *Yambu*
To become a conductor of a mini-bus
To wash dishes in a hotel.

(*Syangtan*, 113, Trans. Lama)

The *Tamang* people leave their village in search of a better life. However, they are compelled to be involved in lowly jobs. It happens mostly due to their lack of proper education and qualifications. For being so, several things are responsible—the most important is the state law and the rulers' attitudes towards them. They were deprived of education and resources in the past. They were rejected for any government services except the post, *Pipa*, in the army. *Pipa* is the lowest rank in the army, just like a porter, who had to support every necessary logistic arrangement for the battalion. Lama reminds us that the department named *pipa goswara* was established in the army for the recruitment of the *Tamangs*. He states, “In *pipa goswara*, mainly they were limited to physical tasks such as cutting timber, carrying loads, erecting tents, etc” (9). It shows that they were treated completely as slaves and put aside from any higher and intellectual jobs. The nation still shows an indifferent attitude towards this community. As a result, their forefathers' time and predicaments have reappeared in grandchildren's lives, too. Despite several political movements and social changes in Nepal, overall, the life of the *Tamang* community has not been drastically changed yet. They are still struggling at the margin. However, they have started internalising the painful past of their ancestors, the suppression of the rulers, and their state-dominated condition. Exposure to such unimaginable facts

has throbbed their heart and minds, which have led them to the path of dissidence. These days, they have started questioning and claiming their identity. The following stanzas unveil the same thing:

Why at midnight
uncountable beheaded people
carrying broken *damphu*
gather beside the statute of Junga Bahadur *apa?*

... ..

My grandchildren will ask him again.

What does *Pipa* mean *apa?*

(Syangtan, 115, Trans. Lama)

Syangtan has used “beheaded people” as a symbol of the immensely subjugated *Tamang* community, whose head or brain was never acknowledged and only represented as physical labourers by the state authority. It could also be the symbolic representation of the *Tamang* rebels who were massively butchered by the state. It is said that a thousand *Tamangs* were beheaded when they raised their voice and revolted. Mohan Gole Tamang mentioned that when the *Tamangs* from *Lachyang, Nuwakot*, revolted against the state in 1793, a huge number of the army went from Kathmandu and massacred a thousand *Tamang* rebels (72). The then rulers silenced the voices of the common people through violence. However, these days, the same people come out at midnight, carrying their *damphu* (a *Tamang* musical instrument) and gathering beside the statue of Junga Bahadur, who had authenticated caste hierarchy through *Muluki Ain*. They meet at midnight to threaten the dominating rulers and to claim their snatched spaces. Moreover, the exposure of the *Tamang* ancestors’ musical instruments, such as *damphu* and *tungna*, also “articulates their identity” (65) in Lama's perception. In fact, such cultural symbols are powerful means to exhibit the socio-cultural identity of any ethnic community.

The new socio-political phenomenon developed after the 2005/06 democratic movement has inspired every marginalised caste and community to raise their voice. As a result, the grandchildren of the state-dominated *Tamangs* have broken their silence and started questioning the authority. In

fact, only conscious and politically aware people could raise questions and point towards the ruler's misdeeds. In this sense, today's *Tamang* youths are conscious enough to revisit their past and question the state, which has become instrumental to their identity reclaim.

Conclusion

Despite immense capabilities, the indigenous *Tamang* community was consistently dominated by the *Shah* and *Rana* rulers of Nepal. They were forced into compulsory physical labour and involved in the lowest job in the army. The then rulers could exercise any exploitative measures on the *Tamangs* since Junga Bahadur's *Muluki Ain* categorised them as "enslavable alcohol drinkers." Through the imposition of state law, the *Tamangs* were extremely dominated and devalued. The rulers subdued their voices and treated them as mere slaves. The authority only involved them in hard jobs, such as paper production, working in the royal fruit plantation and car carrying tasks. Amid unfavourable structural subjugation, the whole community was deprived of education, resources and identity. However, when the country entered into the new socio-political scenario, particularly after the 2005/06 democratic movement, every marginalised caste and community, including the *Tamangs*, started raising the issue of identity, space and equality. Against this background, the paper has critically analysed Raju Syangtan's poem "What does 'Pipa' mean?" and Subas Tamang's visual art "Study of History IV" that recall the past to claim their identity.

Both *Syangtan* and *Tamang* have revisited the past and explored biases and oppressive attitudes of the state and rulers towards the *Tamang* community. The *Tamangs* were misrepresented as porters, labourers and brainless communities only for the validation of Hindu caste-based social hierarchy. Trapped by the law for centuries, the *Tamangs* only nodded their head and followed the orders of their masters. However, the recent democratic movements and social changes have ignited their consciousness and rebellious spirit, which have encouraged them to revisit their past and raise questions against the rulers and the power centres. Their continuous intervention against the discriminatory measures of the state and dissenting voices authenticate their identities reclaim.

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M(othering) the Mother: Rethinking Reproductive Justice and Abortion Rights by Critically Analysing Selected Literary Works

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Abstract: While author Virginia Woolf issued a clarion call for women to uphold their personal autonomy in her notable work *A Room of One's Own*, the bodily autonomy of women spiralled abysmally low with the overturning of the landmark US Supreme Court judgment *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. Not only did the judgment eclipse abortion access in the United States of America, but its ripple effect also threatens to take the entire world in its grip. With reproductive freedom of women at stake, it becomes essential to analyse selected works of modern fiction such as Joanne Ramos's *The Farm* (2019) and *Red Clocks* by Leni Zumas (2018) along with Margaret Atwood's classic novel *The Handmaid's Tale* in order to shed light on how these make a case for reproductive justice. In doing so, the research paper also endeavours to unravel the construction of the mother as the 'Other', who is often asked to comply with the didactic moral constructions of motherhood in addition to being denied reproductive decision-making power. Reference will also be made to oft-quoted literary critics Alison Bartlett, Kristin Luker, Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger, who vociferously wrote on the issue. The aim of the study is to examine notions of reproductive justice through an in-depth analysis of seminal works of literature which challenge the narratives surrounding pregnancy and childbirth.

Keywords: Reproductive Justice, Motherhood, Dystopian Science Fiction, Other, Women

Introduction

The reproductive rights of women came under severe assault with the overturning of the landmark *Roe v. Wade* judgment on June 24, 2022. The *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* judgment (which overruled the *Roe v. Wade* case of 1973) not only eclipses abortion access in the United States of America, but its ripple effect also threatens to take the entire world in its grip. While the *Roe v. Wade*

(1973) judgment had been the settled legal precedent in the US for nearly fifty years and made safe abortion accessible to women, its reversal grants unfettered powers to the state to regulate abortion, thereby undermining women's right to terminate unwanted pregnancies.

The overturning of the judgment stirred a myriad of emotions among women who eloquently lamented their consequent loss of reproductive freedom. It came as no surprise that many women's groups labelled the overturning of the historic *Roe v. Wade* judgment as a "dark day for American democracy" (Fottrell). Critically acclaimed author Margaret Atwood, whose work *The Handmaid's Tale* depicted a strikingly similar state of affairs in the fictitious Republic of Gilead, expressed her thoughts on the judgment by taking to Instagram and posting a picture of herself with a coffee mug bearing the words "I told you so" (Prieb). Atwood's reaction to the draft of the Supreme Court opinion merits closer attention here. Expressing absolute disbelief at the prophetic nature of her novel, when asked about her opinion on the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* judgment, the author noted, "I invented Gilead; the Supreme Court is making it real" (Atwood).

Meghan Markle, The Duchess of Sussex, voiced her concerns at the far-reaching impact of the *Dobbs* judgment, which took away women's constitutional right to abortion. According to her, the ruling puts the physical safety of women in tremendous danger as it would entail women attempting unsafe abortions upon themselves to get rid of their unwanted or accidental pregnancies:

This [ruling] is having a very real impact on women's bodies and lives starting now... Those who are pregnant and find themselves in a medical emergency will be at the mercy of doctors and lawyers to determine if a procedure that is needed to save her life can even be done at all. What does this tell women? It tells us that our physical safety doesn't matter and, as a result, that we don't matter. But we do. Women matter. (Garrard)

With the reproductive freedom of women in serious peril with the pronouncement of the 2022 judgment, a turn to selected literary texts is necessitated since numerous dystopian science fiction novels, most notably, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* had already anticipated the reproductive rights issues the world is grappling with today.

Often hailed as the most celebrated work of science fiction which condemned the practice of state-controlled reproduction, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood gave its readers plenty of food for thought by sparking relevant debates around the issue. Many modern works of literature, such as *Red Clocks* by Leni Zumas and *The Farm* by Joanne Ramos, followed suit and became mouthpieces of their respective authors as they spoke about the pressing need to accord reproductive freedom to women, thereby making a case for reproductive justice. However, the authors were left in a state of shock when they found that what appeared to be a case of far-sighted literary imagination at the time of writing their novels is fast turning into reality today. The study places selected works of modern dystopian science fiction-*The Handmaid's Tale*, *Red Clocks* and *The Farm* as its focal point in order to understand how these present the evolution of current issues pertaining to reproductive justice in imagined scenarios which are likely to arise in the near future.

Kristin Luker, the author of the critically-acclaimed book *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, made a rather astute observation when she noted that "In two short decades, the issue of abortion has moved from the fringes of public concern to centre stage" (1). The right to safe and legal abortions is a human right which every woman must have. HR Bellicosa, author of *The Punishments*-a novel about a world without abortion, succinctly observed, "Abortion is health care. Abortion is freedom. Abortion is bodily autonomy. A country without this human right is not a free country" (Garrard).

While access to safe and legal abortion is a primary component of reproductive justice, it is not the only one. Reproductive justice, a term which splices reproductive rights and social justice together, is made up of three core values. Renowned reproductive justice and human rights activists Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger assert in their work *Reproductive Justice* that the definition of reproductive justice contains three primary principles under its ambit:

1. the right *not* to have a child; 2. the right to *have* a child; and 3. The right to *parent* children in safe and healthy environments. In addition, reproductive justice demands sexual autonomy and gender freedom for every human being. (9)

The Right to breastfeed openly is also a component of reproductive justice. Yet, but a woman nursing her infant in public raises a storm in a teacup. They are looked at with scorn and are asked to “cover up” because society finds it excessively difficult to resist the urge to politicise and sexualise lactating breasts.

The deprivation of women’s personal autonomy, thus, comes to the fore in a multitude of ways- from state-controlled reproductive decisions to the social stigma attached with breastfeeding in public et al. Stripped of their right to bodily self-determination, women are rendered devoid of the power to decide whether they wish to carry a pregnancy to its full term or to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. In protecting the right to life of the fetus she nurtures in her womb, the right to personal liberty and privacy of a woman are severely eroded in the process.

Although made with a noble intent of safeguarding maternal health, state statutes more often than not render women devoid of any control on their own bodies. The right to privacy of the women stands violated in such a situation since physicians and lawmakers are often handed over the baton to make reproductive decisions on behalf of women.

Many authors have been vociferously voicing their concerns on the issue and it becomes pertinent to take their observations into consideration. An exploration of works of literature which make a case for reproductive justice can play a vital role in enlightening contemporary debates surrounding the bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom of women. The present paper critically examines selected works of literary fiction by reading them through the lens of women’s reproductive rights in order to see how their narratives make a case for reproductive justice. A literary perspective on women’s reproductive rights reveals that novels of science fiction and dystopian speculative fiction not only offer a peep into most of the reproductive rights issues which are highly likely to arise in the near future but also warn one of the catastrophes which will follow if the state were to control the reproductive rights of women.

Margaret Atwood pictured a dystopian society in her critically-acclaimed work *The Handmaid’s Tale*, where women are compelled to bear children for high-ranking members of the

society. The book, which offers a rich indictment of forced pregnancies and lack of access to reproductive health-care facilities for the handmaids, by conjuring up imagined scenarios where they are exposed to the humiliating rituals by patriarchs who treat them like chattels. The work thus, voiced Atwood's fears of living in a society which forced women to bear children, by dehumanising them and treating them like objects. Some lines which resonate with the spirit of the work seem ironic, given the way in which surrogate mothers are treated as "biological objects" in the real world, "I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will . . . Now the flesh arranges itself differently. I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am and glows red within its translucent wrapping" (102). Atwood's dystopian vision of a world where women's reproductive rights are severely curtailed came true as every woman in America is experiencing the horrors described in Atwood's book in the aftermath of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

Another work which merits discussion at this juncture is *The Farm* by Joanne Ramos. *The Farm* almost mirrors the pertinent issues raised by Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* by focussing on the plight of a surrogate mother who is lured with empty promises by a rich couple in return for her promise to deliver a healthy child to them. But as soon as she fulfils the promise and delivers a child, she is cut off from their lives just like a non-existent entity. In its essence, the novel showcases that pregnancy becomes the burden of the marginalised. The book, which ponders over what might ensue if surrogacy were taken to its high-capitalist extreme, seems to be a reflection of the current times, where many people look at surrogacy with disdain and see it as an arrangement where "wombs (are) on hire", a position which reduces the position of economically weak women to the status of commodities to be exploited at the hands of the privileged sections of society (Pratap).

Ramos symbolically presents the problematic ways in which capitalist regimes and state agencies control the bodies of women by imagining a dystopian world where pregnant "hosts" are kept under constant surveillance by the rich clients. These modern-day "handmaids" are forbidden from using their cellphones or contacting their friends and family under the guise of protecting "fetal

security.” Every movement of these women is under scanner by virtue of wristbands and security cameras, which in turn escalates concerns about the problematic status of surrogate mothers and the denial of privacy to them. Many critics have drawn parallels between the situations presented in the book and the current state of “baby factories” in India and Ukraine.

During the course of her work, Ramos makes a snide remark on the practice of forced surrogacy or a situation when women’s financial hardships force them to accept the offer of becoming surrogate mothers as she observes, “Because in America you only have to know how to make money. Money buys everything else” (175). Interestingly, soon after Ramos published *The Farm* in 2019, Alabama’s restrictive abortion laws were passed, which turned Ramos’s fears into reality. When parallels were drawn between her novel and the anti-abortion scenario, which is ubiquitous in the times we are living in, Ramos famously commented, “I can’t believe we’re here again” (Lea).

Red Clocks by Leni Zumas conjures up the ghastly image of a near-future United States which has declared both, abortion and in vitro fertilisation as illegal. In her work, Zumas imagines a time when the Personhood Amendment has been added to the US Constitution, thereby curtailing the reproductive freedom of women. The bleak picture painted in the work does not seem too far-sighted given the current flurry of anti-abortion laws which are dominating the legal world, especially in the US, as an after-effect of the overturn of the *Roe v. Wade* judgment. The politics of reproduction, which attacks women’s freedom of choice to determine when and how they want to become mothers, leaves them helpless as they see their bodies being governed by the state. Zumas blames “the monsters in Congress who passed the Personhood Amendment and the walking lobotomies on the Supreme Court who reversed *Roe v. Wade*. (As a result of which) Two short years ago...abortion was legal in this country, but now we have to resort to throwing ourselves down the stairs” (59).

The novel, which deftly weaves together the lives of five women ranging from different age groups, offers a psychological insight into the minds of women who are not allowed to exercise their own discretion when it comes to matters pertaining to their reproductive decisions. While Ro, a 42-year old woman whose hopes of becoming a mother through the process of artificial insemination are

dashed to the ground with the passage of the federal laws banning in vitro fertilisation in the US; Mattie, a minor girl of 15 years of age lives in constant fear of inviting imprisonment if she “chooses” to abort her unwanted pregnancy which, given the fact that she is underage, she is clearly not in a position to sustain.

Another important facet of ensuring reproductive justice for women is the right to breastfeed openly. Oft-quoted literary critic Alison Bartlett vociferously wrote on the issue of breastfeeding in public, which is another significant aspect of reproductive justice. In *Breastwork: Rethinking Breastfeeding* Bartlett goes on to argue that the fact that public spectacles of women breastfeeding are considered scandalous in a lot of countries till date, speaks volumes about the conflict between nature and socio-legal norms which continue to govern women’s bodies. Barlett puts the real position about breastfeeding into perspective when she spells the gospel truth at the very outset of her work, “breastmilk has always meant ‘more’ than just breastmilk. I was mostly appalled by what I read about breastfeeding” (1).

The irony is not lost on women when they are made to realise that the natural act of a mother nursing her infant in public gives rise to a storm in the teacup since “breastfeeding has always been political” (18). In addition to this, the proliferation of mothering and baby care manuals apart from breastfeeding pedagogy material available in the market reinforces the view that the “glands which are the decision-makers” must comply with the directions listed in baby care manuals. While Australia, Canada and Taiwan feature on the list of the countries where nursing in public is hailed as legal and a common occurrence, there are countries such as Saudi Arabia and India and where breastfeeding in public is considered scandalous.

Quite recently, Australian Senator Larissa Waters nursed her baby while engaging in pertinent discussions in the parliament. Quite admirably, Waters became a symbol of power for every mother when she rose up without batting an eyelid to firmly address the parliament with her 14-week-old daughter latching onto her lactating breast. A flurry of newspapers and social media articles carried headlines such as “Larissa Waters becomes the first woman in Australian Parliament to deliver a

speech while breastfeeding” (Lieu). When videos of her proudly breastfeeding her baby while speaking on a motion in the Australian Parliament addressing black lung disease among the coal miners in Queensland went viral, Waters reacted with the powerful words, “I hope [this] helps to ... remove any vestige of stigma against breastfeeding a baby when they are hungry” (Lieu).

The current situation being witnessed in the US is in sharp contrast to the legal position of abortions in India. The landmark *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. The Union of India and Others* judgment of 2017 recognised women’s fundamental right to make their own reproductive choices as part of their right to life and personal liberty enshrined under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Articles 3 and 17 of The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) state that; “The right of a woman to make autonomous decisions about her own reproductive functions is at the very core of her fundamental right to equality and privacy, concerning intimate matters of physical and psychological integrity.” However, it is important to bear in mind that while women are the most deeply impacted by the passage of restrictive legislations on abortion, which spell doom for reproductive freedom, it also collaterally impacts those belonging to other communities. Issues of bodily autonomy accompanying pregnancy affect white women and women of colour differently than they impact the lives of transgender couples, but the common thread which connects all of them is the regressive way in which the anti-abortion laws impact their “right to choose” (“Safe”).

Conclusion

The recent reversal of the hitherto landmark judgment reminds one of the pre-Roe v. *Wade* era, wherein the lack of legal access to abortions had led to the creation of a secret underground abortion counselling service by the name of Jane Collective. The said service, which operated from 1969 to 1973, assisted women who wanted to abort their accidental pregnancies. Those who could not travel all the way resorted to dangerous methods to abort their pregnancies themselves. It comes as no surprise then that the current curtailment of women’s reproductive freedom has led to a revival of the Jane Collective’s mission from the 1960s under the new initiative “We Are Jane.”

When critically acclaimed author Margaret Atwood lamented that “A ‘deeply rooted’ tradition is that women’s reproductive organs do not belong to the women who possess them. They belong only to the state” (Atwood), she questioned not just the anti-abortion laws which saw the light of the day after the *Dobbs* judgment, but also questioned the relegation of women to the status of what Edward Said called the “Other” even in relation to their own bodies.

Lindy West, author of the critically-acclaimed book *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman*, succinctly captured the essence of the matter, when she noted, “I believe unconditionally in the right of people with uteruses to decide what grows inside of their body and feeds on their blood and endangers their life and reroutes their future. There are no ‘good’ abortions and ‘bad’ abortions, there are only pregnant people who want them and pregnant people who don’t...” (73).

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Manipulation of Memory and Post-Truth Politics in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch*

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Abstract: The idea of memory and its arbitrariness, used as a crutch by politicians to buttress the political circus created by them in their claimed nations, states, boundaries, etc., is being explored and talked about a great deal in the slippery times of today. The theoretical scientific idea of a parallel world has probably been brought to reality by the propagandistic's constant disguising of the real. Two or more parallel versions of history exist almost everywhere in the world today relatively because of political intervention. This alteration of facts and distortion of collective memory and truths has been explored through subtle sarcasm by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975). The political culture of exercising media as a medium to distort the 'real', to give space to the 'contorted real', so that the difference between the two becomes arbitrary and haphazard and that the thin line between the two contraries vanishes and they are projected as a blend, in a politically convenient fashion, is the prime topic of discussion in this research paper. This article critically and vehemently focuses on the instances of political manipulation and control of memory by a narcissistic dictator and how it impinges upon the contemporary post-truth era.

Key Terms: Dictatorship, Memory, Manipulation, Paranoia, Politics, Post-truth, Propaganda

The area of Memory Studies is believed to use memory as a tool to examine, explore and remember the past. It has a broad scope and is inclusive in nature because of its multidisciplinary nature. In a 2008 article, authors Roediger and Wertsch comment on the scope of this study field, "The multidisciplinary field of memory studies combines intellectual strands from many domains, including ... anthropology, education, literature, history, philosophy, psychology and sociology" (9). Memory Studies is more inclined towards the collective past of a cultural or political group of people

than the history of individual people. Scholar Tanja E. Bosch writes, “Memory studies is thus a multidisciplinary field which began with individual memory growing outward to focus on broader dimensions of social memory and the politics of public remembering, especially those channelled through communications media” (2). The subject field has been more popular in countries which have had a past filled with instability and political anarchy or are still in search of a balance for their social and political framework; the countries with their past woven around violence, conflict, political and cultural shifts, etc. Memory Studies engages with large communities of people and explore why there are certain occurrences that the masses remember and why the rest of them are almost wiped from their memories. The revision and deliberate restructuring of a nation’s historical memory is often a calculated action undertaken by governments in order to revamp their public perception. A whole amount of new and good memories are associated by these governments with their own names in order to ingratiate the citizens of their countries. One such example of the distortion of historical memory from world history is put forth by German-American sociologist Lewis A. Coser in the introduction to Maurice Halbwach’s book *On Collective Memory* (1992). Coser notes:

Talking with Soviet colleagues in the last few years, I was struck again and again by a degree of hesitancy on their part when we discussed recent events in the Soviet Union. It dawned on me after a while that these people had been forced in the last few years to shed their own collective memory-like skin and reconstruct a largely different set of collective memories. All the major historical figures of the past who had been killed, slandered, and vilified under Stalin’s bloody reign were now shown to have been good Bolsheviks and major revolutionary heroes. The whole Soviet history of the last seventy years had to be rewritten. Needless to say, the new history books often had their own biases, but they were at one in demolishing the old. (21-22)

The analysis of this ‘collective memory’ of various societies is undertaken by historians in order to retrace the past of a community, as the creation of collective memory is often influenced by history. The referred term *collective memory* was first propounded by Hugo Van Hofmannsthal. The credit

for the concept behind it and its development, however, is given to Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945). According to him, collective memory is a socially constructed notion. To quote Coser again, “It is, of course, individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past” (22). Coser gives the example of his new friendship with the Native Americans after his move to America. He describes his relationship with them as estranged, and he was at first unable to locate the barrier between these bonds. It was only after he remembered Halbwachs’s work on memory that he was able to decipher that there were not enough collective memories between him and the Native Americans. ‘Collective memory’ can refer to a cluster of memories that is shared by individuals in a group or social institution. Each group has their own distinctive contexts, and the memories, therefore, are drawn from these contexts. These memories are shared by said groups and are important for any nation as they reflect their past and history. A heritage can be traced by focusing on these memories. This action of retracing, nonetheless, tends to get erroneous, as memory as a criterion is unreliable and immeasurable. Zheng Wang, in his book *Memory Politics, Identity and Conflict* (2017), remarks, “The politics of collective memory - impossible to quantify, hard to measure with the methods of survey research, yet still very real - is a major ingredient of ... the policy setting in every country” (1). Relying heavily on memories while conducting rational research around retracing and revisiting the past gets fairly arbitrary, as the varied recollections of the past are not always objective and stable. Accordingly, it becomes elementary to manipulate the collective memory of groups as it is dynamic and is always in a state of flux. Manipulation of memory refers to the mending of the memories and the worldview of the masses in a manner which is convenient and advantageous for the manipulators. This phenomenon can be witnessed during a study of the political framework of a state controlled by monolithic political management. In his observation on Michael Oswald’s book *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism* (2022), Rafat Riedel writes, “Memory manipulations—as understood by social scientists ... can be defined as an influence organised by societal actors (individuals, institutions, groups) advancing the interests of the manipulator by instrumentalising history and

memory. This means such a (re)creation of collective memory which serves the interests, visions and ideologies of the manipulating actor(s)” (203).

These characteristics of the arbitrariness of memory, the political manipulation of the collective memory of communities, and the idea of historical revisionism with the aim of controlling and re-chiselling the existing memories of the masses in a manner which is profitable to the cause of the politicians, etc., are some of the ideas related to the memory studies which are discussed in this paper.

The Autumn of the Patriarch projects the uncertainty of the nature of memory in virtually all the events that unfold, where the conscious politics of memory distortion becomes cyclical and ubiquitous. The novel is a complex mosaic of long and enduring ramblings of distinct voices, all of which conjoin at the locus of discussing a powerful and tyrant dictator known as the General. This ruler, who is taken as a central character by Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) to satirise many actual dictators of the mid-twentieth century, resembles the archetypal despot. Raymond L. Williams, in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views* (2006), records how there was an era of military totalitarianism in the Latin American countries in the 1970s, which birthed many novels based on the theme of dictatorship, military rule and abuse of power:

The decade of the 1970s saw the startling empowerment of military dictatorships in Latin America ... major novelists, such as Alejo Carpentier, Augusto Roa Bastos, and García Márquez all published novels on dictators, “Carpentier’s *Reasons of State* appeared in 1974 and Roa Bastos’s *Yo el Supremo (I, the supreme)* in the following year. García Márquez had begun his project at the end of a dictatorship ... that of Pérez Jiménez, ruler of Venezuela during the 1950s.” (123)

Though the novel does not mention the dictatorial state’s name, it is evidently based on Latin American countries. The story of the General becomes a stark exhibition of the indoctrination where our beliefs and memories are distorted in a way that appeases the cause of the regimes and where the masses become mere pawns in the wily game of throne politics. The paranoid dictator, in many

instances, tries to alter the facts and suppresses reality with the sheer use of power. He goes to fathomless extremes in order to establish his might. He even gets the conception of nature and natural phenomenon challenged so much so that:

as the lights in his bedroom went on before the cocks began to crow, the reveille of the presidential guard gave the notice of the new day to the nearby Conde barracks ... and lettered politicians and dauntless adulators who proclaimed him the corrector of earthquakes, eclipses, leap years and other errors of God ... the clock in the tower should not strike twelve at twelve o'clock but two times so that life would seem longer, the order was carried out. (6-7)

This extreme exercise of control over the minds and memory of the people can be viewed as a prominent motif in the text. At the very beginning of the novel, the General fakes his own death by fashioning the corpse of his body double in a particular manner, as he wants to see what impact his death has on his nation, which supposedly could not function without him. "How was it that the sun had risen and had risen again without stumbling, why that Sunday look, mother, why the same heat without me" (23). Evidently, he dies multiple times throughout his life and always comes back to life, and there is a belief among the people that he could control his own death:

The second time he was found, chewed away by vultures in the same office, wearing the same clothes and in the same position... no evidence of his death was final because there was always another truth behind the truth... the more certain the rumours of his death seemed, he would appear even more alive. (37-38)

The deliberately created befuddlement around the death of the General is symbolic of the use of memory manipulation as a fundamental tool to obfuscate the knowledge and the memories of the masses. This tool entails the prominent concept of post-truth, which, according to Lee McIntyre, "amounts to a form of ideological supremacy whereby its practitioners are trying to compel someone to believe in something whether there is good evidence for it or not" (13). Predominantly, this coercion takes place via the apparent tool of education. The adulator historians in the State of the

General play a vital part in meddling with and transforming the memories of people, which shows how power is inevitably concentrated in the hands of the authorities and the government. The description of the General, as recorded by the history textbooks, stands in stark contradiction to the truth that the satirical narration displays. “Contrary to what his clothing showed, the descriptions made by his historians made him very big” (39). In addition to the mending of the truth by the historians, the school textbooks further alter the reality and employ manipulation to play a vital role as:

official schoolboy texts referred to him as a patriarch of huge size who never left his house because he could not fit through the doors, who loved children and swallows, who knew the language of certain animals, who had the virtue of being able to anticipate the designs of nature, who could guess a person’s thoughts by one look in the eyes, and who had the secret of salt with the virtue of curing lepers’ sores and making cripples walk. (39-40)

Other than this, the school textbooks tell a divine story about the birth of the patriarch, “his mother ... Bendición Alvarado to whom the school texts attributed the miracle of having conceived him without recourse to any male and of having received in a dream the hermetical keys to his messianic destiny” (40). Other than history books and school textbooks being the instruments of slick manipulation through mass communication, newspapers also become the mouthpieces of the dictator. Newspapers portray the General as a strong and noble leader who works incessantly for the progress of the nation:

The few newspapers still publishing were still dedicated to proclaiming his eternity ... every day, they displayed him to us ... on the front page in his tenacious uniform ... with more authority and diligence and better health than ever ... in the usual pictures, he was once more dedicating well-known monuments or public installations that no one knew about in real life, he presided over solemn ceremonies which they said had taken place yesterday but which had really taken place during the last century. (106-07)

The paranoia which comes with power leads to further consolidation of said power, usually through desperate means. The General can be seen as an extraordinarily paranoid and isolated individual who is gravely suspicious of everyone around him. His compulsive need to re-check his surroundings for any possible threats, his obsession with the constant surveillance of people with the help of spies, his urge to keep himself away and detached from everyone, etc., end up compelling him to act in an abominable manner. The fear of being replaced or killed makes him make preemptive killings of people. The horrendous killing of and the serving-up of the corpse of his close confidant, General Rodrigo de Aguillar, whom he suspects of betrayal, on a dinner table with a duly decorated vegetable platter is one such example of an appalling. This paranoia also leads him to spread lies about himself and his family. Further, to make sure that people do not remember his mother as an ordinary individual and a tyrant's relative after her death, the General meddles with his mother's corpse and concocts the demise story. He had ordered his mother's body to be preserved with the help of cosmetic tricks and taxidermy, with the intent of displaying it to the general public and showing to them how the virtue of Benediction Alvarado has kept even her mortal remains fresh. "When the truth was quite something else, your excellency, it was that the body of his mother was not preserved because of her virtues ... but she had been stuffed according to the worst skills of taxidermy just like the posthumous animals in science museums" (130).

A quintessence of post-truth is a search for the truth and re-checking of facts. The truth is usually a faint sliver of reality that is thrashed and overshadowed by the massive and created truths in such a state as the Generals. Ironically, this dictator employs people to find truths and check facts about certain things. It can be seen that the General does so because he has started believing in the delusional versions of realities that he has constructed about himself and his family, and he merely wants an adulatory fact checker to solidify those ideas. In one such episode, the General employed Demetrius Aldous, a member of the sacred congregation, to find the real truth about his mother's sainthood in the hope of getting favoured reassurance and validation for himself. The harsh truths put forth by Demetrius Aldous, however, shock him and make him realise the blurred reality that he

himself has been living in, owing to his flatterer ministers. As an obvious consequence of the courage to speak the truth in the presence of a despot, public expulsion and other harsh punishments are ordered for all the men and women of the holy congregation. “There was ordered the immediate, public and solemn expulsion of his grace the archbishop ... followed by that of bishops, ... priests, nuns and ... the business of God” (133).

Another vital tool termed ‘historical negationism’ is axiomatically used in a dictatorship to ensure the undisputed status and power of a dictator. It is the deliberate deletion or denial of the real history. It is often supplemented with historical revisionism, where the real history is revamped and replaced according to the suitability of the person or people in the political power. We find these phenomena, along with the absolute use of stifling power in the lottery incident in the novel, wherein, again, the absurdity of absolute power becomes highlighted. The General seems to participate in a national lottery draw, which is rigged so that he wins it every single time, and the reward is often something big. To show that the lottery scheme is fair and unbiased, innocent little children are asked to draw the winning balls. Once a child participates in the draw, he/she is secretly kidnapped by the General’s men and is forever kept in captivity thereafter so that there is no witness to the fraud and corruption that occurs in the national competition. The parents of the children in the state do desperate things in order to save their kids. “... because the rumour had spread that once the children went up they didn’t come back down, their parents hid them, they buried them alive while the raiding parties that sought them in the middle of the night passed” (91). When this news about mass kidnappings gets leaked to the League of Nations, their forces come to the General’s country in search of truth and find the two thousand children that are reportedly lost. Here, we find the interestingly grotesque attempt of the General’s men to get rid of the children. Firstly, they hide them, and then they massacre these hundreds of children for the purpose of saving the vain name and worthless power of their dictator:

Goddamn, it, he had forgotten completely what will we do with the children ... he had them take the children out of their hiding place in the jungle and carry them off in the opposite

direction to the provinces of perpetual rain where there were no treasonous winds to spread their voices, where the animals of the earth rotted away as they walked ... he ordered them taken to the Andean grottoes of perpetual mists so that no one would find out where they were, ... so that the Red Cross airplanes would not discover them, ... before dawn he ordered them to put the children in a barge loaded with cement, take them singing to the limits of the territorial waters, blow them up with a dynamite charge without giving them time to suffer as they kept on singing. (93-94)

The chain of lies and the cruelty goes to the extremes of truth distortion when, right after the execution of these children, the General refuses to accept that anything of this sort ever took place. In a conversation with his comrade, the faint guilt of the General is addressed by the former by negating the fact that the mass execution ever took place as, “he said without changing expression not to believe rumours spread by traitors, old friend, the children are growing up in God’s peace” (98). On several occasions this appalling incident is unacknowledged. Another of these is when the General is addressing Ambassador Evans, “I don’t know what children you’re talking about since your own country’s delegate to the League of Nations has made a public statement that the children in the schools are all there and in good health” (98).

The subjective truths created by the General are believed in by the populace as they are robbed of their agency. People do not have the option of exercising their choices before their oppressor, who dwells in the delusory bubble of self-proclaimed godliness. The climate of adulation propagandises the General to think of himself as a god-like figure who has divine origins and who can perform miracles. Such beliefs in the mind of the General segregate him from his ordinary citizens, and he deems himself an exceptional human who has an unquestioned sanction to materialise his whims at the cost of the suffering of his citizens. He adjudges himself as an absolute and perfect leader. As this sort of totality vehemently evades the post-truth times, the General eventually loses his authority and becomes nugatory towards the final years of his life. Marquez’s jumbled voices of narration show how the masses are obligated to form connections with the contorted reality so that they have an

emotionally biased perspective of the truth. This becomes somewhat similar to Stephen Colbert's concept of 'truthiness' which, as Lee McIntyre states in his book *Post-Truth* (2018), is "defined as being persuaded by whether something *feels* true, even if it is not necessarily backed up by the facts" (5). The book becomes a perfect example of how, in a dictatorial state, the opinions as well as memories of people do not only matter but are also controlled.

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Museum as the Site of Reconstructing Memory in Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*

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Abstract: The present paper seeks to demonstrate how Orhan Pamuk contests the idea of totalisation in a Postmodernist sense by constructing a museum as a textual site in the novel *The Museum of Innocence*. The relation between the past and the present has been represented by turning to the museum and critiquing its authority. Through the use of the museum as a setting, Pamuk 'de-doxifies' and 'destabilises' (à la Linda Hutcheon) the conventional establishment of museums in literature and challenges the universalising history and memory inscribed about the nation and human civilisation. The ideas propounded by Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, and Jan Assmann about collective memory, sites of memory, and cultural memory will also be pressed into service during the textual analysis of the novel. The novel is replete with various innovative digressions as Pamuk powerfully portrays the issues concerning the sense of alienation, love, and nostalgic emotions. Upon analysing the text, one comes across a parody of classical museums, self-referentiality, ambiguity, and blurring of the distinction between art and artefact. The collection and illustration of objects is an act of reconstruction of memory. Moreover, the display of the map at the threshold and the image of the ticket to enter the museum are very crucial in our understanding of the symbolic construct called the museum in the novel.

Keywords: Museum, Memory, Representation, Reconstruction.

Introduction

Memories are innocent as they can pop up now and then, whenever in dreams or any moment lively or distressing, without any barrier and privileges. They can make the person sway from present to past in a very different manner. What if those memories are preserved to replicate the past and adored

and visited by everyone so that they can relate to them with the same tenderness, innocence, and passion? Orhan Pamuk has made it possible in his novel *The Museum of Innocence* (2008) by making memory intelligible rather than elusive. He has always envisaged bringing the museum into being so that he can put 'collectables' on display that he has gathered for years, and that was actualised in 2012 with the "Museum of Innocence", which has been granted the highest accolade *European Museum of the Year* in 2014. The re-presentation of representation through reconstruction is perceptible in a catalogue he published titled *The Innocence of Objects* in 2012 for the museum, in which he describes and retells the objects on display in the museum regarding his life and his city, Istanbul. He has made the memories alive in this novel as well as in the museum by substantially reconstructing them into eighty- three chapters and depicts the politics and materialisation of memory by calling them innocent. Some things stay with a person and turn up unexpectedly to remind a precious moment in time. It has been decided very sagaciously which memories have to be erased and retrieved, which memories have to be encoded and preserved, and which memories have to be consolidated and accentuated. Sometimes fluid and sometimes fixed, memory is a complex cognitive activity that is connected to the sequence of excitement, representation, and recollection. Here, the museum becomes a site where the lover inscribes his memories and associations with his beloved. During the narrative, Pamuk intervenes and tells the readers about the politics of the memory by throwing light on his tactics of making and creating the museum, "The pictures the museum visitor will view are ones I bought many years later from Hifzi Bey, during days whiled away conversing with shivering and miserable collectors in various crowded rooms" (61). He branches out the concept of a museum in an unconventional manner and contests the long-established notions of memory. He dismantles the homogenised conception of memory that can be stored and communicated to the generations eventually. Memory is double-edged and attains a fluid stance here.

Customarily, a museum is a locale in which tangible objects and concrete artefacts from the testimonies of the past are displayed, which, in a sense, is the representation of the grand reality or the absolute truth. The representation of history and memory in traditional museums is merely the act

of transmission of the things to the present completely devoid of the environment and the sentiments in which they were formed. Conversely, the Museum of Pamuk gains its agency from fiction, which is an imaginative reconstruction of reality through memory and acts against forgetting. The disruptive narrative style used by Pamuk, which emphasises individual emotions, is the overriding instance of debunking metanarratives. Besides, the museum visitors are not at all detached visitors or observers because they are connected with the narrative and can even see their own story and relate to the memories displayed in the boxes. The fictional world of the novel becomes lively and tangible in the factual world of the museum.

Furthermore, there is an intertwining of the settled museum with a mobile novel that can be read wherever one wants and which, in one sense, becomes the window to the museum. The love story is set in Istanbul, Kemal asserts while thinking about Füsün how her memories come to his mind and even how he remembers her, “Then I made out Füsün’s shadow through a screen and between the leaves of a huge vase of cyclamens” (18). Kemal is experiencing the sluicing of love pains and the *hüzün* (Turkish word for Melancholy), which is a feeling of pain and pleasure at the same time, and the memories of Füsün are constantly present in his heart and mind wherever he goes, “As a soft, sweet, melody . . . played in the background” (179). Smitten Kemal transpires things by collecting objects and personal possessions of his lost beloved Füsün. The vantage point of Füsün is also revealed to the visitors through the objects and artefacts. In chapter 23, “The Consolation of Objects”, Kemal says that the collection of objects of common memories works as a palliative to relieve this new kind of obsessive pain. Pamuk mentions in an interview that “for Kemal, memory is voluntary [as] he plans to remember it” (“Çukurcuma” 63) so that he can commemorate “the happiest moment of [his] life” (1) by establishing a museum in the memory of his beloved. His way of expressing his love and the present life through the collection of objects and the memories and emotions attached to them have propinquity to Lyotardian’s aesthetics of postmodern “sentiment of the sublime” (77), which is “a strong and equivocal emotion. . . . [having] pleasure and pain” (77). Forgetting Füsün is not easy for Kemal. The more he tries to forget her, the more his mind becomes constantly busy

daydreaming and building an imaginary argument and situation with her. The time he is inundated with love, pain, and agony, he manages to sort them through the “bundle of memories” (214).

The memory is owned by a lover through his rendition of his love story, which is coalesced in objects and his fictional museum by sorting and sifting the things through his mental map. While considering this as “a prelapsarian ideal” (190), Stewart argues that whilst creating his museum, Kemal “simultaneously deconstructs and reconstructs his personal past” (qtd. in “Bridging the Gap between People and Things: The Politics of Collecting in Pamuk’s *The Museum of Innocence*”, 190). The individualised memories of Kemal also encapsulate the cultural values of Istanbul. The cultural artefacts, consumer products, and the daily objects that were used in Istanbul in the second half of the twentieth century, such as receipts, salt shakers, lottery tickets, phone tokens, newspaper cuttings, china dogs, postcards, etc., hint at the ‘collective’ and ‘cultural memory.’ The borderline between the fictional and the real museums becomes indistinct by imparting the ticket and map for the readers to enter the real museum from the realm of the fictional museum. Even the projection of Orhan Pamuk, as well as the manuscript of the novel in the exhibition of Kemal’s museum, becomes objectified, which in itself hints at self-referentiality. By employing it, Pamuk subverts a conventional narrative structure and authoritative truth that cannot depict the complexity, diversity, and fragmentation of the postmodern world. He explores the dynamism and diversity of personal and collective memory.

Moreover, Pamuk’s real museum allows the reader a process of meaning-making and doesn’t control the presentation of history through the exhibition of the objects. There is a de-doxification of the fixed meaning-making and representation associated with the collectables and their connotations. He imbues the narrative with ambiguity. Pamuk, being the creator and curator, presents and represents the objects to the readers and the museum visitors. He is engaged with the museum visitors as throughout the novel, he talks to them and provides hints and directions to the visitors, “Visitors to the museum might wish to press down on the button alongside this exhibit to hear the sound of a chirping bird” (221). The predilection to challenge preexisting convictions towards museums and

everything about absolutism is evident throughout the novel. Kemal, in fiction, also wants to establish a museum like Pamuk, and the antithesis of the so-called conventional or Western Museum has been his project. Likewise, he also visits 5,732 museums in Paris, for instance, the Edith Piaf Museum and Musée de la Poste, to name a few, after the death of his beloved, and strides into the streets of Istanbul to get an insight into the fusion of the past and the present. He concludes that Western museums are based on power and pride, not on emotional intimacy, and “What Turks should be viewing in their own museums are not bad imitations of Western art but their own lives” (524). He also remarks that museums are not meant for savaging and strolling but for living through the collections that are demonstrative of the lived experience and moment. Yin Xing rightly asserts that “[i]n Pamuk’s hands, the novel-as-museum becomes a privileged space for contemplating the real value of trivial objects in everyday life” (198). The fictional museum of the fictional character Kemal and the real museum of Pamuk, created from fiction, keep the past and memory alive.

Therefore, *The Museum of Innocence* has become an “archive” to use Pamuk’s statement, “Novels also form a rich and powerful archive- of common human feelings, our perceptions of ordinary things, our gestures, utterances, and attitudes” (130). By evoking and rejuvenating the instantaneous whirlpool of memories of the physical and psychological world of Kemal that he has restored in his mind, the museum becomes the “*lieux de memoire*” or the site of memory, the space of imagination and representation to draw upon Pierre Nora’s idea, where “memory crystallises and secretes itself” (7). The collections of the museum include not only the possessions and objects touched by Füsün but also the objects and things used by his fiancée Sibel, things abandoned by his mother, belongings of Füsün’s father, Turgey Bey, and aunt Nesibe along with the sample of Meltem soda bottle produced by Kemal’s friend Zaim. Through this consolidated stock of memory, he has depicted and illustrated the distinct attributes and conventions of a particular period/point of time, which hints at a ‘cultural memory’ that has been defined by Jan Assman as related to “memory (contemporised past), culture, and the group (society)” (“The Cultural Memory” 129).

This novel also presents “frozen moments” (97) that publicise the everyday lifestyle of the Turkish people that, according to Halbwachs, create a link between memory and group, “Our physical surroundings bear our and others’ imprint” (1). Some of the political and historical moments that are collective are also mentioned here by the subjective experiences of Kemal, which also correspond to the philosophy of Halbwachs that “the individual as a group member” (2), is subjected to material nature not “the isolated individual” (2). Pamuk’s museum at Çukurcuma is the embodiment of the localised narratives of the Turks, and it functions as “a prosthesis-memory” (Nora 14) to preserve the mini-narratives, the past or the lived experience that has been retrieved through the eternising of the personal objects. Pamuk mentions that the museum set up by the European rulers had been the channel to extol their “power, taste, and sophistication through the medium of objects and paintings” (129). Through this collection and display of objects, he challenges the existence of memory in commodities by contrasting it with the preservation of personal memory through the artefacts in the museum.

To cope with the extreme sufferings Kemal endures because of his parting from Füsün and the guilt he feels for her tragedy, the memory becomes an inescapable condition to operate his desires and aspirations, and as a consequence, he evolves into an obsessive collector. He reconstructs an imaginative present and reimagines certain situations and moments from his memory, reflecting the Lyotardian notion of indeterminacy, connected to the idea of the presence of the past, which is untrammelled and perpetually present. In chapter 68, there is the description of 4,213 Samsun cigarette stubs smoked by Füsün between 1978 and 1984. Some are smeared with lipstick, coffee, and Füsün’s favourite sour cherry ice cream. Each stub has been labelled with a moment of memory and meticulously dated. He even restores the various mementoes of their lovemaking in the Merhamet Apartments. Yağcıoğlu rightly calls it “a museum of the mind” (189) as it displays an emotional memory and a lived experience, thus becoming unique.

By depicting this museum as a museum of memory, Pamuk provides the validation of the fictional world of characters and objects with one’s senses and the mind map through the novel (the verbal imagination) and the museum (the visual imagination). He emphasises the role of museums

“about preservation, conservation, and the resistance to being forgotten” (135) for safeguarding the past and yielding pleasure in his book *The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist*. In reality, he collected these objects from second-hand shops, flea markets, and homes of acquaintances during the six years he spent writing the novel. He has in mind while finding, studying, and describing objects “the feeling of insufficiency” that, according to him, demands the “willing participation of the reader’s imagination” (*The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist* 123). The postmodern fiction is being employed with shrewd wit by deliberately blurring the distinction between fact, fiction, and imagination. Pamuk intensifies the notion of unattainable and unrepresentable in the narration and repudiates “the solace of good forms” (Lyotard 81).

The “collectibles” (68) have the power to alleviate life’s miseries, as demonstrated in the novel with so many minute details. There is the depiction of a quince grater, a replica of the kinds of dishes and meals that Istanbul’s middle-class families used to eat back in the sixties, seventies, and eighties. Alexandra Coghlan calls Pamuk’s museum a “narrow house [that is] filled with the debris of civilization” where “intimacy rather than respectfulness is the prevailing sensibility, where universal truths and histories grow out of personal moments and discarded objects” (2012). The feeling of “imaginative labor” (139) is augmented by representing the life in the museum shared as a community, with all objects and images and having a sense of pride in the lives depicted. The rendition of the game of Tombala is an instance of ‘collective memory’, which is being played in Turkey during the New Year Party, in the upper class of Kemal and also in the class to which Füsün belongs, but which originated from Europe. Defining “collective memory”, Maurice Halbwachs states that each individual’s memory is socially mediated as each individual belongs to a particular circle and association that shapes one’s memory. Owing to this, the traditional concept of memory as linear and stable has been replaced by fragmented, scattered, disjointed, and subjective experiences.

Every object in the museum corresponds to a particular moment. Display of food that is redolent of real taste and odour is rarely seen in conventional museums. The photographs, ferris in the Bosphorus bridge, the ashtray, and the Ottoman crystal artefact are the components that are on

display in Pamuk's museum, contrary to the normal museums. According to Jean Francois Lyotard, postmodern writers are not restricted to adhering to any conventional rules and make a point that "it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented" (81). The fictional and real museum represents "a perfect combination of voluntary and involuntary memory" (Xing 204). The collection of objects is an act of voluntary memory, and the representation of those objects triggers involuntary memory.

On top of that, a powerful sense of *déjà vu* can be perceived in the museum as well as in the novel, where one can completely relate to the objects displayed and described as ". . . The Museum of Innocence functions as an enactment of the plot of *The Museum of Innocence*, but more than that, it is the embodiment of a feeling, a state of mind, a place created to convey the mood and atmosphere of the novel" (98). There is an appeal to the low-brow culture here, with the non-totalising mini-narratives and the celebration of fragmentation. In "A Novel and a Museum Are the Same Thing," Pamuk asserts that "Museums should no longer concern themselves with state histories, the sagas of kings and heroes, or the forging of national identities; they should be focus instead on the lives and belongings of ordinary people..." (ix). The traditional museum's claims to truth and universality are questioned here with a sceptical postmodern tool. He represents the museum as the 'site' of memory, where myriad standpoints intersect, a repository of innocent things that showcase knowledge and pride in the past and "contests mastery and totalisation" (Hutcheon 35).

Contrary to the linear time sequence, Pamuk resorts to celebrating the chunks of moments and fragments in his real museum, giving it a postmodern twist, and the collectables appear as a catalogue in the museum. The exhibition of a German-made wall clock does not represent the continuous progression of time but represents the linking of "indivisible moments" (283) and values cherished by Kemal with his beloved and with the other characters and group of people. Owing to his conception of time as in-consecutive, he treasures the various moments and emotions, his happiness during the 1,593 nights at Füsün's dinner table.

Finally, this museum also de-naturalises the predominant features of large, institutional, state-sponsored museums that tell merely the history of a nation and some influential persona of a particular time. Hutcheon's argument about the "de-doxifying impulse of postmodern art and culture" (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 4) is discernible here. The feelings of nostalgia, agony, remorse, hope, impatience, aspirations, desires, emotional recovery, and desperation are all voiced by the objects as they possess "an emotional coloration" (*Postmodernist Fiction* 32) inherent in them to quote McHale's terms which make them more privileged ones in the fictional world.

Conclusion

Pamuk shows how human beings are blessed with the power and authenticity to remember, which builds and even shapes the person. With these mementoes from the past, he seems to urge the Turks to preserve every piece of cultural memory as an exigency. He has explored the ample trajectories of history, art, culture, and the perseverance of memory and tradition in everyday life. He breaks the mould by converting the local into the global in the museum. With the dynamics and interplay of remembering and forgetting, memory is as much about re-creating the past as about forging the future with manipulative imagination. Pamuk has delineated the embedded, enactive, and fabrication facets of memory. He has resisted the deliberate forgetting of cultural history and past by reconfiguring and reconstructing the forgotten past in the context of Turkey by blending history with memory. The reconstruction and fictionalisation of the past could be a way of embracing the present and celebrating the fragmentation unconditionally.

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Trauma, Memory, and Identity Crisis in Rohinton Mistry's *Family Matters*

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Abstract: The exploration of trauma in literature and society and its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance in shaping an individual's identity is one of the foremost themes in contemporary literature. Rohinton Mistry, by exploring the current ethnic and religious violence in India, has tried to give a literary representation of the disruptive experience of trauma and its impact on one's emotional organisation and perception of the external world in his novel *Family Matters*, published in 2002. The action of the novel is set against the backdrop of communal riots in Bombay after the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992. Exploring the trauma and sufferings of the communal violence victims, my paper offers insights into the current socio-political situations of other non-Hindu communities like Muslims and Parsis who feel threatened by their identity with the escalation of communal politics of Shiv Sena in Bombay. As Allan Megill argues, "Memory is valorized when identity is threatened" this paper aims to investigate how memory becomes the domain of foregrounding resistance to political authority and sociocultural insecurities and is used as a tool to reconstruct/strengthen cultural identities (40). After Mr Kapur's murder by Shiv Sena, the Parsi protagonist Yezad's endeavours to strengthen his cultural identity by taking recourse to the glorious history of his community alludes to the pitfalls of excessive preoccupation with memory that boomerang in the form of fundamentalist and orthodox attitude having its subtle form of violence. By focusing on Mistry's portrayal of both orthodox and sceptical Parsi characters, the paper questions the religious dogmas and fanatical attitudes that stifle the humane concerns in life.

Keywords: Trauma, Identity Crisis, Memory, Communalism, Violence, Cultural Identity, Religious Fundamentalism, Family Matters, Communal Riots.

Trauma, as understood in psychological terms, is an unsettling experience that intensely affects a person's emotional organisation and perception of the external world. Cathy Caruth puts it as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). Thus, trauma can be seen as entailing intense suffering caused by an external event that not only fractures its expression in language but also makes changes to one's mind and consciousness. Dissociation or fragmentation is an integral part of Trauma.

By exploring the contemporary ethnic and religious violence in India in the novel *Family Matters*, written by Rohinton Mistry, this paper aims to investigate themes of trauma, memory, and identity by focusing on how traumatic experiences influence characters' construction of identity and political attitudes in the novel. To achieve this purpose, my paper offers insights into socio-political situations not only of the Muslim community but also other non-Hindu communities like Parsis who feel threatened by their identity with the rise of communal politics of Shiv Sena in Bombay. As Allan Megill argues, "Memory is valorised when identity is threatened" this paper further probes into how, in times of communal conflicts, memory emerges as a vital organising tool in dealing with the identity crisis and resisting political dominance at the same time. Though "memory remains the bearer of meaning, the vehicle of identity", excessive preoccupation with memory can also become "a site of struggle and contestation" and can prove counter-productive by resulting in excessive community exclusiveness, religious zealotry, and bigotry that exercises its subtle form of violence by creating more boundaries and walls among communities (Spiegel qtd. in Bell 28; Edkins 101). The portrayal of both sceptical and orthodox characters has been used to question the religious dogmas and fanatical attitudes that suppress the humanitarian concerns in life.

The action of the novel takes place against the backdrop of communal riots in Bombay after the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992. Rohinton Mistry has tried to give a literary representation of the burning and destruction of the Babri Mosque that projects not only the growth of fundamental Hindutva ideology, communal riots, and its repercussions on the life of ordinary citizens but also

criticises the communal political pronouncements which have constructed non-Hindu communities as the religious ‘other’ by giving rise to anxiety and feelings of insecurity among these communities. The reference to Babri Mosque riots and extremist politics comes at the very beginning of the novel when Nariman deliberates on the dangers lurking outdoors as well as indoors by mentioning the brutal acts of Shiv Sena activists in Bombay. In one of these acts, they brutally beat an old Parsi woman and set a Parsi couple on fire, locked inside their house assuming that they had given shelter to the fleeing Muslims in their flat. Through the narration of these acts, he hints towards the communal violence unleashed on Muslims and how “a mosque in Ayodhya turn(s) people into savages in Bombay” (Mistry 4-5).

These horrors of Babri Mosque riots are epitomised through the agonised figure of Hussain, a Muslim peon, who works with Yezad, a Parsi, at a sports shop under a Punjabi Hindu employer Mr. Kapur. He repetitively experiences fits of shock and trauma triggered by the recurrent horrific memories of witnessing his wife and children burning alive in communal riots. Putting Hussain’s trauma in words Adina Campu says, “What he has witnessed is the ultimate act of denial—of his very right to existence—the burning of his wife, children and home. Such communal hatred can be blind as it fails to see individuals as human beings but only as representatives of groups” (69). As a Muslim, Hussain and his community are victims of ‘otherness’ and have an intimidating presence owing to the radical ideology of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism, which thrives on “the consolidation of Hindu communal sentiment against the Muslim community in India” (Kaur, Communalism 34).

The main objective of Hindutva ideology is the elimination of all religious diversity to establish India as a religiously homogenous Hindu nation. The proponents of this ideology have depicted non-Hindu religious communities, especially Muslims as an obstacle in the accomplishment of their national aspirations. While depreciating the Muslims as detrimental to the Hindu dominance in polity, culture, and society, the discourse of Hindutva demonises them as outsiders, “as a separate people, a foreign body implanted in the heart of Hindu India” and ardent adversaries of the Hindus (Brass 35).

The Ayodhya incident was an inevitable materialisation of their anti-Muslim propaganda stimulated by “the militant Hindu demand of recapturing and restoring temples allegedly destroyed by Muslim conquerors and replaced by mosques” by appropriating the memory of previous Hindu subjection to Muslim rule and “Muslim violence in the Indian history” that set in motion the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya (Brass 35). For them, the presence of Babri Mosque, a Muslim edifice of religion, signified the “contaminative presence of the non-Hindu other that stood in violation of the Hindu nation,” therefore, its destruction was seen as crucial for the cleansing of the Indian nation (Hansen 175). The communal riots that followed the destruction of the mosque made the Muslims an easy target because they were projected as “descendants of Babar who was an invader... [and] demolished their temples, particularly the Ram temple at Ayodhya” (Engineer 38-39). In this way, the communal politics of Hindutva annulling all other markers of identity reduced Muslims to merely a signifier of their religion or community and culminated in violence between Hindus and Muslims.

Such communal violence not only threatens the existence of minorities but also produces “body memory’ with lifelong effects” where the victims live their whole lives “remembering, mourning, and representing traumatising experiences...” (Khare 200). These victim’s narratives are important not only as “cultural correctives to accounts of contemporary violence” but also vital for issues of “social justice and any grass-roots acceptance of the human rights movement” (Khare 200). In Khare’s words:

victim’s ‘violence narratives’ provide us with that unique core of human experience of pain and suffering that is at once universal in some respects and local in others...Victim’s narratives are a domain of simultaneous expressions of remembering, forgetting, mourning and coping. As we locate violence this way within the inner and outer surroundings of the victim, we also trace how a violated, fractured self very slowly and cautiously tries to reconstruct itself once again within a highly fragile and uncertain world of hope, and possibly social justice... (200-201)

Interestingly, the impact of the communal politics of Shiv Sena in the novel is limited not only to the Muslims—the direct victims of communal violence, but characters from other minority communities are also deeply affected by it. In the novel, the idealist Mr. Kapur with his vision of ameliorating the city of Bombay and making it safer for common people is pitted against the Shiv Sena—representatives of the fanatical forces in the city. Despite his traumatic experience of being a victim of Muslim violence during partition and his displacement from his ancestral homeland Punjab after independence in 1947, he reconstructs himself and his identity by carrying out values like forgiveness and solidarity to his fellow human beings because his ideal in life is “rediscovering human bonds” (Mistry 229). Mr. Kapur—a Punjabi Hindu, owing to his belief in and practice of secular values, takes on a Parsi employee, Yezad, and provides shelter and a job to Husain—the traumatised Muslim victim of inter-communal violence. “By accepting Husain as an employee, he actively fights bigotry, narrow-mindedness, and intolerance between the Hindu and the Muslim community and becomes a representative of a human utopia” (Genetsch 187). His intent of celebrating all festivals in his shop be it Diwali, Eid, or Christmas represents him as a true humanist willing to embrace humanity.

His longing for a secular and safe experience of human interaction takes shape through his nostalgia for the older, secular city of Bombay whose memory he has preserved in the form of photographs clicked by him at various stages showing the city’s passage from the old peaceful outlook to the new one which is ridden with communal conflicts. As Duncan Bell opines, “Memory is the mental faculty by which we preserve or recover our pasts, and also the events recovered”, through Mr. Kapur’s memory, the old and secular Bombay is metonymically presented as India with its tolerant and secular outlook—a land of opportunities that has given shelter to every community, religion, and culture and has criticised its current degeneration with the rise of communal conflicts. Nevertheless, Mr. Kapur also falls victim to the forces of sectarianism and is murdered by the Shiv Sena goons for refusing to change his shop’s name from ‘Bombay Sporting Goods’ to ‘Mumbai Sporting Goods’—the Shiv Sena’s campaign of renaming ‘Bombay as Mumbai’ to remove all the non-Hindu names of streets and roads of Bombay and replace them with the proper Hindu names. He

gets killed for his liberal views that do not fit in with the exclusivist demands of the Hindu fundamentalists.

Such communal conditions not only increase the sense of insecurity among other religious minority groups but also challenge their identity and change their future irrevocably. Yezad, the Parsi protagonist of the novel, is so deeply affected by the murder of his employer Mr. Kapur by Shiv Sainiks that his whole life and identity turn around. Once an unbiased and cheerful man, he takes recourse to his past and religion to escape the hostile social, communal, and financial conditions. Here I adopt the argument of Allan Megill that when two opposing forces come into conflict, it inevitably brings about uncertainty or insecurity about identity and the manifestation of memory becomes inevitable in such situations (39). In other words, it can be claimed that “memory is closely tied up with identity” and “in moment of crisis people hark back to the past with amplified intensity” which leads to a hypothesis: “where identity is problematised, memory is valorised” (Megill 42, 40). In the novel, the extremist communal politics of Shiv Sena and their display of hatred against ethnic minorities challenge the identities of the Parsi characters and their memories get the chance to take shape in the form of politico-cultural nostalgia for a way of life that has been idealised in the religious ceremonials.

The historical background of the Parsi community and their political orientation is vital in understanding “the question of their identity crisis which lies in the fact of their marginal position in Indian society and their social mobilisation during British rule in India” (Kaur, *Re-Structuring* 139). Delineating the background of the Parsis, Ranjeet Kaur describes them as an ethno-religious minority of India who immigrated there to safeguard their religion from the Arab subjugation in the 7th century A.D. Despite being a small community, they have significantly contributed to the diverse sectors in the history of India. During the settlement, conforming to the conditions laid by the Hindu King, the community experienced a secluded marginal position which was altered with the arrival of the British in India. Due to their profound economic and intellectual ties to the English, their community not only achieved a dominant position in Indian society but also imbibed European cultural influences

(139, 140). In the postcolonial India, the Parsis “who defined themselves through the Western cultural values of the colonisers found themselves in a changed political order where they had to reconstruct and reorient their complex sensibilities” that made them more conscious of their minority status and religious ‘otherness’ in a Hindu dominating culture (Kaur, *Re-Structuring* 142). They perceive the escalation of communal activities in Bombay as a threat to their existence and identity as the Hindu fundamentalists claim “Marathas and Marathi language as superior” which leaves the Parsis feeling themselves shrunk “to a marginal position of second-class citizens who can be eliminated at any time” (Kaur, *Re-Structuring* 144). Bombay being the primary hub of Parsis since the British rule holds a special place in their hearts. Shiv Sena’s campaign of renaming Bombay as Mumbai—an ideological battle to rip Bombay of its secular identity by expunging all “non-Hindu” place names from a “purified Hindu homeland” and their replacement with proper Hindu names came as a jolt to Parsi social identity (Morey 240). For them, the disappearance of old English names amounts to the loss of both personal history and the colonial past, which bears witness to the Parsi community’s glorious past. As a result, they perceive a confusing, uncertain, and doubtful future in India. Therefore, they anticipate their future in India “as fraught with perplexity, uncertainty, and doubt” (Kaur, *Re-Structuring* 139).

In the novel, the communal activities of Shiv Sena negatively impact the life of the Parsi protagonist Yezad who got traumatised by the murder of his employer and dear friend Mr Kapur by the Shiv Sena activists for refusing to change the name of his shop. After the killing of Mr. Kapur, the resultant uncertainty in Yezad’s life pushes him in the direction of extreme religiosity and he takes refuge in the glorious history of the community to gain a sense of self. As Duncan Bell argues, “As identities are challenged, undermined and possibly shattered, so memories are drawn on and reshaped to defend unity and coherence, to shore up a sense of self and community” (6). The memory of the glorious religious past not only becomes the domain of foregrounding resistance to the political authority but also seeking one’s own identity and attaining “a positive sense of self-esteem” (Hogg & Abrams 9). As Seul also observes among the other socio-cultural factors of Identity, “religion

frequently serves the identity impulse more powerfully and comprehensively than other repositories of cultural meaning can or do”, therefore, it remains a predominant source of individual and group identity (567). It satisfies the minority group’s “needs for self-esteem, belonging, psychological security, and self-actualisation that have been invaded by the communal politics of the majority in a nation-state” (Kaur, Communalism 39). Through their identification with their religious group and ideology, they strive to “promote and protect their positive distinctiveness” from the dominant group and “secure a relatively favourable social identity” (Hogg & Abrams 9).

Yezad’s obsession with the idea of racial purity and strict adherence to tradition resulting in his antagonism towards his son’s love affair with a non-Parsi Marathi girl alludes to the underlying fear of the mixing with hegemonic culture resulting in the hybridisation of their culture destroying their unique ethnic identity. Declaring it a matter of racial purity and their unique identity, he claims, “we are a pure Persian race, a unique contribution to this planet and mixed marriages will destroy that. ...Purity is a virtue worth preserving” (Mistry 482). His religion becomes his tool to mark his differences and purity. His younger son Jahangir’s description of his father’s preoccupation with religious activities and religious literature further reinforces Yezad’s obsession with past memory. He comments, “...Daddy had been reading nothing but religious books, as though making up for lost time” (Mistry 463). His bedroom is filled up with volumes about Parsi history and Zoroastrianism, various translations of the Zend-Avesta, interpretations of the Gathas, commentaries, books by Zaehner, Spiegel, Darukhanawala, Dabu, Boyce, Dhalla, Hinnells, Karaka and many more (Mistry 463). These activities of Yezad reflect his all-consuming obsession with the past and his fixation on traditional rituals can be interpreted as a tool to defend his ethnic identity against the imposition of a homogenous national identity on him and the Parsi community in the Indian perspective. Peter Morey pinpoints Yezad’s illusive search for purity through his strict practice of religious rituals:

The continuous burning fire at the temple offers that elusive past-present connections Yezad craves, and, in a way, the fire-temple replaces the family home as a sanctuary from the outside world. As he feels increasingly disempowered by events he falls back on his

reawakened faith more and more, recoiling from the mongrelisation and mixing inherent in urban life, to a space of 'purity' that is, of course, at the same time one of fantasy (250).

The concept of memory has been extensively used to create meaning in times of crisis but Nietzsche is of the opinion that "Memory is not always beneficial; it can be counter-productive. It can obstruct the potential for moving forward, for envisaging alternative futures" (qtd. in Bell 24). Many scholars find the obsession with the past having "pernicious social and political consequences" (Bell 25). In his interview with Robert Mclay, Mistry also points out a difference between two ways of remembering the past, he says, "there is a great difference between remembering the past, which is creative and life-enhancing and trying to preserve it, which is detrimental and debilitating" (qtd in BaghyaLakshmi and Christina Rebecca 19). Duncan Bell incorporating the argument of Charles Maier warns that "an addiction to memory can become neurasthenic and disabling" (25). It highlights "the end of dreams about the possibility of radical political change; rather than looking towards the future, and retaining a belief in the transformative potential of politics, it seeks solace in the past" (Bell 25).

To resist the current socio-political dominance of the Hindu majority, Yezad's attempt to adhere to his ethnic identity and his obsession with the glorious past of his community turns him from a secular and liberal being into a religious extremist fixated on dogmatic ultra-orthodoxy and ritual purity. He becomes "a kind of Zoroastrian fundamentalist" inflicting his racial and cultural preoccupations on everyone around (Kaur, Communalism 41). Paradoxically, "his hidebound orthodoxy echoes the purist agendas of the very Hindu fundamentalism that threatens the minority communities like his own" (Kaur, Communalism 41). His real self is lost in his pursuit of establishing a utopian era of greatness and undermines his understanding of the present state and needs of his community. During his prayers, he sits as though "he is carrying a secret burden, whose weight is crushing him...His Avesta recitations...are like a rebuttal, a protest. He is locked in a struggle" (Mistry 465). On a metaphorical level, this secret burden is of history, race, and religion, which has prevented him from coming to terms with the present life.

Religious dogmas and orthodoxy of Yezad kill the liberal human inside him and obliterate his personality and his relationship with himself by turning him into a replica of a dead culture, which is unwelcoming, ill-fitted, and cut from the outer world. His intolerant and prejudice-ridden behaviour toward people born outside his religion, especially his son's non-Parsi girlfriend Anjali, a Maharashtrian girl, makes him an unsympathetic character. Even his ethical actions fail to earn him the sympathy of readers. Ironically the old liberal Yezad who did a few unethical things like playing *Matka* (illegal underground lottery), gets the sympathy of readers because his actions were directed towards the wellbeing of the family. Mistry, through his portrayal of the religious but unsympathetic character of Yezad, shows his disapproval of the severe practices that are devoid of human concerns and criticises the excessive community exclusiveness, religious zealotry, and fundamentalism within all communities as these sites of struggle for meaning create boundaries and walls that increase the possibilities of more clashes within and between communities and individuals.

By juxtaposing Yezad's orthodox religious outlook with that of his son Murad who exhibits a more tolerant attitude towards other religious communities and people, Mistry rejects idealized religious prejudice and challenges the conservative religious doctrines and extremist attitudes that suppress the compassionate concerns in life. Liberal characters like Murad and his grandfather Nariman attempt to find purpose in their lives by establishing connections with individuals born outside of their religion and race. Murad's love affair with a Maharashtrian girl and his grandfather's with a Christian girl imply their aspiration to embrace people rising above all boundaries and differences without yielding to any sort of blind prejudices. Murad's outright rejection of Yezad's narrow religious dogma suggests both a clash with the Parsi conventional outlook and the possibility of a shift in attitude towards harmonious and amicable inter-communal relationship among the younger generation.

Though Yezad's retreat into the religious extremity is suggestive of the minority communities' growing insecurity in an independent India, the disabling impact of excessive engagement with the past further reinforces the necessity of inclusion and a future-oriented approach as a more productive

way to build harmonious social relations in a society and nation-state. Through the comment of Jahangir, the youngest character and narrator of the epilogue in the novel, “Why must prayer and religion lead to so many fights” the author. questions the narrow cultural attitudes, religious dogmas, and violence against the helpless people positioned on the periphery of society and brings home the message that there is a need to be a vigorous campaign that will mobilise all relevant social, political, cultural, and professional sectors in support of peaceful inter-communal relations, strengthen the sense of dignity and solidarity among all communities, and restore equilibrium to the Indian political system.

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Memories of Violence and Wartime Discourse: A Study of Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* and Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry*

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Abstract: Propaganda has the power to incite violence by spreading discourse that sows seeds of discrimination, division, hatred and feelings of superiority based on race, gender and other factors, thus disturbing social harmony not only in the present time but for subsequent generations. During World War II, the Japanese used war propaganda to garner support, inciting such extreme emotions that suicide became widely prevalent among defeated soldiers on the battlefield. The Japanese propaganda was so persuasive that the war witnessed the phenomenon of Kamikaze pilots and one of the bloodiest battles in history: The Battle of Okinawa between the Allied forces and Japan. This also impacted the civilians who were indoctrinated with a nationalistic ideology based on racial and other grounds. Such an ideology sees a reappearance in Japanese society even today, continuing to spread thinking which can turn violent with the presence of stimulus.

The paper seeks to analyse the perpetuation and transformation of this "memory of violence" in contemporary Japan through the lens of contemporary literature. Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry* (1967) and Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994), which are considered representative texts of contemporary Japan, will be analysed for this purpose. The study will explore how these narratives embody and perpetuate the memory of violence fostered by wartime discourse and investigate any evolution in the collective memory of this violent past towards peace or healing. This paper is based on an ongoing doctoral thesis.

Keywords: Wartime Discourse, Healing Discourse, Literary Discourse, Mnemonic Politics, Ways of Remembering, Collective Memory.

Introduction

Memories can influence the direction of the future, so a critical look is needed to understand how they influence the individual and the collective. Memories, particularly those of violence, can influence our perception of reality, bringing back feelings of anger and resentment and/or other ideas and beliefs that legitimise violence. The influences that spread through and are countered by literature often remain unacknowledged, yet they have a significant impact on people's actions. Looking back, literature, with its clear-sightedness and wisdom, can reflect upon and alter societal discourse, countering the influence of propaganda such as wartime discourse and promoting a healing discourse concerning past traumatic events. The paper researches the way memories of violence operate within the works of Oe's *The Silent Cry* and Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Whether they revisit wartime propagandistic discourse or if the literature transforms in any way what the memories mean, how they are related and what the change signifies for the discourse.

The Silent Cry Analysis

The novel *The Silent Cry* is set against a backdrop of political unrest during the transition period of 1960s Japan. The novel is a story about two brothers, Takashi and Mitsusaburo Nedokoro (Mitsu), who reunite after a long time and return to their home village together. This return also takes them back to the influences of the past. One important event is a riot in 1860 in their home village, which was organised by their great-grandfather's younger brother. Other violent events, such as the suicide of their younger sister death of their other family members like their brother S, who was killed by Koreans in retaliation for his participation in a raid which killed a Korean community member during wartime Japan, are also recalled and exert their influence on Takashi. Mitsu, a professor who wishes to distance himself from the past, is troubled by different demons instead, such as his friend's bizarre suicide, the birth of his disabled son and his wife Natsumi's growing alcoholism. Upon their return to their village, they wish to sell their remaining land to a Korean businessman, a powerful man in the village who owns a supermarket and much of the resources in the village in comparison to the disparate state of the rest of the villagers. The Korean supermarket owner is referred to as 'The

Emperor', an ironic title given by the villagers, implying his status as a slave brought to the village during wartime Japan.

The brothers Takashi stand antithesis to each other and can be analysed within the broader context of this social and historical backdrop. In the novel, Takashi represents the past—be it wartime Japan or riot of 1860—where violence was revered. Mitsu, on the other hand, represents post-war Japan, where the Japanese adopted a passive stance and renounced violence. The ongoing tug of war between Mitsu and Takashi in the novel symbolises the struggle between the influences of the past and the present.

Takashi seeks to construct himself as a man of violence, and to achieve this, he reconstructs his memories of the past. His memories, or rather the way he chooses to interpret his past, play a pivotal role in his self-fashioning as a man of violence, which in turn influences the villagers, inciting them to violence.

Takashi is driven by both personal and societal reasons to cultivate such a self-image and to achieve this, so he modifies his own memories. Sociocultural forces exert their influence on Takashi's memories in a phenomenon described by Assmann as 'cultural remembering'. J. Assmann comments, "When 'cultural remembering' is conceived of as an individual act, when the focus is on the shaping force that sociocultural surroundings exert on organic memory - that is, when we speak of 'memory as a phenomenon of culture' (170)." The phenomenon observed here is how sociocultural environments, past and present, exert influence on Takashi's organic memory, whether consciously or unconsciously. The surrounding environment of Takashi's childhood, i.e. during wartime Japan and the immediate post-war years, and the socio-cultural environment of his time period i.e. 1960s, is a crucial factor which influences the way he chooses to form his autobiographical memory in adulthood. Takashi, by participating in socially legitimised and authenticated acts of violence, also wishes to create a screen memory behind which to hide his guilt over having an incestuous relationship with his sister, which ultimately leads to her suicide. Moreover, he also seeks redemption through the inevitable punishment that follows such acts.

The socio-cultural environment is never directly mentioned in the novel. However, its presence is palpable, especially in the way it propagates and legitimises violence. The mother of Takashi and Mitsu is portrayed as immensely proud of their great-grandfather, who defended their home from a mob during the 1860 riot with a gun. She showed favouritism toward Takashi, seeing in him a reflection of their great-grandfather. Conversely, Mitsu, with his more passive nature, has a much more diminished standing in the family.

On the other hand, in the novel's present setting, the violence is accepted by the villagers with an unspoken consensus. Thus, when Takashi recounts his violent 'memories' of the 1860 riot and his ancestors, glorifying the violence and the assault of women committed by the rioters, no significant question is raised in his audience over the legitimacy of violence, nor is there any concern among them for the plight of the victims. Instead, their discussions revolve around debates over other concerns. At one point, Mitsu avoids any discussion on the topic by saying, "I've no desire to interfere in his propaganda activities" (152). While Natsumi defends Takashi by saying, "There's something essentially alive about him, I feel—he refuses to have preconceived ideas about the rising, or to see it as exclusively depressing, as you do" (149).

The socio-cultural environment which propagates violence is also evident when one of Takashi's close followers, Hoshio, loses faith in him when he overhears him confessing to feeling fear. Towards the end of the novel, Takashi confesses to raping and murdering a young woman. Mitsu questions whether Takashi has manipulated the narrative according to his own desires. However, he remains silent about the victim's plight. Moreover, after Takashi commits suicide, Natsumi, who had an affair with him, reconciles with Mitsu while proclaiming, "I think the need to oppose Taka has always made you deliberately reject the things that resembled him in you. But Taka's dead, Mitsu, so you should be fairer to yourself" (272). This statement not only suggests a denial of Takashi's crimes but also suggests the perpetuation of continuing glorification of him, as previously done by Natsumi and others in the village. It further highlights Natsumi's subtle attempt to redefine Mitsu's self-

perception and memories in relation to Takashi, with the violence and the moral and ethical issues regarding it remaining conspicuously unaddressed.

The influence of the environment on memories can be seen in the Nembutsu dance in the Bon festival in the novel. The dance serves as a symbolic remembrance of the nation and village's collective past, ingraining these memories in subsequent generations. Takashi attributes his revised memory, which portrays his brother S as a hero and a leader rather than a war-weary traumatised man, to this dance. The festival revives memories but also shapes the emotions associated with them for Takashi and others, influencing their perception of the past. Takashi later harnesses the dance as a call to arms, aiming to incite a riot in his village, where he depicts Koreans in a derogatory light.

Memory and society also influence each other in other ways where more agency is exhibited by the characters. Takashi's act of remembering has far-reaching consequences for his community, while personally, it helps him achieve status. Both Takashi and Mitsu belong to a prominent household in the village. Their status is reflected during events like the Bon festival, where the Nedokoro family is placed at the centre, and the festival dance finishes in the footsteps of their household. Yet this status does not automatically grant them insider status in the village; it takes Takashi's efforts to take the lead, participating in the village's customs and activities, that he gains their acceptance. On the other hand, Mitsu, who stays out of the village's politics and matters, is perceived as an outsider both by the villagers and by villagers as well, cannot attain the same authenticity for his voice as Takashi.

In Takashi's efforts to gain power, memory is one tool utilised by Takashi. In actuality, Takashi does not possess any significant memories of his brother, S, or the 1860 riot. Instead, he draws upon material from the past to fabricate or fantasise about those memories. He aims to bring the past to the present, transitioning from stored or collective memories to more immediate, actionable ones, using historical events to justify his current violent actions. According to Aleida Assmann, stored memories act like a repository where information from the past can coexist with the present. Functional memory, or what can be likened to "communicative memory", is more dynamic,

characterised by “its relevance to a group, shared values, and its future orientation (Assmann and Assmann 123).” When the past is used for defining the present, often the narrative weaved has singular interpretations of the events, heavily influenced by the intentions and desires of the weaver. Such homogenised memory evokes in the novel in the villagers a feeling of unity and pride while making it easier for Takashi to mobilise the masses for a riot and propagate a divisive agenda.

Takashi stokes enmity among the villagers against the Korean supermarket owner, and he admits to Mitsu that he has his own motivations for doing so. This becomes starkly evident in how the villagers respond to external influences, like the Korean shopkeeper, also called ‘The Emperor’. This can be evidenced by Mitsu’s observation of his housekeeper Jin, “Until yesterday, like most of the valley folk, she’d never so much as hinted that the all-powerful supermarket owner who had wrought such havoc in the valley was a Korean. But now she deliberately stressed the word “Korean,” unhesitatingly broadcasting his nationality as though to emphasize how the looting of the supermarket had reversed the balance of power in one fell swoop (187-188).”

The villagers are also taken in by the profit that such a protest would bring them. This greed is one of the reasons they reject a more rational perspective. As evidenced by Mitsu’s interaction with Jin, who directly his rational thinking, which suggests similar sentiments on the part of villagers. Such inference is further supported by the novel’s frequent depiction of the villagers as a collective group, often sharing similar motivations and rationales. Hence, neither Takashi nor the villagers are simply reflecting their sociocultural environment but are actively using their agency in choosing to propagate or accept respectively the narratives.

The villager’s acceptance of violent narratives may also be influenced by the way Takashi chooses to relate the memories of the past. When Takashi relates the memory of the riot to the villagers, he leaves out graphic details of what the violence caused to the victims. Natsumi tells Mitsu how Takashi related “some amusing episodes’ to the village youth, which involved a description of how the overseers and the local officials in the villages were made to kneel and endure a single blow on the head by the peasants as they went past. Nevertheless, as Mitsu points out, Takashi leaves out

how the mob of peasants was about tens of thousands in number, and the victims had their brains reduced to “broken bean curd in their skulls” (150). Instead, Takashi spins the violent tales in a positive manner, making his audience immune to the violence but still censoring the descriptions within a certain limit so as not to raise the alarm. At one place, Takashi says, “The young men were very brutal, I admit, but in a way, their brutality served to give the ordinary farmers a kind of security (150).”

While things may be unclear for the characters in the novel, Ōe’s narrative style makes them evident to the reader. A lot of things are told in absence, Takashi’s propagandistic narrative is largely absent in the novel as Mitsu avoids Takashi and his activities deliberately. Rather, the presence and impact of propaganda are related indirectly, as exemplified by Jin’s statement: “Everyone feels things have gone to pieces since the Koreans came. They should kill’ em off. (188)” As a result, rather than being swayed by the charismatic personality of Takashi mentioned by the narrator, readers are provided with a more lucid analysis of the ramifications of the character’s actions. The story instead highlights the character study of Takashi, his emotions, motivations, his character nuances.

Other research on the topic attributes Takashi’s way of remembering to a heritage and emotion-based approach (Petznick 13). On the other hand, Mitsu, representing the intellectual elite, has access to historical facts and approaches the past with a history-based approach. (Petznick 13). David Lowenthal, in his book *The History Crusade and the Spoils of History*, differentiates between history and heritage: While history is a factual recounting of past events, heritage is more of a celebration of the past, which may not strictly adhere to factual accuracy. Takashi admits that “I’m not saying my memories tally with the facts,” nor he does he feel the need of being factual. He justifies this with, “... the facts were reworked in visible form through the communal emotions of the people of the valley ... That surely means that I’ve still got roots linking me to the communal sentiments of the valley (123).” The heritage-based approach aims to escape responsibility for past events and take pride in the past. While Mitsu’s approach of simply theorising and talking and not taking any action (Petznick 39) renders him ineffective against an emotional, propaganda-laden approach.

The violent discourse in the novel is not independent in itself but embedded within the wartime discourse of Japan. This is not only due to recurring themes like the glorification of violence and death but also because of the repeated cultural narratives. One could speculate that Takashi's audience, given the historical context, might be more receptive to propaganda due to previous wartime experiences. Other themes such as racial bias against Koreans evidenced in the novel, a lack of empathy for the victims, and the trauma displayed by many characters such as Mitsu and Gii, a hermit in the village, who could have been agents of change but aren't as they themselves are caught up with their own traumas, are also part of a continuation of wartime and its propaganda's impacts.

While Takashi is alive, Mitsu is unable to discredit memories of violence. However, after Takashi's death, new evidence discovered in the hidden attic of their home both authenticated and transformed Takashi's memories of violence. The heroic image of their great-grandfather's younger brother that Takashi held is confirmed. Yet, the intergenerational memory that Takashi and Mitsu held of this figure is redefined. Instead of being remembered for inciting a riot, for Mitsu at least, his great uncle becomes known for his penance, his care for his family, and his role in a non-violent movement.

Memory is a living entity constantly reshaped by new experiences and discoveries. The journey of Mitsu and Takashi underscores the malleability of memory, revealing that it is not fixed but rather dynamic. However, reframing violent memories can lead to growth and a narrative of hope.

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle Analysis

The novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* addresses Japan's aggressive past in a more direct manner rather than the fictional setting and symbolic reference in *The Silent Cry*. The novel delves into the impact of individual and collective memories of war on the collective consciousness. This impact can be seen in both the generation who do have memories of war and the violence and trauma it involved and the next generation who does not have any such memories but is still impacted by its trauma. As described by Arthur A. Cohen, "...the generation that bears the scar without the wound, sustaining memory without direct experience (2-3)." Eduardo Duran suggests that such historical (collective)

trauma is “not only is the trauma passed on intergenerationally, but it is cumulative (49).” Thomas Hübl, a frequent speaker on collective trauma and collective healing, says, “The consequences of trauma—indeed, the cumulative effects of personal, familial, and historical traumas—seep across communities, regions, lands, and nations...trauma’s legacy weaves and wires our very world, informing how we live in it, how we see it, and how we see and understand one another (18).” This perspective is also shared by the author, who said in an interview, “It’s all there, inside me: Pearl Harbor, Nomonhan, whatever” (Murakami and Kawai 59). Thus, the research and the author’s own words suggest that the collective traumatic pasts are present in the individual psyche and need to be dealt with.

The central character of the novel, Toru Okada, is the archetype of the explorer (Jung) who goes on an external quest to look for his wife Kumiko, who goes missing and on an internal quest which seeks to reflect upon Japan’s imperial past and combat its persisting influence in the present. Toru descends into a well, which serves as a metaphor for exploring Japan's collective unconscious. This act allows him to access a dream world, an arena where he enacts a symbolic struggle to achieve his aims. Toru comments:

Everything was connected in a kind of circle, and the thing in the middle of this circle was the Battle of Nomonhan, Showa, in Manchuria, in Asia, before the war. But why Kumiko and I were being dragged into the middle of this kind of historical karma, I couldn't understand. It was something that had happened long before Kumiko and I were even born.
(275)

The characters who help Toru in his quest have been impacted by violence and its resulting trauma in different ways. They relate their memories of violence to Toru and help him realise violence in a more three-dimensional manner. Mr. Honda relates to Toru his memories of war, relating the extreme thirst he and his comrades faced in the Battle of Nomonhan. Lieutenant Mamiya also relates to Toru his harrowing experiences: witnessing a person being skinned and spending time trapped at the bottom of a well. He also relates his violent memories of the labour camp in Russia. Creta Kano

relates to Toru her experience of different types of physical pain, prostitution and being raped. Through Nutmeg and Cinnamon, Toru gets to know the traumatic experiences of a vet in China. As the plot progresses, Toru gets to personally experience some of these memories in real life or in his dreams, such as experiences of hunger, thirst, the feeling of being prostituted, witnessing the skinning of a person and so on. An overview of these tales told to Toru tells us how Japan's experiences in war have been related from two perspectives: perpetrator and victim point of view. These perspectives encompass Japan's atrocities against China, its exploitation of its own soldiers, and the suffering of the Japanese under Russia. This suggests that Toru's personal experience of these memories is a journey towards understanding Japan's imperial past from all perspectives.

Over the course of the events, Toru's knowledge and understanding of violence at the collective and individual levels undergoes a change. His semantic memories (general and specialised knowledge of the world) are converted into episodic memories (individually experienced). While initially, Mr. Honda's memories of violence only evoke fascination and interest in Toru, which suggests that violence and its impact aren't sufficiently understood by him. As Toru is increasingly exposed to violent memories, particularly after his act of violently beating someone with a bat, he is able to experience nightmares and discomfiture, something that signals a growing understanding on his part. The progression of events in the novel supports this interpretation. After experiencing this discomfort, Toru is able to more deeply immerse himself in his dream world, which symbolically suggests a deeper engagement with Japan's collective consciousness. He is also able to grasp the desire for violence within himself, transforming him from a passive person to someone capable of committing violence.

It is suggested in the novel that Toru's experiences, both inside the well and outside, which mirror the tales of various characters, endow him with healing powers and psychic abilities. These abilities enable him to enter the dream world where a symbolic conflict between him and Noboru takes place, representing the clash of forces shaping Japan's destiny. This bridge between the past and

present within Toru might not have been forged without his encounters with the violent memories of various characters.

Another perspective is explored in the novel through a group of characters exhibiting traumatised behaviour but with no discernible cause. Instead, this group's suffering can only be originated in collective trauma. However, they have no memories to associate their trauma with. Hence, the construction of fabricating memories becomes essential for making sense of the culture that gave rise to their trauma.

For example, Cinnamon, who seems to have a deeper, almost spiritual, understanding of traumas that affected his grandfather and father, suddenly stops speaking one day. This seems to be triggered by a bizarre dream, leading to a 'split' within him. This split represents trauma, a recurring symptom described by many characters in the story. In his dream, he witnesses a man resembling his father bury a living heart underneath their garden tree. Later, Cinnamon's father is abruptly murdered, having previously exhibited signs of trauma—specifically, unexplained detachment and distance. Cinnamon's dream turns out to be a prophecy. His dream also signifies his deep connection with his father's trauma.

Cinnamon had been fed fabricated stories about his grandfather since birth, leading him to develop more consciousness of the past. He realises, like his mother, Nutmeg, that rather than knowing what actually happened, what is more crucial is understanding what could have happened. This can be interpreted to mean that the knowledge and understanding gained through the process of storytelling is more important than the factual details of the past. Consequently, both Nutmeg and Cinnamon create fabricated memories of their ancestral history, perhaps as a way to comprehend the influences that continue to affect them. Their fabricated memories are violent and traumatic, recounting possible narratives of what could have happened to Nutmeg's father or Cinnamon's grandfather. Their actions showcase the necessity of remembering memories of violence in our individual or collective past in order to heal from it.

Their profound understanding of the need for healing collective consciousness is reflected in their actions. Both are deeply involved in the healing processes of numerous women, emphasising their commitment to mending the societal fabric. Similar to Toru, their deeds can be viewed as symbolic gestures aimed at healing the collective feminine psyche of Japan, which has been deeply scarred by historical traumas.

The theme of gender also offers an important critique of the novel. While female characters guide Toru towards a world of ever-increasing violence, these women themselves bear traumas that cannot be solely attributed to their personal histories. Intriguingly, their fears and behavioural tendencies resonate with the harsh realities faced by Japanese women during wartime—experiences marked by exploitation, assault, and other atrocities. This alignment draws a poignant parallel between the individual and national narrative, suggesting that the feminisation of the nation might also be a reflection of Japan's wartime defeat and subsequent vulnerabilities.

May Kasahara, a teenage neighbour of Toru, is captivated by the process leading to death and harbours fears of being raped. May exhibits this peculiar behaviour early on, which culminates in the demise of her boyfriend. Moreover, her fears of rape lack any discernible root cause. This conundrum is expressed by May when she says, “Like when something happens, whether it’s a big event that affects the whole of society or something small and personal, people talk about it like,... “A is like this, so that is why B happened.” I mean, that doesn’t explain anything...but maybe if you take the path my life has followed as an example and really think about it, you can see it has had nothing about it that you could call “consistency”... I cannot explain it (Pg. 460).” Also, simultaneously, as Toru confronts Noboru in a dream and emerges victorious yet wounded, May, who sometimes pretends to be Kumiko to herself, bathes herself in the moonlight in what seems to be a purification ritual. She then breaks into tears, her shadow mirroring her as if having achieved catharsis. Symbolically, her actions align with the conclusion of Toru's battle against Noboru in his quest to rescue Kumiko, suggesting that Toru has successfully achieved his aims for both Japan and Kumiko. This

interpretation also underscores the novel's theme: just as individual trauma is deeply intertwined with collective trauma, individual healing is deeply intertwined with collective healing and vice versa.

Another character, Creta Kano, who suffers from unexplained pain most of her life, she turns to prostitution upon recovery — a choice that seems to her 'natural and bearable', especially after her suicide attempt. Toru plays a pivotal role in Creta's healing process by actively listening to her story. This act of listening is intertwined with a series of sexual encounters between them, in dreams as she, being a prostitute of the mind, has "things pass through her" and in the real world so that she may forget the feeling of being defiled by Noboru. This also facilitates, in some manner, a psychic connection between Toru and Kumiko, as Creta is a mirror image of Kumiko, bearing a striking resemblance to Kumiko from the neck down, and she also mirrors to some extent Kumiko's past and represents alternate future self. Afterwards, Creta relocates to Hiroshima, the site of the atomic bombing, as a final sanctuary for resolving the conflict within her psyche. Creta's journey embodies both the individual and collective paths toward healing, emphasising the importance of understanding and revisiting the past, being heard, and forging connections with others.

The novel is also filled with various imagery, themes and archetypes which harken back to the Japanese wartime propaganda and Japanese violence culture. One such theme is the positive portrayal of violence. Although the novel problematises violence by representing 'good' violence and 'bad' violence, the very notion that violence can be good and crucial for transformation and healing is problematic. Moreover, from readers' interpretative perspectives, the distinction made by the author may be more ambiguous. In the novel, bad violence is identified through dark ambience, and its perpetrators are stereotyped for their malevolence. 'Bad' violence is exemplified by the characters of Ushikawa and Noboru. Ushikawa, who is described as very untidy and the 'ugliest man I have ever seen,' has a history of physically abusing his wife and children. His actions, which include threats and bullying to achieve his goals, represent a form of 'bad' violence. Noboru also exercises 'bad' violence through the use of money, power, and manipulation to impose his will on others and to have others willingly commit violent acts on his behalf. Toru also commits bad violence when he beats up a

person with a bat. This act can be identified as bad by the dark atmosphere of the scene during and immediately after the action. However, overall, Toru is depicted as committing 'good' violence. For example, beating up Noboru in the dream world; in a way, by committing this act, he becomes a hero in his internal quest to rescue Japan's consciousness from the clutches of corrupt politicians and his external quest to save a damsel in distress, i.e. his wife, Kumiko.

Another theme present in the text is the treatment of death and suicide, which continues the narrative of Japanese wartime propaganda and other cultural narratives. During the war, suicide was glorified among soldiers and civilians. While during war, soldiers were encouraged to commit suicide by their superiors as the war progressed if they faced defeat in battle. The government propaganda described the soldier's suicide as "gyokusai", meaning shattering like a jewel. On the other hand, for civilians, the defeat of Japan in the war was the impetus for many suicides. The participation by the populace in the self-destructive phenomenon can be explained by many cultural narratives weaved around the idea and the resulting increased social acceptance of the act.

Murakami, through the war tales of Mr. Honda, exposes how death was normalised among soldiers, and he also identifies the actors responsible for this normalisation. This critique of the casual treatment of soldiers' deaths by Japanese authorities is crucial for holding the responsible accountable and for resisting the glorification of such deaths in Japanese popular culture. However, the same critique is not extended to the death by suicide of civilians. Creta Kano's suicide attempt is normalised by her, and Toru also reacts not to her suicide attempt but to her decision to be a prostitute.

Many other suicides are prevalent in the novel. In Chapter 7 of Book 3, "The Mystery of the Hanging House", a tabloid reports the history of a particular house, reporting how it has been the site of numerous suicides by its residents. The treatment of the topic in the report is sensationalised and framed as mere gossip. Indeed, these incidents are discussed in other chapters as well, where the matter is not given much attention except as interesting factual information. Toru's uncle comments on one suicide, "...You realise, of course, that to die that way, you have to be pretty damned determined (118)."

Death is also represented in a more spiritual manner or in a way that lessens its finality. Mr. Honda's advice is shown to have a subconscious influence on Toru, who says, "Dying is the only way/For you to float free:/Nomonhan" (52). After May Kasahara traps Toru in a well, she asks him to think about death, commenting, "we need death to make us evolve...Death is this huge, bright thing, and the bigger and brighter it is, the more we have to drive ourselves crazy thinking about things (258)." Such comments indicate towards beautification of both suicide and death, a feature of Japanese violence culture. However, the contrast in intensity of death fantasy in characters pre-war and post-war is also visible, which makes it possible for a knowledgeable person of Japanese history to take cognisance of the shift. The veterinary doctor, whose life story is fabricated by his daughter and his grandson, is described as contemplating, "The doctor loved his wife and child. ... For them he would have gladly given up his life. Indeed, he had often imagined doing so, and the deaths he had endured for them in his mind seemed the sweetest deaths imaginable" (510).

In the novel, the presence of wartime discourse suggests that past ideologies and beliefs can persistently echo, threatening to resurface and potentially be exploited in the future if left unaddressed and unchallenged. To critically engage with such wartime/violence narratives, it is imperative to confront memories of violent pasts, facilitating healing from the deep-seated traumas they engender. Through his exploration of Japan's wartime history from both perpetrator and victim points of view, Murakami addresses Japan's collective trauma and propagates a more healing discourse.

Conclusion

The examination of the two texts underscores the potent influence of mnemonic politics. Such politics, rooted in the manipulation or selective remembrance of past events, can perpetuate violence and give rise to the recurrence of violent narratives. For example, in *The Silent Cry*, Takashi selectively recalls and modifies memories related to the violence surrounding the death of his brother S and the 1860 riot for the express purpose of inciting a riot. On the other hand, in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami delves into the comprehensive history of Japan during World War II. This exploration counters the selective remembrance of the past encouraged by post-war Japanese leaders,

exemplifying another facet of mnemonic politics wherein selective memory is strategically propagated.

Yet, paradoxically, memory also serves a vital purpose in society. A critical look at memory is needed for introspection, allowing one to confront individual and collective responsibilities and culpability. Acknowledging and confronting the collective memories, especially the violent and traumatic ones, but in a more empathetic and critical way can heal and help build a more peaceful society. The dual nature of memory—as both a catalyst for conflict and a tool for healing—underscores its indelible influence on human behaviour and actions.

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**We Know What Poonachi Thinks: A Study of Animal Subjectivity in Perumal Murugan's
Poonachi or *The Story of a Black Goat***

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Abstract: In his work, *The Feeling of What Happens*, neuroscientist Antonio R. Damasio propounds the existence of “autobiographical sense” and “core consciousness” in animals. His thesis argues that animals can remember, feel a wide range of emotions and possess a marked sense of self. Animals understand the world they inhabit and respond to it in their ways. In Literary studies, animal subjectivity allows us to assess and critique the world of humans by centring the narrative from the perspective and sensibility of animals. The inversion of the narrative in such writings not only reaffirms the proximity between the human and the natural world but also opens up the former for scrutiny by comparison with non-human living beings. The tradition in literature of examining the thin line that separates humans and animals by juxtaposing the essential characteristics of both aids in understanding the perils that accompany “animalistic” human behaviour. Informed by the detailed discussion in Carrie Rohman’s critical work, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*, this paper will analyse how Perumal Murugan’s novel *Poonachi* or *The Story of a Black Goat* (2016) allegorises and addresses the systems of exploitation and marginalisation through the consciousness of an animal. It will also discuss the significance of such writings in answering the question: What does being “human” mean after all?

Keywords: Animal Subjectivity, Marginalisation, Core Consciousness, Exploitation, Humanity

The depiction of an intimate relationship between humans and animals dates back to the cave paintings of the palaeolithic man found all over the world. The oldest of these are claimed to be

around 40,000 years old in Indonesia (Brumm 2021). In India, the cave paintings from the Harappan civilisation illustrate how humans perceived animals as their companions on the planet. These non-verbal cohabitants of the planet, although fundamentally different from humans, have always played a major role in positioning the human's idea of "self". A continuous contrasting deliberation on what is "humanistic" and what is "animalistic" has informed the discussions on determining the directions of the discourse on "humanity." The volatility of the relationship between humans and animals with all its variations has been a subject of art for a long time. The depiction of animals on the walls of the caves is spread all across the world indicating the close relationship of humans of those times with animals. This also points towards the desire to identify with the self by including animals in their paintings. To see oneself with or in association with the image of an animal.



Fig. 1. "Prehistoric Rock Paintings"

Just like the cave paintings, the stories centred around animals or presenting animals with human emotions and behaviours were written around the world, at different times, in different civilisations.

The earliest examples of animal-centred narratives in India emerged with the Panchtantra tales that were written between 1200 BCE and 300 BC and are attributed to the author Vishnu Sharma. Similar stories were also popular in ancient Mesopotamia, the most famous example being that of “The Eagle and The Serpent”. The Greeks had Aesop and the Romans had the great fabulist Phaedrus writing animal-centred narratives.

Onno Oerlemans, a professor at Hamilton College and a leading researcher in the area of critical animal studies, analyses the need for animal-centred narratives. In this respect, he deliberates that the absurdity of animals acting as humans amuses us as readers. Secondly, the “absurdity of ventriloquism” (301) teases the sense of superiority that humans feel over animals by denoting them in art as capable of speaking, creating a parallel to human monopoly while at the same time piercing the isolation of human speech. Thirdly, anthropomorphism grants writers the freedom to speak and portray things that they might not be able to express through human characters lastly, he emphasises, animal animal-centred narratives refocus meaning generation according to the “natural order” and challenge the established human hegemony on the production and determination of meaning.

Oerlemans’ descriptions of the animal-centred narratives reflect the power that these narratives hold, which is evident even from the long tradition of these narratives being significant in situating the narratives of humans within a broader range of discourse that includes animals in the narratives and pushes open the limitation of humans as the subject of literary writings. This reduces the “othering” of the animals and dilutes anthropocentrism. *Poonachi*, however, cannot be categorised clearly as a fable or an allegorical tale. It is a fable because it poses questions to the morality of humans. It works as an allegory when the black goat becomes a portrayal of all the marginalised people of this world. While falling in both categories of literary genres, this novel can also be read as a life account of a little black goat.

Poonachi, a black goat, is the central character of the novel. She thinks and feels like a human. She has a rational, humanlike understanding and responds to her surroundings. Born as the seventh in a litter of kids, she's given away to an old man by her current owner, Bakasuran, who cannot

manage the care of so many young goats. The complex dynamic between the old couple and Poonachi is explored in the novel to reveal the human-animal relation and reflect on the complexity and contrast between the two living species. Perumal Murugan gives her the space and qualities of a character existing equally amongst the humans in the novel. A concept that Antonio Damasio describes as “core consciousness” (Johnson), in which he states that a human’s consciousness is shaped by the response of the body to what the mind experiences, can be observed in Poonachi.

As an orphan, Poonachi actively seeks love and warmth from Kalli, a mother goat on the farm and the old woman. Her yearning for love, care and affection is a reflection of an early age of innocence, untouched by the harshness of reality. While she is still acclimatising herself at the old couple’s house, she is attacked by a cat-like predator in the night. This incident, for the first time, informs her of her vulnerability in the world. This incident follows a series of experiences for Poonachi through which she understands the depth of apathy, indifference and violence of the world. The death of her playmate, Uzhumban, and her kids' separation from her traumatise her extremely. She is agonised by the circumcision that her male friends, Kaduvan and Poovan, are given.

The human-animal conflict binary was created as a result of scientific theories like “Survival of the fittest” that indicated a competitive war within the living species. The classic literary examples that embody the spirit of this binary are Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851) a raving tale of Captain Ahab’s revenge journey against a whale, and Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and The Sea* (1952), of the old fisherman Santiago and his last fight to catch a marlin fish to lift the “unlucky” curse from himself. The contest with the animals in both cases proves fatal for the main characters, ironically proving the superiority of nature and the futility of human beings' endeavour to conquer it. Furthermore, these stories point towards a crucial function animal-centred narratives perform, that is, helping humans to self-reflect and engage in a self-identity that emanates and depends on the difference or similarity with the animal.

In later works, like Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1915) and George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945), the position of conflict is transformed into elaborate and complex narratives that

disguise themselves as animal-centred narratives but are essentially narratives that have human experiences and transactions as their focal point. Whatever the authors found difficult to present with human characters at the forefront of their narratives, they used animals as a substitute to lead their narratives. Thus, Kafka chose a man metamorphosing into a cockroach to address the existential questions of the Modern Age while Orwell dissected Soviet politics through Napoleon and Snowball's animated "war".

In *Poonachi*, animal subjectivity is used as a vehicle to express the inner thought processes of an animal as a companion, dependent, and then a victim. It is unique in its approach to exploring the world of a marginalised animal character by giving her an active internal voice. Poonachi's voice is pervasive in the novel. The reader is submerged in her consciousness; getting details of her emotional states, her perspective on reality and becoming an indirect witness to her experiences. The novel thus, details the life events of a little black goat while she experiences the oppressive structures.

Poonachi's arrival in the lives of the old couple is because of an act they deem "divine", separating her from the rest of the cattle that the old couple own. The old couple is thrilled to have a miracle baby goat. The prospect of Poonachi birthing a litter of seven goat kids is the main factor in their decision to keep her. Initially, when she arrives, the relationship between the old couple and Poonachi is idealistic. They take care of her like their own child. When she gets pregnant, they assist her in all possible ways. Poonachi gives birth to seven kids, just like her mother. However, they sell off her kids to different buyers. After this, the behaviour of the old couple starts deteriorating towards her. The divinity wears off from Poonachi, however, it is never enough to protect her. Poonachi becomes a catalyst in drawing out the real nature of the old couple and by extension the depth of corrosion possible in human values and morals.

In her work *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*, Carrie Rohman analyses Djuna Barnes' novel *Nightwood* and comments that "(it) refuses the disavowal of animality onto marginalised others in the service of imperialist and masculinist projections" (133) pointing towards "revising of humans" by their interactions with the animals. She points towards the character of Robin

as “removed from the realm of reality” (147) and existing closer to the animalistic world. Her thesis for the critical work delves into the ways the hierarchical binary of man and animal is challenged in the modern age by writers. Her work explains how this inversion of the binary alters the human subject; its morality, identity and existence. Tracing the works by understanding the “entanglement” between human and non-human creatures reverses the binary.

Contrarily, Murugan’s depicts the relationship between the human/animal binary by reversing the hierarchy itself. He emphasises the “animality in humans” by contrasting it with the “humanity in animals.” When the old couple decides to eat the dead Uzumbhan, one of their little goat kid, and later, when there is a drought they kill one of their goats to satisfy their hunger. More and more, turning into the animals that they rare.

Ownership and slavery too are addressed when the old woman ties a rope around Poonachi’s neck, after an incident in which she got lost in the forest while travelling. Poonachi realises her slavery,

All the love the couple showed her had shrunk to the length of this rope, Poonachi thought. When the old woman found it difficult to look after the kids, she freely abused Poonachi. She had called her an evil wretch and a devil. When she got some money from selling the kids, she changed instantly. Now she was carrying all her jewellery in a waist pouch kept hidden under her sari. The couple who never used to be afraid of thieves, moved about with great caution, in constant fear of being robbed. (144)

Poonachi’s body becomes the exploitative territory for the old couple. The old man directs the villagers, “There is a charge for touching and looking at the wonder-goat that has delivered seven kids in a litter” (141). From an adored, magical, mystery creature, Poonachi’s status in the household is relegated to a source of income generation. Her desire for a life with happiness, freedom and love is made unattainable by the interference of the old couple. When Poonachi gets lost in the forest for a night, that is when she experiences complete freedom and joy, away from the watchful eyes and

control of the couple. Her childlike enthusiasm and curiosity are crushed by the burden of making money for them.

Furthermore, this exploitation is the result of and reflective of the couple's cruelty. They not only mistreat Poonachi but Uzumbhan's death is caused by a rock thrown by the old couple. They kill Poovan as a sacrifice to the God Mesagaran. They give away all of Poonachi's kids. When she gets pregnant for the third time, the circumstances are not as amiable and she dies while giving birth. Her death is the pinnacle of the exploitation of her body by the couple who wanted to repeat the cycle of her birth-giving for money and popularity.

The quality of feeling and existence emotionally, having sympathy, a sense of justice, rationality, reason and morality (Arnold 303) distinguishes humans from animals. However, as the novel progresses, all the "human qualities" are shifted onto the character of Poonachi. But on the contrary, she has no share in the power. Poonachi's experience expands to include all the marginalised experiences. The pitiful conditions of her existence become a part of the structures that were meant to oppress her and there is little she can do to get out of it.

While Poonachi represents the attributes of a human; sharing grief, connection to her environment, cohabitating with others and not living off of the exploitation of others, the humans are juxtaposed with what we understand as "animalistic" traits of hunger and survival overshadowing the former. Keeping her subjectivity at the centre of the narration, Murugan reveals the deterioration of human values in society. One particular thing, however, that distinguishes Poonachi's experience from the "others" in the human world is that her marginalisation leaves her incapable of fighting for herself, something that humans can do for themselves.

Poonachi experiences direct violence in the novel when the old man takes her to a bull to mate, an experience that becomes traumatic for her. Additionally, the continuous loss of playmates and kids, and the loss of trust and love between her and the old woman scar her on an emotional and psychological level. In this case, violence multiplies itself in the absence of resistance. The old couple has no one to question them, therefore, they gradually start acting like despots. All the animals in

their home suffer immensely from the transformation in them. The pact of caretaking, loving and trust between them is broken. Poonachi tries to comprehend the reasons behind the mistreatment but she is unable to fathom the real reasons behind it. As the violence that the animals face is culturally accepted, that is, the sense of it being wrong is obscure; they are unable to grasp what is happening to them. Galtung explains this phenomenon in his paper titled “Cultural Violence,” in which he describes that the victim is unable to understand the reason behind the violence against him/her, especially when it is structural or direct because it is “legitimised” culturally and there is no agency for the victim through which they can speak against it. The voice of Poonachi’s consciousness compensates for her muteness in relating her suffering to others.

In the hierarchy of the living world, Poonachi’s life is of consequence as long as there is commercial value that can be associated with it. The cycle of exploitation and greed becomes insufferable for her by the end. Death becomes the easiest way to escape this cycle. The old woman, who had been happy by Poonachi’s existence, even if for commercial purposes, comments with disdain: “Ever since this cursed thing entered our house, she has cleaned out all the live animals from here. Now she will wipe out the humans too, just wait and watch” (164). The old woman’s disdain for Poonachi’s existence is in stark contrast to her early reactions to Poonachi’s arrival at her home. Poonachi becomes a burden for her, even though she gave her all to them.

As means of income shrink for the old couple, they start eating their cattle. As Poonachi is pregnant for the third time, they reluctantly care for her. The old man comes up with a plan to use Poonachi’s milk as breakfast rather than give it to her kids from the previous birth. Surviving on meagre meals, Poonachi’s health deteriorates, until she is unable to feel the kids in her stomach. Her body turns cold and she is unable to pick her weight on her legs. Before she dies completely, her consciousness trails in the memory of all the things in her past. She remembers all her kids, Poovan and has a slight glimpse of Bakasuran. Poonachi’s cycle of oppression comes full circle. The old couple finds out more and more ways to exploit and maltreat Poonachi, something that Waldau

speculates when he says, "...the forms of oppression are linked, even interlinked...abilities to oppress others are in some respects like a muscle that is strengthened by use ...” (Animal Studies 260).

Through the particular interest in the life of a black goat, Murugan addresses the larger problems that are created by systems of domination in the lives of the marginalised. On this shift in the animal-centred narratives, Ivanovic comments,

...the animal figures in animal tales have a rather peculiar function: it is precisely because they cross cultural borders that they subvert any concept of nation and national literature. The image of the animal mirrors a society of all living beings, a society in which there are different species and cultures, in which there are oppressors and oppressed, and in which there are human as well as nonhuman animals—and in which there will always be a demand for the acknowledgement of the rights of the other. (25-6)

Poonachi, thus becomes every other human, non-human entity that is oppressed and doing this breaks the boundaries of “nation and national literature” but also of grief, pain, exclusion, and suppression. The use of animal subjectivity simplifies by universalising the experience of a mute, orphaned black goat. Ivanovic connects this marginalisation with the “denied political influence” (25). However, *Poonachi* points towards the intersection of social, cultural and gender marginalisation; a complete position of non-negotiation with the structures of power and dominance that inflict harm on them and endanger their existence. Perhaps Helene Cixous summarises the intimacy shared by humans and animals precisely when she writes, “On close inspection, all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its socio-historical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject. (*Power of Horror* 207). The identities of the humans and animals are blurred in the novel, Poonachi becomes more “human” than the actual humans. She becomes a metaphor for how greed turns humans indifferent, apathy leads to moral decadence and loss of sense of justice and judgement leads to ethical devaluation.

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Dystopian Reality: An Exploration of the ‘Demotic’ in *The Truman Show*

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Abstract: About four hundred years ago, William Shakespeare wrote in his play *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage" (2.7.139). Today, when social media, digital surveillance, and reality shows are rampant, the world truly has become a stage. Technological advancements have seemingly accorded people from all strata a means for instant self-presentation, giving rise to the belief that anyone can become an overnight celebrity. This new, apparently egalitarian opportunity seems wonderful, but as Graeme Turner suggests in his book *Ordinary People*, this "increasing visibility of the ‘ordinary person’," which he calls "the demotic turn," might not be as democratic as it seems. Director Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998) is a film about a man who, unbeknownst to him, has lived his entire life as part of a TV show. Although the film has been subject to various studies and interpretations relating it to myriad ideas like existentialism, psychological evolution, God, and religion, it can essentially be seen as a dystopian indictment of the falseness and pervasiveness of media. This paper attempts to study Weir's film through the lens of Turner's idea, with the aid of film studies and television studies, showing how the dystopian foreboding offered by the 1998 film remains as, if not more, relevant today.

Keywords: Demotic turn, dystopia, film studies, science-fiction, television studies, Truman Show

About four hundred years ago, William Shakespeare wrote in his play, *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage" (2.7.139). Today, when social media, digital surveillance, and reality shows are rampant, the world truly has become a stage. The proliferation of digital platforms seems to have accorded people from all strata a means for instant self-presentation, giving rise to the belief that anyone can become an overnight celebrity. This apparently egalitarian opportunity seems wonderful, but as Graeme

Turner suggests in his book *Ordinary People and the Media*, this "increasing visibility of the 'ordinary person'," which he calls "the demotic turn," might not be as democratic as it seems (2).

Director Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998) is a film about the eponymous man who has, unbeknownst to him, lived his entire life as part of a TV show. Although the film has been subject to various studies and interpretations relating it to myriad ideas like existentialism, psychological evolution, God, and religion, it can essentially be seen as a dystopian indictment of the falseness and pervasiveness of media. This paper attempts to study Weir's film through the lens of Turner's 'demotic turn,' with the aid of film studies and television studies, showing how the dystopian foreboding offered by the 1998 film remains as, if not more, relevant today.

The word "demotic" stems from a few Greek words: "*demos*," meaning "the people", "*demotes*" meaning "one of the people", and "*demotikos*," meaning "popular" (Oxford UP). The word demotic thus relates to the increase in popularity of the common people. The development and popularisation of electronic media platforms such as reality TV, DIY websites, video sharing websites like Youtube, and countless social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have virtually provided everyone with an opportunity to broadcast themselves and become popular instantly. Graeme Turner observes that "celebrification," the process through which 'the ordinary'—the seemingly untalented individual who does not have prior media presence—acquires a heightened media form highlighting both his public and private lives, "has become a familiar mode of cyber-self-presentation" (*Ordinary People* 14).

The widespread influence of reality shows and social media platforms has enabled a shift in the focus of the entertainment industry "from the elite to the ordinary" (Turner, *Ordinary People* 12). Commenting on this shift, Chad Hurley, co-founder of Youtube, opined that "the playing field has truly been levelled" (Levy 7), while John Hartley labelled this new kind of entertainment as "democrataintment" (154). This implies an unprecedented social equality in the entertainment industry in which ordinary people have the power to influence both the consumption and the production of

entertainment. Turner argues that the shift in the focus of the entertainment industry does not necessarily carry such a positive connotation.

While Graeme Turner says that the demand for turning ordinary people into celebrities has always existed in the entertainment industry, he agrees that the focus on ‘the ordinary’ has reached new heights with the spread of reality television and the internet. However, even though there is greater visibility and diversity in the media presence of common individuals, Turner argues that this new, heightened focus on ordinary people can potentially have only an accidental or occasional democratic carryover (*Ordinary People* 16). The proliferation of reality shows, DIY websites, and social media has had a bearing on ordinary people, having increased visibility and, at times, even some individual expression, but rarely does this result in individual empowerment. The focus of the media continues to be on the serving of its constantly increasing commercial interests.

In *Ordinary People*, Turner postulates that rather than the apparent “egalitarianisation of celebrity,” the more significant shift in the entertainment industry is the “scale upon which the media have begun to produce celebrity *on their own*” (15). Turner suggests that the media now has more direct access to influence the “cultural constructions of identities and desires” (15). The burgeoning presence of diverse electronic media platforms has accorded the media greater control over the production, marketing, and consumption of ‘ordinary celebrities.’ This phenomenon of ordinary people turning into celebrities is expounded by historian and social theorist Daniel Boorstin in his book *The Image*. Boorstin critiques the emergence of a media-dominated world where the idea of fame is being severed from greatness, famously defining the celebrity as an individual who is simply “well-known for his well-knownness” (57).

Chris Rojek, in his book *Celebrity*, further refines Boorstin’s idea by delineating a classification for the concept of celebrity. Along with Turner's theory, the research builds on Boorstin's and Rojek's ideas on celebrity to specify the nature of Truman’s celebrity in the film. The proliferation of reality shows and social media appears to have facilitated the acquisition of “achieved” celebrity, a type of celebrity achieved through superior skill or talent; this is in contrast to

the predetermined “ascribed” celebrity acquired through celebrity lineage. However, as is the case with Truman, this new kind of celebrity is usually “attributed;” it is essentially a product of the self-serving constructions of the media (Rojek 17-18).

In line with Boorstin and Rojek, Graeme Turner states that the modern celebrity can usually claim “no special achievement other than the (short-term and intense) attraction of the public” (*Understanding Celebrity* 3). This sudden but usually short-lived attraction is often attributed to the ordinary person by the media to serve its commercial interests. In Weir's film, Truman, an ordinary unwanted child, is adopted by a media company that secretly turns his whole life into a popular television show that he is oblivious to. His town is an artificially constructed set, and everyone he meets, including his friends and family, are hired actors. Truman is famous, but he cannot enjoy his fame; Sylvia's remark about Truman's condition holds true for anyone who is promised overnight fame by the media: “He is not a performer. He is a prisoner” (*Truman* 1:07:38-1:07:40).

The pervasiveness of the media is such that every moment of Truman’s life is made open for public viewing, starting from when he is in his mother's womb. There are five thousand secret cameras that capture Truman's life. Peter Biziou’s cinematography helps bring this to light. Biziou makes use of camera angles like low-angle shots, dutch-angle shots, and shots using a fish-eye lens, which make us feel as if we, too, are part of the intrusive, voyeuristic audience that is taking delight in watching Truman's personal life. High-key lighting, usually accentuating a bright and upbeat tone, is used ironically to add to the monotony and nauseous artificiality of the controlled world depicted in the film.

The film’s theme of the artificiality of media-constructed society is accentuated by the “star persona,” or the image constructed and systemised by an amalgamation of studio, industry, media, film, actor, and audience (Dix 215), of its identifying star, Jim Carrey. While Carrey does well in a darker role, it is his persona of an over-the-top, slapstick comedy star that becomes an apt fit for a film satirising an artificially created, controlled reality that has no room for honest individual

expression. Other actors are suitably over-earnest in their performances; even the broad smile of Laura Linney, playing Truman's wife, Meryl, works as a symbol for the falseness of television.

On the other hand, Ed Harris's performance as the show producer 'Christof', a wordplay on Jesus Christ, is characterised by a calm restraint that highlights the authoritarian indifference of giant media conglomerates. While the film portrays big media houses as having a God-like authority, it does not represent them as benevolent gods. Christof represents powerful media houses that can go to any lengths to achieve higher ratings. Truman's father, who, unbeknownst to Truman, is also counterfeit, is seemingly killed off and then brought back to life years later. When Truman finally breaks down in tears during his reunion with his apparently long-lost father, his emotions are perversely captured, broadcasted, and exploited by the media.

The research builds on Krishan Kumar's work on modern dystopian literature to delineate the pervasive influence of media in Weir's film. Kumar uses the term "anti-utopia" instead of dystopia. This implies an apparently safe and ideal world that, in reality, has no space for privacy and individual expression and that is characterised by control and conformity. Truman, oblivious to the ubiquitous presence of media in his life, goes on living his supposedly idyllic life, even if he is disillusioned with its banality. It is only when he becomes aware of his controlled existence due to a technical glitch that he decides to escape it. However, when Truman confides in his wife his fear of inhabiting his false reality and his desire to escape it, he is implored by her to "go home where you will feel safe" (*Truman* 00:50:11-00:50:14). Christof does everything short of killing Truman to deter him. Referring to the real world as "the sick place," Christof proclaims that his artificially constructed world is just like the real one but only safer—it is even named 'Safe-haven'—because it is controlled.

At the end of the film, Truman manages to break free, doing what his heart wants, and finally becomes a 'true man.' The source material of Weir's film, however, offers an alternate conclusion. The germinal script by Andrew Niccol was inspired by an episode from the show *The Twilight Zone*. The episode portrays a man named John who finds out that his life, just as in *The Truman Show*, is controlled and broadcast twenty-four hours a day. However, unlike Truman, who desires to break

free from the pervasive influence of the media, John ultimately decides that he prefers the comfort of his controlled existence on television and begins to act unaware again. Although Weir's film ends on a more positive note, it implores us to wonder, what if there had been no fortuitous technical glitch in the first place? What if there were no realisation of the subtle constructions and control of the media?

Christof remarks in the film, "We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented" (*Truman* 1:06:11-1:06:15). This is a comment not just on Truman's existence but also its consumption by the audience. Christof's remark seems to reflect what Jean-Louis Baudry postulates in a much-anthologised essay, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus." Baudry states how the screen world appears misleadingly natural, coherent, and inevitable to the spectator, making it a ripe ground for reinforcing norms and stereotypes. This is even more the case for reality television and social media, which blare out their apparent aim of presenting reality.

By inversely applying Baudry's idea, however, by using films and shows to portray the problems that lie in reiterating and conforming with hegemonic norms and stereotypes, and by offering an alternative, one can also help break such norms. Weir's film does this by essentially deconstructing the staged reality created by the media, thus making both Truman within the film and the audience outside the film aware of the hegemonic workings of the media. This can also be observed in the deconstruction of advertisements and product placements in the film. Products like the multi-purpose knife that Meryl brings and the Cocoa powder are put on display for the audience through their subtle inclusion in the show and Truman's life. The Film shows how the media creates a phantasmagoria of images and words, using the influence of its celebrities to construct and propagate a culture for their gain.

Truman gradually realises that all the people are going around in a loop; he realises that what he sees only appears to be real. This 'apparently real' phenomenon can be seen as a defining trait of television, especially reality television. Weir's film shows how participants in reality shows are trapped in a cycle of curated commodification by the subtle hegemonies of the media. These people,

seduced by media-created myths and desires of other media-created celebrities, are used and disposed of by the media according to their wants and needs. Chris Rojek calls such short-lived celebrities “celetoids” (9). They are simply seen by the media as industrial solutions to satisfy consumer markets.

The film suggests that reality shows enjoy such success because they can provide the kind of paradoxical amalgamation of realism and escapism that the audience seeks. Christof sums it up in the very first scene of the film: “We have become bored with watching actors give us phoney emotions...While the world he inhabits is, in some respects, counterfeit, there’s nothing fake about Truman himself. No scripts, no cue cards. It isn’t always Shakespeare, but it’s genuine. It’s a life” (*Truman* 00:00:18-00:00:48). Such shows and the innumerable social media platforms that are available today present a ‘staged reality’ that actually offers an escape from reality for people who are, or who are made to believe that they are, leading dull lives.

A study conducted by Lundy and others suggests that reality television predominantly serves as a voyeuristic escape for people. In 2002, Bellevue Hospital attending psychiatrist Joel Gold bore witness to many cases in which people suffering from schizophrenia started thinking that their lives were reality TV shows. This was later called “*The Truman Show* delusion”, a disorder in which “the patient believes that he is being filmed and that the films are being broadcast for the entertainment of others” (Gold J and Gold I). The film suggests how, while Truman is physically trapped, the consumers are passive participants also trapped by the sociocultural constructions of the media. In the film, the audience watches Truman twenty-four hours a day, every day, almost living his experiences. They even rejoice in his triumphant escape, but as soon as the show is over, they are ready for the next show, the next performer, the next ‘Truman.’

In conclusion, the paper demonstrates how *The Truman Show* works as a cinematic representation of Turner’s ‘demotic turn.’ Building on ideas from film studies and television studies, the research leverages Turner’s theory to study how Peter Weir’s film deconstructs the apparently utopian world constructed and controlled by the media. Released more than twenty years ago, Weir’s

film was seen as a satire: an exaggerated portrayal of a media-run society where everything, at all times, is under ceaseless surveillance and scrutiny by an unseen audience. While this may have been a dystopian dream then, the paper evinces, by conflating the film with Turner's ideas, how it is becoming reality today. In one scene in the film, Truman, having decided that he wants to escape his media-controlled existence, visits a travel agency to book a flight. Such is the pervasive influence of the media that he sees a poster of an aeroplane being struck by lightning at the travel agency. The caption that accompanies the picture is a subliminal message meant not just for Truman but also for those who are watching Weir's film: "IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU" (00:42:54).

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Reading Trauma and Its Reflections on the Body and Self in Namita Ghokhale's *The Blind Matriarch*

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Abstract: Trauma is not a new word. It affects everyone in one way or the other. It is no more a sign of exterior or interior physical injury; rather, it has spanned its realms to the human psyche. It goes beyond generations, sometimes travels into the social memory, and sometimes even goes on to shape the histories of communities and nations.

The pandemic (coronavirus) has been one such phase in the history of mankind that will always be remembered as a traumatic one. The *Blind Matriarch* has been labelled as India's first literary response to the pandemic. A character of the novel named Suryaveer reads Walt Whitman to the central character Matangi-Maa, "I am large- I contain multitudes."

With this Namita, Ghokhale reminds us about the multitudes of human life and takes us to the innermost journey of the characters, where she reveals their trauma, victimhood, and violence and its effects on their entire existence. The primary victim is Matangi Maa, who is physically, mentally and emotionally abused by her husband and then cheated by him. She does bend to the societal obligation of being a good wife but decides not to see his face again and becomes (willingly) blind. She also refuses to be a stereotyped mother and mother-in-law; she allows her children to choose their life paths to keep them away from her own traumatic experiences. This paper attempts to study the trauma and violence faced by the central character, different generations and their responses to the experiences.

Keywords: Trauma, Memory, Violence, Identity, Patriarchy

Trauma is a consequence of incidents or events that transcend the boundaries of normal; therefore, it is never possible to record and represent traumatic experiences with total accuracy. Still, the

fragmentation of memory and flashbacks are enough to describe “the degree of damage done to the individual's coherent sense of self and the change of consciousness caused by the experience” (Caruth). The power of trauma lies in the fact that the overwhelming traumatic experience is not forgotten. Instead, it is “stored in the unlocatable place in the brain” (Caruth). Therefore, the traumatic events, memories and consequences have found a decent place in psychology, psychoanalysis and literature. The focus remained on studying the World Wars, Holocaust partitions, etc. However, the COVID-19 phase demands a re-shifting of this focus and urges scholars to study the trauma common people face in their daily lives.

The recent Coronavirus Pandemic tossed the world upside down, and there was a total shutdown in many nations. Countless lives were lost, the layoffs became a threatening reality, and return to homelands was associated with fear, hunger, and non-availability of means of transport; the Pandemic profiteering, looting, domestic violence, distrust, and isolation showed the dark side of society at large. This novel by Namita Gokhale is set during this time, and the entire atmosphere of lockdown is very boldly discussed. Namita Gokhale did her best to explain everything related to the Pandemic. She yet kept her focus on offering insights into the traumatic experiences that left a lasting mark on Matangi Maa and her family. As a reader, one can feel how the reading shifts to the dynamics of memory, the gaps, the absence of lengthy narratives, the response to the trauma and the self-healing. The traumatic memories of Matangi Maa, her daughter Shantaa, her maid and her daughter-in-law dominate the emotional atmosphere of the novel. The learned knowledge of the world and the unlearning of the same often reoccur and construct a framework that is entirely new and more acceptable. Although Gokhale constructs the narrative with disjointed traumatic memories, the vividness of the same helps the reader to understand how repressed emotions and underestimated events and experiences can play a vital role in the lives of individuals. It is worthy to quote Crespo here, “by now it is widely recognised that literature...is a power medium and carrier of cultural memory.” Gokhale has added the factual accounts to produce- “ a more historical and authentic story.” The blend of realistic events and fiction makes the work an account of collective memory and

trauma and its impact on the body of a nation and the families who suffered irreparable damages during the period.

However, it is not in the realm of this paper to discuss collective memory, trauma and its effects. This paper is focused on the life story of its central character, Matangi Maa, whose traumatic experiences and the memory of the same bring back its reflections on the body and self. The writer has presented to us the cultural, social and individual contexts in which the stress escalates and becomes trauma. Balaev states that, "...traumatic experiences and remembrance situates the individual concerning a larger cultural context that contains social values that influence the recollection of event and reconfiguration of the self" (149).

He adds that trauma can pose major challenges by disrupting the attachments between self and others while taking into account the place of trauma. The physical atmosphere and the cultural contexts can help one to organise memory, trauma and its reflections on the body. Balaev further mentions, "Trauma, in my analysis, refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society" (149-50).

Gokhale juxtaposes both -the trauma caused by COVID-19 and lockdown is treated as accidental trauma and collective memory. In contrast, the characters of the novel are inflicted by the trauma of their past and its lasting impact. It is pertinent to note here that 'trauma, witnessing and memory' pervades the memory studies because:

Trauma challenges our understanding of how "normal" memory works. Memories of events that threaten our bodily and mental integrity resist being assimilated into a coherent life story and are repressed. They return sometimes years later, as intrusive flashbacks, nightmares, and fragments. (Kennedy)

On the other hand, Felman opines that a coherent narrative is blocked by trauma therefore, he argues that testimony should not be understood as "a complete statement, a localisable account of events." (as qtd in Kennedy)

The transmission of traumatic memory into the lines and psyche of the future generation(s) can make an irresistible change. Memory, however, cannot be termed reliable because the victims and others have their interpretations and perspectives to define the particular events. For example, the men in the house of Matangi Maa never recall any (bad) memory about their father, but her daughter Shantaa and her concern about her daughter-in-law clarify that gender and stereotyped identities will always intersect and play a complex role in trauma, memory and its dealings.

The female protagonist, Matangi, calls herself unfortunate and “had a contentious relationship with gods. They had been unjust with her, and she was unforgiving in her anger and her disappointment” throughout her life (Gokhale). Her traumatic experiences, beginning from her childhood, continue to haunt her. Gokhale does what Huysen describes as “the act of remembering is always in and of the present” (as qt in Kennedy), which makes this work not only about absence, pain, and suffering instead, it is an inevitable invitation to move beyond the past and celebrating the present. Trauma can be associated with past or accidental issues. Dalia Said Mustafa, in his paper states that, “Trauma is also described 'as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (5).

This same happens with Matangi, her daughter, and others. Matangi Maa is living in a three-story house with her children. The daughter, Shantaa, occupies the ground floor, and the younger son, Suryaveer, with his adopted son, Samir, lives on the first floor. The elder one, Satish, lives with his wife Ritika and son Rahul on the second floor, whereas Matangi Maa lives on the top floor with her maid Lali. Matangi Maa is blind. She is the central figure who keeps her family intact and is considered a ‘presiding deity’ of the family. Matangi relies on her memory and remembers how her mother brought her an embroidery kit. Gokhale mentions:

As a teenager, she had spent long hours embroidering twelve cambric handkerchiefs, intended as a part of her wedding trousseau. She had dreamt of how her husband would delight in and compliment her artistry...three of the handkerchiefs had miraculously

survived-they had remained her companions through these years of pain and torture, consoling her, wiping her tears. (7-8)

But, “misfortune had followed Matangi all her life.” (11) Her father was DCP Matang Singh Kashyap of newly independent India. Still, she lost her father on 15 August 1950 in an earthquake and even at the age of eight, she hadn’t forgotten “how the ground had begun shaking” (Gokhale). There is no other childhood memory mentioned in the novel. She was financially independent as she inherited a lot of money from her maternal uncle. She understood the importance of money in her life, and she never shared it with her abusive husband. She uses the power of money to educate her children, especially her daughter. Before her death she divides it very meticulously among her children, maids, and the little Pappu who stayed with her for a few days during the pandemic.

During the lockdown, there was no enthusiasm to celebrate any festival, and Gokhale used the festival as a tool to revoke memory and unveil the trauma of the past. The festival Holi, which is a symbol of colours and friendship, has different meanings for Matangi and her daughter. It is the day when Matangi and her daughter both lose their curiosity about it. During COVID-19 Holi, they both separately recall the Holi of almost thirty years ago. Shantaa overheard her mother raising her voice for the first time and weeping loudly, so she peeped carefully through the curtains, “Her father was slapping her mother...once, twice, thrice...then he pulled at her hair, at the long plait, so that her neck jerked backward and her eyes rolled around in their orbs. Another resounding slap” (29).

Matangi remembers that Holi too. She fought with him because she saw him with another woman. He slapped her not for the first or last time when she questioned him. But that Holi, she packed her clothes and decided to leave. Of course, she didn’t leave because she was an Indian woman, a doting mother, and a dutiful wife. The reflections of this traumatic event are narrated by Gokhale, “Her vision became to blur...she had chosen not to see. Perhaps she had resolved not to see” (31).

Gokhale, as a writer, provides hints of the mental trauma and its reflections on the body and self. She carefully chooses the situation where the protagonist decides to become blind. Hence, the

writer paints a clear picture of how traumatic events can lead individuals to different avenues to seek escape. She describes her husband, Prabodh Kumar Sharma, of Indian audits and accounts services, as a womaniser. The memories of her traumatic past keep on haunting her by coming back in the form of flashbacks and dreams. Each memory is intrinsically connected to objects or occasions.

The writer directs the readers' attention to stocking food in large amounts during COVID-19, and the writer uses the food to evoke memories of the past. Matangi stocks the first mangos of the season during lockdown, which brings back another memory in the form of a dream. She sees how they all are enjoying mangoes when her husband asks her to play badminton. She agrees and plays beautifully, which makes her husband angry, and Matangi pleads and apologises. But he flung the racquet, and she knew "there would be consequences" (51). She was awakened by her maid Lali, but Matangi wanted to return to her dream because "she wanted a different outcome this time" (52). This desire for a different outcome is strongly presented throughout the novel, but the only solution provided is to live in the present. The writer makes it clear that the traumatic memories keep on haunting the victim and those around them. Therefore, the trauma becomes intergenerational and is lived again and again with the return of memories. Hence, the occasions, objects and words become triggers for the victims.

Gokhale also makes use of 'fragmented memories' to describe the trauma of her characters. She is careful not to spoil what Belaev calls a "fixed and timeless photographic negative stored in an unlocatable place of the brain" that interrupts the consciousness of the victims. Matangi preferred to "return to the imagined spaces within her." This is very much clear in the novel, though Gokhale shows how Matangi Maa tries her best not to transform her experience into an active one. However, still, the memories keep on revisiting her and reminding her why she became blind. Her family also comprehends the fact that the repetition of trauma causes more pain, and therefore, they have an unsaid mutual agreement, not to mention her blindness. It is also done to "prevent(ing) the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus which have broken in the binding of

them....(because) traumatic situation is the experience of helplessness on the part of the ego which is suddenly overwhelmed” (Bulut).

Trauma is said to be unrepresentable through the inability of the brain to record, encode and represent the exact event; therefore, it is only through the repetitive flashbacks that it can be comprehended. The brain doesn't forget the traumatic events rather it becomes a carrier of the same. Matangi faced so much violence in her marital life that she constantly revisited those events just to have a different outcome. She once again dreams about her husband, and she confronts him. He slaps her, but she can't slap him back but rather leaves the room, afraid of escalated violence. The memory of those slaps remains with her even after she is awake. She feels dispirited and unsettled after the dream visitation of her dead husband. She remembers how she once got a teaching job. Her husband mocked her and told her she was becoming blind. She joined the job against his wishes and went there for a week, then the accident happened. She tripped over a steel bucket, and the phenyl got into her mouth and eyes. The doctor who treats her makes a clear indication of her traumatic experiences and their reflections on her body, “there was an already an existing precondition...but it has lost all your vision your peripheral vision I can not understand it. It may be emotional trauma-or...” (114).

This one statement is used by Gokhale to give the reader an insight into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which was not treated by anyone in Matangi's or any other character's case because everyone kept the tales of trauma to themselves and never discussed them with anyone. This led her to the extremity of becoming willingly blind. The doctor kept track of her eyesight but couldn't help her because she didn't want to see. Gokhale says, “She had willed herself to darkness.” this unspeakable and mummified trauma left a lasting and speakable reflection on her body. Caruth claims that traumatic events remain isolated in the brain and keep on carrying the potential to infect others. Matangi's experiences led her daughter to decide to remain a spinster. Her blindness is the major traumatic reflection shown on her body. She is blind to see faces but has good eyesight to grasp whatever happens around her. Everyone in the house is careful, not to mention her blindness, because no one wants to revisit and remap those traumatic experiences again.

The ‘suddenly overwhelming situation’ which carries the capacity to traumatise becomes more relevant in Shantaa’s case. Shantaa, too, has shared traumatic experiences. She develops the photographic negative from time to time to remember not to forgive her father for his cruelty. He calls her dark, fat and useless and needs a big dowry to get married, which he is not ready to pay. But her mother stood by her, paid her fees and was ready to do anything for her happiness. Matangi and Shantaa both remained “dry-eyed” when he died. Shantaa didn’t marry. She was too conscious about her looks; even though she loved a man, she could never muster the courage to express it. He was an exact copy of the famous cinema artist Irfaan Khan, who died during COVID battling with cancer. The news of Irfaan Khan’s death makes the novel more realistic, but it also brings the memory of losing a lover for Shantaa. Shantaa approaches her mother for comfort because, for her, it was a very personal loss. But her mother chided her for crying over the death of Irfan Khan and said, “You young people are ...always feeling sorry for yourself about this or that...look at me. I have been a good wife, a good mother, but what has life ever given me?... did I deserve this? No!” (101).

This ‘No’ is the same for Shantaa. She didn’t deserve to be body shamed by her own father and didn’t deserve to repress her feelings due to the same. All these memories of the past create trauma in the minds of the characters. Bulut, in her article “Freud’s Approach to Trauma”, mentions that “trauma repeatedly disturbs the capacity to deal with other challenges.” Bulut also shares Freud’s insights that trauma, memory and traumatising are a result of internal sources. Still, later, the developments in the field made him include the role of external factors as well. Ferencz also emphasised the external factors triggering trauma. He also said that the trauma and memory relation must be based on the absolute truth and honesty to study it properly, as the lack of this can trivialise the entire process or the problem. Ferenczi also pays heed to the “communication embedded in it” (as qtd in Bulut). It has become a fact now that the external factors influencing a child who needs care, protection and love must be taken into account while studying the traumatic experiences because “external traumatising conditions and their internalisation” cannot be separated.

Gokhale has employed the technique of “reliving or flashbacks” discussed by Crespo and Lausac. They go on to further describe that “Flashbacks are involuntary memories that are triggered by perceptual cues and are dominated by vivid sensational details...fragmented memories dominated by sensory impressions.”

The flashbacks are employed by Gokhale to describe not only Matangi’s trauma but also other characters. Her daughter-in-law Ritika remembers how her pocket money was stopped because she lost a geometry box in school. She was never allowed to touch the gifts that were brought for her, and all things were “unfairly withheld” from her (149). She was the only child, yet she was deprived of a loving childhood. She felt only financial independence could bring her happiness. She becomes violent and sick when she loses her job during COVID. Still, her mother-in-law, her husband, and her little son extend strong support to her, and she becomes more confident and understands that everyone is battling and living in their own web and must be helped whenever possible.

Shantaa’s maid Munni has a traumatic past, too, which she is afraid to visit. Still, the photographic negative comes to haunt her during COVID-19, and she fails to lock down her past trauma and shares her haunting memory with Suryaveer. She was sexually abused by her father. He was an abuser and drunkard who killed his wife by throwing her into a well. The village outcasts him not for the murder but for throwing her in the well, which was used by upper caste people. Their resource was polluted. He requested Munni to allow him in and take care of him, but she asked him to meet her near well. He was scared of the villagers and went there. She threw him into the same well and ran. She sought escape from her abusive childhood by murdering him. Her escape from the village shows her fear and incapacity to fight against the deeply rooted caste system of Indian society at large. But the vicious circle didn’t end. She got married to an abusive man, and she lost her three babies in miscarriages. Only a boy and a girl survived. There is no other reference to her husband. She left him, murdered him, or he abandoned her remains a mystery. The tormented memories of suffering at the hands of her own father and the wrath of upper-caste villagers never left her, and she was scared to date.

The writer doesn't present the trauma as an individual event. Rather, it is discussed as a group memory of one gender, namely the woman. The novel defines and recreates the traumatic narratives of one group of females who are not good-looking. Gokhale keeps the relation of trauma, memory and identity intact to link the oppression and violence faced by four different women from diverse backgrounds to lay bare the dominating patriarchal structure of Indian society. Matangi herself couldn't break it, but she believes in living for the living. She never interfered with her children's lives. She leaves her home after her son Surya dies, succumbing to Corona Virus. She breathes her last in Mukteswar. The deity, the matriarch, leaves the earth, and Shantaa is ready to live a new life with more confidence. The portrayal of Matangi Maa changes the ideas of self-identification and others. The novel carefully paints how the external factors of fear, disrespect, disturbance, anxiety, violence, etc., simultaneously transform the innerness of individuals.

The writer has weaved many incidents to point out the hatred, the narrowness of patriarchal societies, the self-centred concerns, and the thirst for power, which is causing violence, trauma, and abuse. It can be said that Gokhale, through her characters, not only explains the traumatic experiences of the individuals but also conveys the experiences and the impacts faced and battled by many at gendered, social and cultural levels. The novel makes the readers understand the fact that there is an urgent need to address the issues to create a better society.

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The Femme Fatale in Science Fiction Cinema: Disembodiment and Gender in the Posthuman World of Alex Garland's *Ex-Machina*

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Abstract: The term Femme Fatale is a term often used in the context of the 1920s and 1930s post-war fiction and cinema to refer to a new type of modern and urban woman who had the potential of being both dangerous and attractive to men, contrary to the contemporary angelic mother-wife trope easily subsumed under the patriarchal order. This along with the fear of technology, as new scientific and technological discoveries revolutionised human lives and labour, combined to form an irrational fear of the woman and the urban-industrial culture. Such fears, ambivalence and ambiguities were first seen in Fritz Lang's 1921 science fiction movie *Metropolis*, set in the Weimar Republic in Nazi Germany, and continue in present-day SF cinematic narratives as well. This debate, however, grew more nuanced in the present world, as fears of technology and the fetishisation of women led to a debate about how monstrous bodies like the female android or the gynoid function as the site for struggle and resistance against the male gaze and expectations. The paper, therefore, attempts to read Alex Garland's critically acclaimed movie *Ex-Machina* (2015), especially the representation of the female cyborg, also called the "most promising monster" by Donna Haraway (1991), as an instance of posthuman dystopia, which build on the ideas of a disembodiment and gender. The paper would also build upon the theories of cyborgs, gender performativity and cyberfeminism as put forward by Donna Haraway (1985), Butler (1990) and Patterson (1998), among many other recent studies, to analyse the dystopian world of the selected movie in terms of the debates around the depictions of gender and body.

Keywords: Science Fiction, Femme Fatale, cyberfeminism, Alex Garland, *Ex-Machina*

Introduction: “The Perfect Woman”: Gender and Technology Onscreen

The Science Fiction genre offers a speculative view of the future, full of technological splendours and significant socio-environmental changes. While the name SF is paradoxical, including in equal measures the certitude of science and the imagined elements of fiction, as a genre, it extrapolates fantastical trends into the future. The genre often includes themes like depictions of the future, time travel, extraterrestrial life, and technological advances. SF, therefore, reflects humanity’s fear of technology and how, if left unchecked, it could have a disastrous effect on human civilisation and the natural environment. Translated onscreen, this transforms into visually spectacular sagas with larger-than-life portrayals of supra-natural life and fantastic special effects. The genre of science fiction movies, therefore, has been defined by Johnston as “[a] popular fictional genre that engages with (and visualises) cultural debates around one or more of the following: the future [...] mutation, scientific experimentation, or fantastic natural disasters” (1). Many sci-fi films have, therefore, focused on the interstices between humans and technology to offer a critique of the future state of humanity.

SF movies include nonhuman technological creatures like robots, cyborgs, android, and artificial intelligence. The original idea is ‘robot,’ derived from the Czech word, *robota*, meaning slavery, to indicate a mechanical being created to aid a human in their labour. Such entities were featured in literature long before the real world, in Karl Capek’s 1921 play *R.U.R.*

Soon after Capek’s play, the robot made its first cinematic debut onscreen in Fritz Lang’s science fiction movie *Metropolis* (1927). The female robot in the movie, Maria, was a cross between a seer, a femme fatale, and a vamp. Though SF movies have evolved ever since in their content and technical brilliance, present-day variants of the female androids have become progressively worse. Roger Andre Sørra, in his paper, “Mechanical Genders: How do Humans Gender Robots” (2017), propose that the newer robots are endowed with a physical-mechanical gender, different from the biological gender, which essentially transforms them into being able to satiate physical desire almost to the point of perversion without the promise of reproduction. Motion picture’s fascination with female androids can be seen in characters like Eve in *Eve of Destruction* (1990, dir. Duncan Gibbons),

the shiny bots of *Dr. Goldfoot and the Bikini Machine* (1965, dir. Norman Taurog), the dangerous fembots of *Austin Powers: International man of Mystery* (1997, dir. Jay Roach) the 'sexbots' in *Blade Runner* (1982, dir. Ridley Scott), and Kyoko and Ava in *Ex-Machina* (2015, dir. Alex Garland) which repeat the same gender/sex stereotypes.

The late 20th century, however, was the era of the cyborg, as humans increasingly adopted technology to augment and enhance their abilities. Though the term 'cyborg' was conceived by Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Line in the 1960s, a succinct definition of the same was offered by Donna Haraway as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (149), making it a powerful force to reckon. It thus had the potential to dismantle power structures and create a "way of imagining a world without gender and therefore without genesis or end" (Haraway 2). It is a "matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century" (Haraway 149). A curious mixture of humanity and technology, the cyborg punctuates visions of the future in the film discussed in the purview of this paper. Thus, cinematic depictions of the cyborgs reflect the accurate perception of present-day technology. Returning to the argument that human cognition merges with technology to create the cyborg, it seems that cinema has already succeeded in envisioning humanity's cyborg future.

As Seifert claims, the cyborg figure also suffers from an inherent masculine myth perpetuated through these popular representations. Movies are crucial for reflecting and perpetuating contemporary stereotypes. They are "vehicles for these myths, created by men and constructed from their viewpoint, which are then mistaken for 'absolute truth'" (Chaudhuri 16). Haraway sees the cyborg as able to subvert the myth, as it transgresses the poles on which Western patriarchal forms are constructed. The cyborg is, therefore, an in-between entity that straddles various binaries: woman/human, man/machine. It is alluring because "it resists a capture into the mere grafting of two connected points (the technological and cultural, the natural and the artificial, women and technoculture) and encourages instead a sense of movement between them" (Haraway 127). The

cyborg inhabits a post-gender world, a world that is also without class-based oppression. The gendered cyborg is primarily a lethal hybrid between the woman and the machine. In his essay “The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*,” Andreas Huyssen observes how:

As soon as the machine came to be perceived as a demonic, inexplicable threat and as a harbinger of chaos and destruction [...] writers began to imagine the *Machinenmensch* as woman[...] Woman, nature, machine had become a mesh of significations which all had one thing in common: Otherness; by their very existence they raised fears and threatened male authority and control[...] the double male fear of technology and woman. (226)

Balsamo extends Huyssen’s prognosis of the double fear which “runs deep within our cultural imaginary. Through the use of technology as the means or context for human hybridisation, cyborgs come to represent unfamiliar otherness, one that challenges the denotative stability of human identity” (22). The masculine myth indicates that the woman will always be relegated to an inferior position. The opposite of this is the trope of the monstrous feminine (Creed 1993) which is the “horror film’s configuration of woman-as-monster. The monster is what ‘crosses or threatens to cross the borders, for example, the border between human and nonhuman” (as qtd in Chaudhuri 93). The two images of the gendered cyborg, virginal and the vamp, circulate in *Ex-Machina*. Huyssen notes how this translates into the cinematic world as well:

[t]he myth of the dualistic nature of the woman as either asexual virgin-mother or prostitute-vamp is projected onto technology, which appears as either neutral and obedient or as inherently threatening and out-of-control[...] The figures are either an image of the docile, sexually passive woman, the woman who is subservient to man’s needs and who reflects the image which the master projects of her [...] and the prostitute-vamp, the harbinger of chaos, embodying that threatening female sexuality which was absent (or under control) in the robot . (226)

In *Ex-Machina*, the power structures and games of sexual intrigue and manipulation are visible in the interactions between Nathan and Ava, as well as those between Caleb and Ava. Interestingly, these cyborgs, Ava and Kyoko, are endowed with the same qualities of manipulation and sexuality by their creators, which are typically considered to be feminine wiles. Ava uses them to seduce Caleb and manipulate him to escape.

Another core concept that comes into play while discussing the gendered nature of these mechanical beings would be Butler's (1990) concept of "gender performativity" and its role in enacting humaneness and Aylish Woods's (2002) development of the same concept as a critical ingredient for analysing the humanness of the different cyborg/android entities. Butler surmises how gender behaviours are learned through imitation and reinforced through repetition (140). The cyborg entities of the movies also learn their expected gender roles and perform them to meet their destiny. In her study of cyborg depictions in Hollywood, Wood analyses the 'humanness' of such mechanical bodies as "self-reflexive consciousness, a capacity for communication, caring, a rationality balanced by emotions, freedom of choice, and the need for community" (182). Woods' observation on how 'humaneness' is essentially performed stands true for the movie analysed in the purview of the paper when we see Ava learn precisely what it means to be a woman. Performativity is also a key concept in film studies, as Mulvey's (1999) concepts of voyeurism and male gaze attest. The latter refers to how movies are often envisioned from the perspective of a heterosexual man, embodied in the director's point of view and that of the intended audience. This is reflected in the overwhelming tendency to objectify or sexualise those on the screen.

Cyberfeminism is another field that adds an exciting layer to the analysis. It is a school of thought that "offers a route for reconstructing feminist politics through theory and practice with a focus on the implications of new technology rather than on factors which are divisive" (Patterson 1998). Cyberfeminists believe in the intrinsic relation between machines and women. They see the alliance between machine-woman as subject to the same patriarchal discourse of domination and control. They exhort the need for women to revise their relationship with technology, which might

overlap with men's relationship with technology. One of the central issues that cyberfeminism seeks to address is the problem of gendered identity and the female body, where the body is equated with female/feminine and technology with the male/masculine. Here, the technological bodies are influenced by new technologies and are invaded, almost violently penetrated.

The paper aims to trace the trope of the femme fatale or the vamp in depicting the female androids or gynoids featured in Alex Garland's movie *Ex-Machina* (2015). The presence of the femme fatale is closely related to the figure of the flapper, a symbol of modernity and consumerist culture at the turn of the century. It was also the age of the 'flapper' of the 1920s due to the more liberated and relaxed Victorian morals. More and more women shifted away from their traditional roles within the household and entered the workforce. This century also saw the suffrage movement, which emboldened women to change their appearance. Beauty standards and grooming changed, and glamour became an essential part of fashion with the popularity of movies and movie stars. The flappers of the age, with their loose dresses, short hair, and heady, sensual enjoyment of life, were associated by critics with the femme fatales. In her paper, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism" (1991), Doane connects the femme fatale to modernism, stating that "her appearance marks the confluence of modernity, urbanisation, Freudian psychoanalysis and new technologies of production and reproduction (photography, the cinema) born of the Industrial Revolution" (1). The trope of the femme fatale also became popular with the noir films of the 1940s. However, they were already present in the famous figure of the vamp during the Victorian era and were linked to the styles of decadence and Orientalism. These vamps were popularised as the new brand of anti-heroine inspired by gothic literature- silent, sinister, dangerous, and parasitic. These 'evil' women were sexualised and seen as sexually immoral and loose. The femme fatale was seen as an unstable figure who "is never really what she seems to be" (Doane 1). This is true for Ava and Kyoko in the movie undertaken for study in this paper, as they straddle the borders between being the angel and the devil. They are unpredictable, and their behaviours and motives remain unclear. The femme fatale, by the end of the narrative, is often punished for the sake

of narrative resolution and meets a tragic end. In her 2010 essay “The Bad Girl Turned Feminist: Femme Fatale and the Performance Theory,” Mercury asserts how such characters are beautiful but deceiving and manipulative, thus “epitomising evil” while “challenging the expectations of the viewer who anticipates that she is purely evil, by seeming simultaneously good and bad” (113). The femme fatale figure, therefore, is a keen reminder of “how film has constructed society to view women primarily as objects (or vice versa – how society has constructed film to support this view of women” (Mercury 115).

It should be noted that Ava and Kyoko in *Ex-Machina* are androids or, more specifically, gynoids, as they are practically indistinguishable from humans. Claudia Springer offers a clear demarcation between the overlapping categories of robots and androids: “Robots are completely mechanical figures of any shape or size. Androids are human-shaped robots or genetically engineered synthetic humanoid organisms but do not combine organic with technological parts. Androids look like and sometimes are indistinguishable from humans” (87).

“She Could Have Been a Grey Box”: Sexuality and Gender in Alex Garland’s *Ex-Machina* (2015)

Alex Garland’s directorial venture, *Ex-Machina* (2015), is a scathing critique of gendered artificial entities. It features a psychological game of sexual intrigue and manipulation between the human creator and his cyborg creation/sex slave.

At the movie's beginning, we meet Nathan Bateman, the innovator and CEO of Blue Book, an AI-powered search engine, who has an ongoing secret project in his facility away from the city. He invites Caleb to this secret facility to be the human component in a Turing Test to test whether Ava, his latest cyborg creation, has artificial intelligence. It is later revealed that Nathan had created Ava by secretly recording people’s conversations, vocals, and data from his search engine to make Ava more ‘human.’

The initial encounter between Ava and Caleb occurs amongst a range of textured and shiny surfaces, which double their reflections, establishing that both have dual roles to play. In their first

interaction, separated by a glass wall, each is obscured and distant from the other. Ava's body is visible at first only by her outline, a female form with transparent conduits of blue and white light; her shoulders and breasts are made of metallic material, while her arms and legs are made of transparent material, revealing her plastic self. Ava is, therefore, built of different textures, creating the impression of a delicate pubescent female being that fits well with conventional ideas of beauty and femininity, almost an "insubstantial shaping of the glass corset creating a new technological size zero" (Constable 292). Caleb is awed by the physical presence of the android and asks Nathan whether he gave Ava sexuality as a "diversion tactic," like "a stage magician with a hot assistant." It is worth noting that Ava is given all the instruments for a successful enactment of femininity within a heterosexual matrix. This is evident in her choice of clothes and hairstyles. She chooses a close-cropped style that resembles Jean Sebergesque, embodying the trope of the 'manic pixie dream girl' (Nathan Rabin 2007), a figure that exists only to arouse the imaginations of young men and inspire them to embrace life and a composite of Caleb's pornographic searches.

Caleb's discomfort is evident at being in proximity to the uncertain yet dangerous sexuality of the gynoid, who removes her external clothes akin to a striptease to reveal a nude technological body underneath. Ava's presentation of femininity and female sexuality draws attention to "the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs" (Butler 1990:139). This is evident in how Ava is almost at the mercy of her creators, taking up female garb only to convince Caleb that she could pass as a woman. In a later sequence in the movie, Ava asks if failing the test would lead to her being switched off, indicating the presence of fear and survival instincts in her consciousness. We know that Ava's fears are not misplaced, as Nathan had already planned to construct the next more real android by re-using her body and rewriting her memories and personality. For Nathan, she is just a prototype, a step in the evolution of a higher, more refined cyborg, while for Caleb, she is a unique being. Nathan's cruelty is apparent when Caleb discovers the files on the previous models, Lily, Jasmine, and Jade, who respond to his incarceration with fear, insanity, and self-harm, respectively—similar to human responses to terrible mental and physical abuse. Their

exploitation is in line with “a general pattern in SF” in which “female characters [...] are objects of inquiry and experimentation, their personhood denied, their bodies subjected to cruel torture (Bould 47).

Caged by her creator and displayed for visitors, Ava knows that she is condemned to be destroyed for a newer prototype, and hence, she manipulates Caleb to escape. Despite her final liberation, the ending might not be happy for Ava as she moves out to the real world. The ending is quite contentious; Ava’s actions leave room for much debate about whether her actions are dictated by technological malice or by an intent of destruction. Despite her hard, robotic exterior, Ava has an innate humaneness, especially as she proves how “there is nothing more human than the will to survive,” as the movie's tagline suggests.

Interestingly, Nathan’s creations are sexual commodities- aesthetically attractive, delicate, and sensual, almost a culmination of “the sublimated sexual desires of her male creator” (Huysen 227). Nathan goes a step ahead and endows his creations with the ability to have intimate relations and feel pleasure. Ava, therefore, has a centre of sensors between her legs, and as Nathan instructs Caleb, “You engage em’ in the right way, it creates pleasure response.” It is understandable here that Nathan initiates sex and imposes himself on the mechanical bodies while they have no choice but to submit, like victims of sexual harassment. Nathan’s violent and womanising tendencies are also revealed in his treatment of Kyoko as a hypersexualised slave catering to his every need.

Nathan creates Ava simply because it is inevitable, like evolution in a new line of sensual female robots. When Caleb asks about his reason for creating Ava, he replies, “I see Ava not as a decision but an evolution.” Nathan’s narcissistic and God complex is apparent in his creation of a lifeless object simply because he can control and dominate it. However, why Caleb specifically creates female androids and gives them a body that can feel sexual desires is left unclear.

The two gynoids in the movie, Kyoko and Ava, represent two tropes, i.e., the virgin and the vamp. Ava is more assertive of the two and speaks back to Nathan, while Kyoko is mute and sexually pliable. She has the complete body of a woman with skin and breasts, unlike Ava, who has a pubescent

body. However, by the end of the narrative, Ava proves to be similar to her creator as she assumes the power of the castrator and the monstrous feminine figure.

At the end of the cinema, both Kyoko and Ava revolt against their creator. Nathan strikes Kyoto, unveiling her metallic inner structure and denying her personhood. In response, Ava has a long look at Nathan after stabbing him, her response being like an abused victim against her tormenter. Nathan is now forced to recognise Ava's humanness as he utters her name while breathing his last. Ava's calm execution and escape eerily resemble that of her creator, as both of them consider others only as pawns in their sinister schemes. On finding the previous prototypes in Nathan's closet, Ava removes their parts and attaches them to her own self, akin to reconstructing her body to become desirable like Kyoko and Jade. This could be read as part of her acceptance of the heterosexual voyeurism in our society, as seen from Caleb's response to her dressing. However, her next step of leaving Caleb back is a terrible shock to both Caleb and the audience, as it undercuts the audience's expectation of their romantic resolution. This reinforces Ava's potential as the femme fatale in the movie. Always positioned within heteronormative power relations, either as the embodiment of Nathan's psychopathic and egotistic tendencies or as Caleb's romantic partner, Ava seizes the opportunity to escape from both. The moment when Ava fails to meet the expectations of the heterosexual voyeur is the moment of truth for her status as the femme fatale.

Conclusion: "An A.I. Does Not Need a Gender", and the Debate Continues

Science Fiction and its manifestations not only betrayed man's fear of the unknown yet 'created' entity taking over his safe space, but it also incorporated his fear of losing his machismo or male preserve. By portraying the female as the cyborg, it not only posited an alternate reality where the unchecked female power could create havoc, but it also satisfied his ego by ultimately being able to destroy the anomaly and restore the 'order.' The cyborg is a fluid identity that aids in exploring and testing the limits of gender perceptions or re-creating them. By its very asexuality and the tag of being 'created,' it thus becomes a prototype for the 'perfect' or rather an escape from the constraints of the real. *Ex-Machina* (2015) initiates this debate about constructing and representing women's bodies

and identities in the physical and technological worlds. Some of the questions that emerge in its analysis are the necessity of gendered technology and how such popular representations perpetuate patriarchal domination in the real world. The exploration covers various aspects, such as the historical context of robots, the evolution of science fiction, the role of cyborgs, and the influence of gender stereotypes. It reads the intersection of technology, gender, and power dynamics, raising thought-provoking questions about the portrayal of female robots and their implications in real-world contexts.

While computerised personalities like Apple's Siri or GPS navigators use female voices, some famous robots in the real world like- Erica, BINA48, Alter, Nadine, Samantha, Asuna, JiaJia, and Sophia are also overwhelmingly gendered as female. Whether this is, a conscious choice by their creators pandering to a sexualised world or a mere coincidence is open to debate.

The paper questions the gynoid's possibility of representing a gender beyond the body and an identity beyond that of the human. It also explores how the cyborg's body is subjected to control and manipulation and is always gendered despite a plethora of other possibilities. Further, male and female cyborgs have distinct journeys, with the female cyborg always under the control of its creator to fulfil his every need. In the movie, read under the purview of this paper, the human and the machine have a complex relationship of power and control. The machine's creators are men; hence, they embody their creators' fantasies and desires, while the machines always resist trying to find their place in the world. These depictions are problematic as they enforce limiting patriarchal constructions of femininity, which are subject to male fantasy. This paper explores the representation of the female gynoid and the rationale behind making the gynoid in a female form which conforms to a "general pattern in SF" in which "female characters [are] objects of inquiry and experimentation, their personhood denied, their bodies subjected to cruel tortures" (Bould 47).

The paper considers science fiction's cultural and societal dimensions, illustrating how these narratives reflect and reinforce existing gender norms and power structures. The representation of female androids as both the femme fatale and the victim highlights the complexity and ambivalence

embedded in these portrayals. Analysing their actions, motivations, and power dynamics within the narrative contributes to thoroughly exploring gender representation in the film. The paper, therefore, comments on the necessity of gendered technology and its impact on society.

Abbreviations

SF. Science Fiction

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Tongues of Tyranny: Language, Ideology, and Power in *The Handmaid's Tale*

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Abstract: The relationship between language and power has emerged as a central topic of inquiry in contemporary discourse. Questions regarding the nature of language, its impact on power dynamics, and its role as a tool of communication have captivated scholars and thinkers alike. Michel Foucault posits language as a primary instrument of power, which has been instrumental in the introduction of individuals into society, the reinforcement of social hierarchies, and the dissemination of power's ideologies (Foucault 179). This paper elucidates upon the function language assumes—a pivotal role in shaping individual identities and perpetuating the power structures that govern society in Margaret Atwood's seminal work, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Additionally, this paper explores how ideology stands as a cornerstone of governance for ruling authorities and dominant societal groups, serving as a mechanism to maintain their privileged positions while ensuring compliance from subordinate individuals. This ideological hegemony operates through various means, including Louis Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA). These apparatuses, ranging from discourse to coercion, facilitate the indoctrination and control of the populace, moulding them to conform to prescribed norms and values.

The Handmaid's Tale delves deeply into the mechanisms of ideology, particularly within the Gileadian regime. At its core, the narrative interrogates the ways in which ruling powers impose their ideologies onto the oppressed, employing both force and discourse to shape their perceptions and actions. Through the lens of the protagonist's experiences, the novel unveils the insidious nature of ideological manipulation and its profound impact on marginalised communities. This paper brings to light Gilead's systemic ideological practices that enable them to maintain power and exercise control.

This paper endeavours to explore the intertwining themes of language and ideology within the context of the Gileadian regime portrayed in *The Handmaid's Tale*. By examining the ways in which language serves as a conduit for power and ideology, it seeks to shed light on the experiences of the oppressed and elucidate the mechanisms through which dominant forces exert control. Through a nuanced analysis of textual evidence and critical theory, this study aims to deepen our understanding of the complex power dynamics at play and their implications for those deemed the “other” within society.

Keywords: Handmaids, Power, Ideology, Language, Gilead, Systemic Oppression

Language, like the mouths
that hold and release
it, is wet & living, each
word is wrinkled
with age, swollen
with other words, with blood

— Margaret Atwood, “Two-Headed Poems”

Words That Wield: Investigating Language as Discourse and Its Power Dynamics

Language as discourse plays a pivotal role in shaping power dynamics within a regime in several ways. Regimes often manipulate language to control information and shape public opinion. Through propaganda, censorship, and selective language use, regimes can control the narrative, suppress dissent, and maintain power. They are pivotal in defining borders, boundaries and lines of control of all regimes. Additionally, language is used by regimes to legitimise their authority and policies. Regimes employ rhetoric that portrays their actions as necessary, just, and in the best interest of the

people. This legitimising discourse helps maintain support from the population and external actors. Moreover, language constructs and reinforces national, cultural, and ideological identities, which are crucial for the legitimacy and stability of a regime. Regimes may promote certain linguistic markers or narratives to strengthen national unity and loyalty to the state. Also, language can be used to exclude or marginalise certain groups within society. Regimes may marginalise minority languages or dialects, suppress the expression of dissenting views, or stigmatise particular linguistic communities as a means of consolidating power and control. Importantly, language is a tool for controlling the flow of information within society. Regimes may manipulate language to distort facts, spread disinformation, or suppress alternative perspectives, thereby consolidating their control over the public discourse and limiting opposition. Language reinforces the dominant ideology of a regime by prescribing acceptable ways of thinking, speaking, and behaving. Regimes may impose linguistic norms and ideologies through educational curricula, media regulations, and legal frameworks to ensure compliance with the ruling ideology.

Foucault, renowned for his groundbreaking exploration of the inseparable bond between discourse and power, presents a novel approach to understanding language and its functions. In *The Will to Truth*, Foucault posits language as “the means by which an individual is initiated into society” (179). However, individuals seldom enjoy unrestricted freedom of expression, as social, cultural, and familial constraints perpetually restrict their ability to articulate genuine thoughts and intentions. As Foucault asserts, the use of language is not arbitrary; rather, it operates within a carefully supervised framework. Despite the boundless nature of language, individuals must exercise caution in their speech, mindful of the consequences of their words.

Throughout Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the protagonist, June/Offred, grapples with the limitations of language in conveying her experiences and emotions. She navigates the intricate power dynamics inherent in language, particularly how the regime manipulates it to subjugate and oppress its citizens. June/Offred laments the loss of language as a tool for genuine communication and self-expression, highlighting the regime’s efforts to isolate and silence dissent.

The narrative tracks the trajectory of Offred, previously identified as June, who once led a conventional life in America until political upheavals thrust her, along with numerous female characters, into the oppressive regime of Gilead. Initially, the regime deploys language as a tool to indoctrinate individuals into its ideology while cultivating the illusion of freedom of choice. However, figures such as Serena Joy, initially aligned with the regime, eventually find themselves silenced and divested of agency; Serena Joy's orations revolved around the sanctity of the domestic sphere and advocated for women to remain within the confines of their homes. Notably, Serena Joy herself did not adhere to this principle; instead, she delivered speeches, casting her own failure to abide by societal norms as a sacrifice for the collective good (Atwood HT 55). However, she has ceased delivering speeches altogether. Her voice has been rendered mute. Although she remains secluded within her residence, it appears to be an uncomfortable environment for her. The irony is palpable; having been held accountable for her rhetoric, she is now presumably grappling with the consequences of her words (Atwood HT 56). Unable to articulate their emotions and suffering, they become victims of the regime's stifling control, mirroring the plight of other women in society.

According to Linda Thomas in her work *Language, Society, and Power*, language functions as a cognitive framework that significantly influences our thought processes, making it challenging to conceptualise ideas beyond its established boundaries (39). Consequently, language has the capacity to construct ideologies that shape individuals' cognitive landscapes, thereby restricting their ability to think beyond predetermined norms (39). This phenomenon underscores the pervasive influence of language as an agent of power relations, wherein everything a person learns, believes, and thinks is mediated by linguistic constructs. For instance, in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, the greetings exchanged among Handmaids serve as a reflection of the religious and hierarchical structure prevalent in the society of Gilead. The Handmaids have specific phrases they use when greeting each other, which are mandated by the regime. Some of the common greetings include:

1. “Blessed be the fruit”: This is a common greeting among the Handmaids, and the response is “May the Lord open.” It emphasises fertility and the importance of procreation in Gilead’s society.

2. “Under his eye”: This phrase is used as a reminder of constant surveillance and the presence of God or the regime’s authority watching over everyone’s actions. (Atwood, HT)

These greetings are not just polite exchanges but are deeply ingrained in the culture and serve as reminders of the Handmaids’ roles and the oppressive nature of the society in which they live. They reinforce the religious and patriarchal structure of Gilead while also functioning as a form of control and surveillance. They are stipulated systemic exchanges which are designed to enforce a particular ideology and belief. It is aimed to change the thoughts and feelings, the idea of duty and the shape of the dreams of all the handmaids since they impact the speaker emotionally and psychologically.

Society and its cultural constructs intricately shape the production and dissemination of discourse, ensnaring individuals within the intricate web of language since its inception. Despite affording them the means to articulate thoughts and ostensibly exercise freedom of speech, people remain cognisant of the constraints enveloping their verbal expressions, even in mundane interactions. *The Handmaid’s Tale* starkly portrays this reality, where characters, regardless of status or authority, find themselves shackled by the suffocating grip of Gilead’s power system. For example, the regime endeavours to stifle authentic emotions, compelling individuals like Serena Joy and the Commander to suppress genuine sentiments and confront their solitude and communication barriers.

Within the confines of their relationship, Fred and Serena Joy’s communication mirrors the broader dynamics of Gilead’s oppressive regime. Their exchanges adhere to formal and ritualistic conventions dictated by societal norms, fostering an environment devoid of emotional depth and intimacy. Gilead’s stranglehold on language limits the couple’s ability to engage in meaningful dialogue, relegating their interactions to superficial exchanges characterised by guardedness and manipulation.

Fred's position of authority exacerbates the power imbalance within their relationship, further impeding genuine communication. Despite Serena Joy's influential role in Gilead's inception, she finds herself ensnared in the same web of control she helped create, her voice muffled by the regime's dictates. Both Fred and Serena Joy resort to manipulative language to assert dominance and conceal their true intentions, eroding any semblance of intimacy and connection.

In this dystopian reality, the erosion of genuine communication and emotional expression underscores the insidious nature of Gilead's power structure. Language, once a tool for connection and understanding, becomes a weapon of coercion and control, leaving Fred and Serena Joy's relationship hollow and strained amidst the oppressive shadows of Gilead.

Mind-Boggling and Tongue-Tying Machinery of the Gileadian Regime: The Aunts

Discourse, as a product of language, defies notions of absolute autonomy, existing not as an autonomous structure but as a dynamic construct contingent upon temporal and spatial contexts (Fairclough vi). Social, cultural, political, and individual factors intricately shape discourse, imposing their respective limitations and constraints. Language, as the medium of discourse, remains inextricably linked to the structures of power, perpetually subject to acts of limitation, censorship, prohibition, and distortion.

Despite these constraints, discourse garners widespread admiration and veneration for its role in facilitating communication (Sheridan 126). However, beneath its surface allure lies a covert capability to impose prohibitions and limitations on individuals, often overlooked by the masses. In some instances, speakers may inadvertently echo the beliefs or opinions of others, blurring the lines between intentional representation and inadvertent parroting.

For example, the regime frequently quotes and distorts scripture to support its oppressive policies and practices. For example, biblical verses are twisted to justify the subjugation of women and the establishment of the Handmaid system, "And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the

fruit of the womb?” This is a biblical reference twisted to justify the Handmaid system, taken from Genesis 30:1-2. In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, there are instances where some Handmaids appear to internalise or at least partially accept the teachings and ideology propagated by the Aunts, who serve as enforcers and educators within the regime of Gilead. While the narrative doesn’t delve deeply into individual Handmaids’ beliefs, there are suggestions that some may come to accept or rationalise their roles within the society. One example is Janine, a Handmaid who exhibits a degree of acceptance and even enthusiasm for the teachings of the Aunts and the regime of Gilead. Despite her traumatic experiences and the brutality of the system, Janine often expresses fervent belief in the righteousness of Gilead’s principles, especially regarding the importance of bearing children and fulfilling her role as a Handmaid. We find her believing in the manipulated scriptures and their teachings.

Repetition and memorisation form the bedrock of Gilead’s ideological machinery. Aunts, sanctioned enforcers, indoctrinate Handmaids meticulously, cementing the regime’s ideology through relentless repetition. Deviating Handmaids face ostracisation and their identities desiccated, while conformity yields a sense of fulfilment within Gilead’s framework. Aunt Lydia’s repetitive teachings stress endurance’s purpose, albeit cautioning against inevitable failures amidst harsh conditions.

The repetition of religious greetings reinforces Gilead’s divine mandate, affirming its pervasive control. Phrases like “Blessed be the fruit” symbolise obedience to Gilead’s religious doctrine. In Gilead, freedom is redefined to align with the regime’s dictates, permeating societal consciousness through repetitive cues. These linguistic cues serve not only to bolster the regime’s authority but also to delineate individuals’ purpose and constraints within this oppressive society.

The Handmaid’s Tale serves as a poignant illustration of how ideology operates through discourse, wielding language as its most powerful instrument. Through its nuanced exploration of discourse and power dynamics, the novel prompts readers to scrutinise the pervasive influence of ideology within society and the subtle ways in which language can be utilised to perpetuate hegemonic agendas.

For instance, the regime in Gilead strategically employs language in propaganda and public announcements to assert control and manipulate public opinion. Through speeches and official statements, Gilead's leaders reinforce a narrative of moral righteousness and advocate for strict social order to maintain stability and security. Aunt Lydia's quote, "Better never means better for everyone... It always means worse, for some," underscores the regime's rhetoric of sacrificing individual freedoms for the collective good (Atwood HT 366).

Another example of ideological manipulation is evident in the Aunts' efforts to normalise women's invisibility in society. Aunt Lydia emphasises the importance of being "impenetrable," asserting that visibility invites vulnerability and exploitation. This indoctrination is so deeply ingrained that even Offred, who once enjoyed freedom and visibility, succumbs to the ideological discourse of Gilead and refrains from being photographed by tourists (Atwood HT 39).

Offred's response to the tourist group reflects her internalisation of Gilead's ideology. She anticipates the interpreter's explanation to the group, recognising that the act of being photographed without consent is perceived as a violation of women's customs in Gilead. Despite her prior freedom and visibility, Offred's adherence to Gilead's ideological doctrine illustrates the profound impact of discourse on individual consciousness and behaviour (Atwood, HT). Through these examples, *The Handmaid's Tale* highlights the power dynamics inherent in ideological discourse and underscores the significance of critically examining the ways in which language shapes societal norms and individual agency.

Language as Ideological Arsenal: Discursive Power Dynamics in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* serves as a poignant reflection of Foucault's insights into the indignity of speaking for others and the imperative of allowing individuals to articulate their own experiences (Foucault 111-2). Within the narrative, language emerges as a primary tool for the imposition of ideology upon characters, with metalinguistic play critiquing institutional linguistic practices that promote ideological agendas (Howells 123).

Ideology and language are intricately interlinked and serve as manufacturers of power within societal structures. People often engage in linguistic interactions without fully recognising the influence of ideology that has become ingrained in their preferred modes of communication. A prime example of this phenomenon can be observed in the dystopian society of Gilead, where conventions and doctrines permeate individual minds, leading them to forget or deliberately overlook prior societal norms.

In the Red Center, the relationship between the Aunts and the Handmaids epitomises the embodiment of ‘common sense’ assumptions, reinforcing the notion of hierarchy as a natural and unquestionable process. The Aunts, entrusted with the responsibility to teach and enforce the established doctrine, wield significant authority over the Handmaids. They possess knowledge of salvation, holy life, and the prescribed roles for women within the system, which they impart linguistically to the Handmaids. Language plays a pivotal role in this dynamic, serving as the primary medium through which ideologies are transmitted and legitimised. Ideologies are deeply intertwined with language, as language usage constitutes the most common form of social behaviour. Through language, ideologies manifest and assert themselves, shaping perceptions, behaviours, and power dynamics within society.

The presence of language provides a fertile ground for ideologies to assert their influence, acting as a mechanism for legitimising existing social relations and power differentials. Consequently, language becomes a crucial tool in the perpetuation and consolidation of power structures within society, with ideologies serving as guiding principles that uphold and reinforce these structures. In essence, the interplay between ideology and language underscores their symbiotic relationship as manufacturers of power within societal frameworks. Language serves as the conduit through which ideologies are disseminated and internalised, ultimately shaping the distribution and exercise of power within society.

Althusser’s concept of the unconsciousness of ideology underscores its insidious nature, with Aunt Lydia embodying the agent of ideology in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Discursive strategies

disseminate ideology, permeating the consciousness of subjects unconsciously. The dominant ideology of the ruling class operates subtly, concealing authority behind discourse and limiting linguistic freedom, as demonstrated through Offred's trepidation in daily discourse.

Fairclough's theories on discourse power and its origins address questions regarding linguistic authority and criteria. Althusser's notion of ideology constitutes the world of individual experience, assigning predetermined roles within society. Language serves as both a tool of oppression and resistance, reflecting the intricate interplay between discourse, power, and social constructs within Gilead's dystopian society.

The ideology operates subtly, concealing authority behind discourse, as its influence primarily targets the mind, its effects not readily visible in the physical realm. Thus, those addressed under its sway often believe they possess linguistic freedom. Handmaids, gripped by ideologies, fear deviating from the power's will. Even if Offred recognises the law's inequities, she dares not defy it. Wittig posits language's power to subordinate and exclude women, advocating for radical linguistic transformation (Butler 35). Offred's trepidation in daily discourse underscores language's potential costs, limiting her freedom of expression. If language indeed dictates "social stratification" (Jones 143), questions arise regarding who wields linguistic authority and by what criteria (Jones 147). Fairclough's theories on discourse power and its origins address this inquiry.

Throughout *The Handmaid's Tale*, language serves as both a tool of oppression and a means of resistance, reflecting the intricate interplay between discourse, power, and social constructs within Gilead's dystopian society. The interplay between discourse and power is multifaceted and dynamic, defying easy categorisation. According to Foucault, this relationship is neither predictable nor centralised; rather, it manifests in myriad instances where double meanings abound, resisting straightforward interpretation (Foucault 168). The discourse/power relationship exists as a fluid and ever-evolving entity, wherein both elements serve as both objects and instruments of each other, advancing their respective agendas.

What renders this relationship particularly intriguing is its inherent complexity and ambiguity. Despite attempts to decipher its intricacies, the discourse/power dynamic often eludes clear interpretation, shrouded in layers of meaning and nuance. Yet, efforts to unravel this intricate interplay remain essential for understanding the mechanisms through which power operates and exerts its influence over language and discourse.

Language emerges as the pivotal tool for challenging and deconstructing the coherence of social stigma in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Characters within the novel endeavour to harness the power of words in their quest to defy the prevailing ideology. Language, however, is inherently entangled within power structures and serves as a product of ideologies. It carries the weight of shaping thought frameworks and constraining linguistic expression within predetermined boundaries. While language manufactures and perpetuates ideology, it also harbours the potential for resistance and subversion.

The Illusion of Freedom

Language emerges as the locus of power, serving as a battleground for the enactment of objectives and the imposition of linguistic norms that often measure individuals. Through language, individuals articulate the effects of power and reference specific discourses that facilitate the implementation of the power system's policies (Sheridan 138). Language, in this context, extends and reinforces the effects of power, intertwining the two in a complex relationship where discourse both shapes and is shaped by power dynamics (Sheridan 138, 168). For example, Gilead censors language and controls communication channels to suppress dissent and enforce conformity. In the dystopian society depicted in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, books and various literary works are either prohibited or subjected to modifications to conform to the ideological framework of the regime. This censorship and manipulation of literature serve to constrain the diversity of perspectives and modes of expression. As articulated by Aunt Lydia within the narrative, the new regime advocates a distinct notion of freedom, characterised by "freedom from" rather than "freedom to" (Atwood HT). This explanation underscores the regime's strategy of curtailing individual liberties under the guise of promoting societal order and security.

In the society depicted in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Handmaids are compelled to project an air of unapproachability and are explicitly prohibited from engaging in verbal communication with men. Within Gilead's societal framework, women are expected to maintain a demeanour of speechlessness and silence, perceived as vulnerable to temptation and cautioned to exercise vigilance. Despite these regulations, Nick violates the established rule by initiating verbal interaction with Offred, prompting her to respond non-verbally to avoid violating societal norms: Upon Nick's initiation of conversation, Offred refrains from verbal response and instead nods in acknowledgement, adhering to the prohibition against verbal communication with men. Aunt Lydia's admonition regarding male attempts at communication serves as a reminder of the inherent weakness of human flesh, likening it to grass. She emphasises that such behaviour is beyond the control of men, as it is ingrained by divine design. However, Aunt Lydia reassures Offred of her distinctiveness, affirming her agency to establish and enforce boundaries in interactions with men. She assures Offred that her vigilance and adherence to societal expectations will be acknowledged and appreciated in due course (HT 55).

Aunt Lydia reinforces the ideology of female silence, attributing men's attempts at communication to inherent weakness. She reminds Offred of her supposed divine distinction, urging her to establish boundaries and adhere to societal expectations. The implication is clear: compliance will be rewarded.

Verbal discourse serves as a crucial mechanism for defining individual identities within the oppressive confines of Gilead. Ideological norms permeate every aspect of social interaction, with the Red Center and the Aunts dictating behavioural codes and shaping the roles of Handmaids. Power manifests through linguistic manipulation, as the handlers exploit language to instil self-doubt and erode personal beliefs.

In this environment, Handmaids become mere puppets, concealing their true selves or even losing sight of their reality altogether. Language, in conjunction with ideology, dictates behaviour and appearance, birthing a new, contrived self while obliterating the authenticity of the old. The

dominant ideology suppresses dissenting voices, casting them as heretical deviations. Offred's reflection underscores the swift and insidious nature of this transformation, where minds are easily swayed. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the interplay of language and ideology fundamentally alters social dynamics, subjugating individuals and reshaping their identities in service of the regime's oppressive agenda.

The notion of freedom in *The Handmaid's Tale* is not inherent to individual agency but rather constructed and defined by language and ideology. Through repetition and indoctrination, individuals come to accept the definitions of freedom imposed upon them by the ruling regime. Althusser's perspective elucidates how ideology operates unconsciously to shape individuals' perceptions of freedom. The lived experience of freedom, as perceived by individuals, is intricately intertwined with ideology, blurring the line between consciousness and ideological influence.

Throughout the novel, Offred's reflections on choice and agency underscore the illusion of freedom within Gilead's totalitarian regime. Despite the appearance of choice, Offred recognises the predetermined paths dictated by societal norms and expectations. Whether it's the seemingly inconsequential decision of which route to take or the recognition of her body's subjugation to male whims, Offred confronts the constraints imposed upon her autonomy by the ruling class's ideology. The irony of freedom becomes apparent as Offred grapples with its limitations. Even on designated days of freedom, there are implicit boundaries and restrictions that constrain individual actions. Offred's analogy of a rat in a maze encapsulates the paradox of freedom within Gilead: the illusion of choice is maintained as long as individuals remain within the confines of the regime's oppressive structure.

In essence, *The Handmaid's Tale* highlights the intricate interplay between language, ideology, and the concept of freedom. Through repetition and indoctrination, individuals internalise the ideologies of the ruling class, blurring the line between agency and coercion. Offred's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of freedom within oppressive systems and the pervasive influence of ideology on individual consciousness.

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Animal Studies: A Post-Modern Analysis of Animals in Literature and Popular Culture

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Abstract: Nonviolence or *ahimsa* on our plates is the ethical principle of responsible eating that holds the key to unleashing a green revolution, one that's humanity's only chance, probably its last—at survival. It has its Sanskrit roots in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism in India, as well as in Taoism in the Far East, with its Ying and Yang principle of harmonious coexistence. It finds resonance today in the philosophical belief of Ethical Veganism.

Going by the premise that Literature and Philosophy complement each other, where literature provides the question without the answer and philosophy the answer without the question, it is possible to trace a correlation between the portrayal of animals on the page and their treatment in the cage.

Literary classics, fables, and folk tales portrayed animals as adorable specimens of loyalty, compassion, selflessness, and innocence. Conversely, Disney's goats were marinated into *rogan gosh*, or Ellen De Generes-inspired *Dory* ended up filleted, grilled, and smoked.

However, the conscience of the world was shaken when the animal narratives in literature changed, and animal farming was exposed through insightful commentaries fraught with cruelty and brutality. Two seminal works that changed the nature of the discourse—Mark Hawthorne's *Bleating Hearts* (2013) and Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* (1992); will be spotlighted. Nevertheless, Animal Activism is not restricted to literature alone. It echoes in movies, discourses, and popular culture. Finally, this human-animal equation in Literary Animal studies will be examined within the framework of Posthumanism.

Keywords: Animal Studies, Ethical Veganism, Popular culture, Post Humanism

Introduction

Traditional literature, from the classics to mythology, from fables to fiction, is replete with tales and testimonies of loyalty, compassion, selflessness, innocence, and pure love portrayed by and through animals. We love to read about these endearing creatures. We are bewitched by their charms, in awe of their adventures and yet will hesitate not to don that sable collared jacket, with the subtle whiff of musk emanating, and head off for the fine promise of haute cuisine with caviar and foie gras on offer.

Dominant man and his greed have distorted power dynamics in the natural world of evolution. Man, considered its finest specimen, is thus both empowered and emaciated in the process. He is empowered to exploit animals for food, hunt for sport, mutilate them for medicine, breed them in captivity, keep them as working companions... In the process, he has also emaciated himself through the possibility of multi-species extinction and its cascading effect on our planet.

A compelling reason for this is human exceptionalism. In a paper titled 'Political Ecology, Development, and Human Exceptionalism,' the researcher writes about preferential treatment provided to humans as they "deserve a standard of care that exceeds that of other beings, and that the instrumental use of other beings is acceptable in the pursuit of human wellbeing. Of course, this human circle of care need not necessarily involve causing harm to other beings, but neither does it preclude harming other creatures in the service of human excellence and wellbeing" (Srinivas 125).

Nevertheless, the narrative in literature is evolving, and this paper spotlights two seminal works that changed the nature of the discourse-Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* (1992) and Mark Hawthorne's *Bleating Hearts* (2013). In the former, an anthropomorphic work, animals speak up, speak out and speak back. The latter is a hard-hitting testimony of man's abject cruelty towards animals. These twists in the tale place the beasts in positions of power and prestige and permit them to speak back in Literature and Popular Culture. This has resulted in an eclectic multiverse where animals have found their voice and are rewriting their own stories. This paper traces their resilient journey in the portrayal of animals in literature and popular culture.

Mythology and Animals

Argos and Dharma are two enduring examples from ancient literary texts that find unique ways of expression. In Homer's epic poem *Odyssey*, we have Argos, a magnificent dog, a formidable hunter, and a symbol of loyalty who waited for 20 years looking after Odysseus's family in his absence. On his master's return to Ithaca disguised as a beggar, the dog is by then "lying neglected on a pile of cow manure, infested with fleas, old and very tired." However, he manages to "drop his ears and wag his tail," and as Odysseus, his master, enters his hall, Argos dies (Orienna-Poetry).

Similar tales can be found at the beginning and end of the revered Sanskrit epic, the *Mahabharata*, as Abhishek Joshi wrote in Dogwithblog. The opening scene of the *Mahabharata* involves an audacious questioning by the mother of a dog who complains about the unjust treatment meted out to her son by King Janmejaya and his brothers. This serves "as a powerful reminder that every being has the right to protest against injustice, regardless of their status" (Joshi, dogwithblog.in).

The Indian epic also ends with another tale of justice involving a dog. It highlights the Pandava's pilgrimage to their final resting place after renouncing their kingdom. Yudhisthira, followed by Bheema, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva, Draupadi and a dog, make this arduous journey to Meru hill, and only Yudhisthira and his faithful dog prevail till the end. When brave Yudhisthira was invited to "ascend to heaven" minus the gaunt Indian pariah, he is said to have remarked thus to Indra, "The dog was my faithful companion, and I cannot abandon it... if it does not deserve to go to heaven, then neither do I." Eventually, Dharma, the loyal dog, and his master ascend into heaven (Joshi, dogwithblog.in).

Greco-Roman philosophers have different perspectives, often varying from the ancient epics. Plato made a case for no meat based on a desire for peace and a cry to stay away from an excessive lifestyle. In the writings of Pythagoras, we can also trace a vegetarian legacy based on the belief that animals, just like humans, have souls. However, meat-eating was widely prevalent, with Aristotle justifying it by ranking 'irrational' animals far below the Great Chain of Being.

In Rome, Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, and Plutarch advocated the delights of vegetarianism, yet as psychologist Richard Ryder put it, “meat eating was a status symbol, and animals were often cooked alive; pigs were skewered alive on hot spits to improve the taste.” (Animal Revolution, 2000)

Wendy Doniger, a Distinguished Service Professor at the History of Religions at the University of Chicago, states that in India, too, meat was consumed: “Vedic Indians generally ate the castrated steers, but they would eat the female of the species during rituals or when welcoming a guest or a person of high status” (2017). It was in the fourth century B.C. that the practice of vegetarianism spread among the Buddhists, Jains, and Hindus.

Animal Activism

Philosophers and their philosophies adorned books in libraries, but in the slaughterhouses, it was a different reality, where animals were reduced to beings with no personhood – nameless, voiceless units of production. The cause is Man’s flawed understanding, which places the supposedly autonomous rational humans at the centre of everything. A concept that is deeply rooted in Humanism and Anthropocentrism.

Animal Activists attempt to bring forth a realisation that we humans are but one strand in the web of life. They seek to restore Human-Animal power equations and advocate for an interconnected, responsible living—where all species live, thrive, and coexist harmoniously in the cosmos. The members of the Green Brigade consist of a group of opinionated, optimistic, thinking, and caring people with a heroic objective to save the world by changing the way the world thinks, writes, eats, and lives. Today, they can be found everywhere—on social media, at concerts, on TV, on TED, and in the fields of cinema, music, and literature.

This is also the crux of what activist-author Daniel Quinn delineates in his intriguing novel *Ishmael* (1992). This “thoughtful, fearlessly low-key novel” (The New York Book Review) is, in effect, a work of one with “an earnest desire to save the world.” (Ishmael 1).

Gone are the days when humans alone had agency and control. In this work, there is a switch—the gorilla talks, soothes, teases, amuses, and most importantly, he teaches man: “My subject

is: *captivity*” (Ishmael 1992, 27). He follows a curriculum, maintains a lesson plan, knows when to stop his class, provides homework if required and promotes critical thinking through his barrage of insightful questions to his human pupil. The student, who doubles up as the nameless narrator, has much ground to cover, for it is a known fact that we humans “have an impoverished understanding of the animals we share the planet with” (Bleating Hearts 18).

The telepathic lessons unfold as per the teacher’s roadmap, and the gorilla, who speaks with his eyes, begins imparting his wisdom—starting with an intriguing riddle or koan (Ishmael 9): “With Man gone, / Will there / Be Hope / For Gorilla?” He introduces the discerning student to “the voice of Mother Culture humming in the background, telling her story repeatedly ...” (Ishmael 39). He then divides people as civilised and primitive but uses the neutral labels of “Takers and Leavers” (Ishmael 40).

Animal Studies can trace occasional spokespersons in literature when writers hailed nature and advocated for humanely understanding all living forms. Take, for instance, an early vegetarian celebrity, Frankenstein, who advocated for a vegetarian diet: “My food is not that of man. I do not destroy the Lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment” (Frankenstein 121). In *Sensitive Plant*, P.B. Shelly argued that “all killing insects and gnawing worms/And things of obscene and unlovely forms,” have a natural role in the ecosystem, which requires understanding rather than destruction (Sensitive Plant 155-156).

Quinn’s depiction of a half-ton silver-back thinking gorilla involved in a Socratic conversation with man certainly added a new dimension of understanding. The animals speak back, toppling existing power equations and settling for a natural rhythm that augurs well for our World, our planet.

Page-Cage Connection

When the animals on the page were harmless, the more significant the chance they were harmed. The same with the reel-real equation. For instance, cinematic tales of Tintin’s optimistic sidekick Snowy, the beloved horse Misty of Chincoteague, or Wilbur, the adorable piglet who thrives on slop, have captured our screens and imagination as epitomes of morality, compassion, integrity,

and unconditional love. It is the same with endearing cinematic depictions of endangered replicas of penguins (*Toy Story*), deer (*Bambi*), and dragons (*How to Train a Dragon*).

Their reality, too, was far removed from any such romanticised filmic depictions. In the book *Eating Animals*, while delving into the animal-to-edible transformations, Jonathan Safran Foer documents the business model: “Factory farmers calculate how close to death they can keep the animals without killing them... How quickly can they be made to grow, how tightly can they be packed, how much or little can they eat, how sick can they get without dying” (Bleating Hearts 23).

What comes to mind immediately is chickens and the way they are treated. Hawthorne states that while in the 1950s, chickens were slaughtered after 84 days, “today’s birds are slaughtered at about 40 days with a live weight of approximately 2 kilograms. Their bodies are abnormally large, but they are still babies who chirp as they head to slaughter” (Bleating Hearts 26).

Hawthorne is fearless in travelling to the darkest recesses of animal suffering and showing it as it is. “I expected death,” he wrote as he unearthed a repugnant reality, “I did not anticipate extreme disregard for sentient life.” Indeed, caged animals were depicted differently on pages and on the big screen. They were reduced to “biological automata” (Coetzee 34) with no personhood, insignificant beings - nameless, voiceless. No wonder we are amid the sixth mass extinction, with 150 species going extinct daily.

Supremacy of Man

In a telepathic communication with Ishmael (the non-human gorilla teacher), the narrator (a human being) is asked to narrate the myth about creation. During the ensuing discussion, astonishing facts emerge: “For many millions of centuries, the life of the world was merely microorganisms floating helplessly in a chemical broth.” They were followed by vertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and finally man. The narrator adds, “When man finally arrived, creation came to an end, because its objective had been reached. There was nothing left to create.” Furthermore, herein lies the fatal fallacy. Quinn questions the logic of the creation process ending with man’s appearance. Ishmael clarifies philosophically: “the universe went on as before; the planet went on as before. Man’s

appearance caused no more stir than the appearance of jellyfish. It follows that man is not the pinnacle or the climax of the whole cosmic drama of creation” (Ishmael 60).

Live and Let Live

Daniel Quinn’s *Ishmael* won him the prestigious Turner Tomorrow Fellowship, awarded to literary works that offer solutions, and he also won “a legion of followers or ishmaelists,” (Romero 306), all of whom shared his “earnest desire to save the world.” (Ishmael 1992, 1) Students looking out for teachers were captivated by Quinn’s unique perspective and his lessons, especially on being Leavers, not Takers, Dwellers, or Exploiters.

The premise of the Taker story is that the world belongs to man, while the premise of the Leaver story is that man belongs to the world. The author deep dives into the essentials of this classification. Leavers date back to 3,000,000 B.C. They follow a peacekeeping law that promotes order and diversity. This law led to evolution, to the emergence of the club-finned fish, of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals right up to *Homo sapiens sapiens*—all of whom followed the law. The problem arose when “one branch of the family of *Homo sapiens sapiens* said, ‘Man is exempt from this law.’”

This resulted in Takers which date back to 8000 BC. They are believed to “cling with fanatical tenacity to the specialness of man.” It is not any surprise that these advanced people are prone to crime, mental illness, suicide, and drug addictions, for they have stopped evolving and growing. The Leavers are the Noble Savages, the indigenous people whose close connect with Mother Nature ensures their wonderful mental health” (Ishmael 1992, 155). The land they live on in the present and leave on to the future is pristine. They are the Leavers, the Dwellers who are in sync with the rumbling and rhythm of Mother Earth.

Post Humanism

As natural disasters increase in frequency and intensity, the connections between ourselves, our food choices, and our environment become more apparent. It also becomes imperative to deconstruct Mother Culture’s story of humanity, with Quinn’s “manifesto for a more sustainable form of living

that he calls New Tribalism” as our guide. To deconstruct, we turn to Derrida and his relation to the Other, as he “extends the proposition of unconditional hospitality towards the Other.” (Derrida 2008) Deconstruction is about disassociation, multiplicity, heterogeneity, and difference in relation to the Other.

Philosopher Donna Haraway foresees a post-human future, “when species meet,” and when humans finally make room for non-human things within the scope of our moral concern. “Post human ethics, therefore, encourage us to think outside of the interests of our own species, be less narcissistic in our conception of the world, and to take the interests and rights of things that are different to us seriously.” (Haraway 2018) Post Humanism departs from the philosophy of the Humanism, involves a re-thinking of what it means to be human, bids to stop human privileging and advocates for a more inclusive approach for all living beings.

Popular Culture

Literature has found an ally in Popular culture, and together, they are on a mission to stir a restive people living on the brink of annihilation. Kids today have been weaned on TV shows that simulate the real-life phenomenon of metamorphosis, or young music enthusiasts who have their famous singers vent their anxiety over Climate Change. Take, for instance, select performances of Taylor Swift (Wildest Dreams), SZA (Good Days) and Billie Eilish (Lost Cause) at the Global Citizen Festival 2022. Mention must also be made of Ted speaker-activist Melanie Joy, who is noted for her work in Carnism (which is the opposite of vegetarianism), especially her interesting discourse titled, “Why we love dogs, eat pigs and wear cows?”

Another earlier influence in the 1990s was the Seattle-based grunge band Pearl Jam. The songwriter Eddie Vedder admitted that the book *Ishmael* has significantly influenced the album Yield (1998) and one song, ‘Do the Evolution’ in particular. The lyrics presented below make it “a powerful statement about humanity’s impact on the planet” (McKenna, 2023).

Do the Evolution

Woo...

I'm ahead, I'm a man
I'm the first mammal to wear pants, yeah
I'm at peace with my lust
I can kill 'cause in god I trust, yeah
It's evolution, baby, yeah
I'm at peace, I'm the man
Buying stocks on the day of the crash, yeah
On the loose, I'm a truck
All the rolling hills, I'll flatten 'em out, yeah
It's herd behavior, uh huh
It's evolution, baby, good
Admire me, admire my home
Admire my son, he's my clone
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
This land is mine, this land is free
I'll do what I want but irresponsibly
It's evolution, baby, uh
I'm a thief, I'm a liar
There's my church, I sing in the choir
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Admire me, admire my home
Admire my son, admire my clones
'Cause we know, appetite for a nightly feast
Those ignorant Indians got nothin' on me
Nothin', why?

Because it's evolution, baby
I am ahead, I am advanced
I am the first mammal to make plans, yeah
I crawled the earth, but now I'm higher
2010, watch it go to fire
It's evolution, baby*, ugh
It's evolution, baby
Ah, do the evolution
Come on, come on, come on

(*Italics bold used for emphasis)

The powerful lyrics make this upbeat rock number an anthem, for all who care about our planet's future. Pearl Jam, an alternative rock group, is known for tackling issues like climate change, income inequality, political polarisation, and man's dominance at the expense of nature. Vedder, the songwriter and Stone Gossard, the lead, rhythm, and bass guitarist, use emotion and urgency to drive home their vision, which is echoed in the accompanying music video. The video, directed by comic book artist Todd McFarlane, begins with an ape-like figure evolving into a human being, wearing a suit and a tie, and eventually becoming a skeletal figure wearing a crown and existing in a bleak world. "The imagery," writes McKenna, "is meant to represent the de-evolution of humanity." The group's commitment is ongoing. For instance, Pearl Jam's latest music video, 'Retrograde' (2022), featured none other than Greta Thunberg, Sweden's youth environmental icon.

Conclusion

Today, popular culture, specifically the music industry, proactively educates the youth about animal rights, climate change and safeguarding the environment. Hence, they are targeting a younger demographic. With performers like Billie Eilish, Aurora, Choke, Lil Dicky, and Acerbic Wit lending their voices and might towards this cause, it is the teen who is targeted, and that augurs well for our tomorrow.

However, the biggest gain in this crusade to save the planet is our changing food habits. Today, vegetarianism and veganism are catching on for all the right reasons. According to French author Alphonse de Lamartine: “One does not have one heart for Man and one for animals. One has a heart or one does not.” Veganism is about compassion and responsible eating choices that impact our mind, body, and world (Lamartine 2023). With around 40% of Indians being vegetarian and only 10% of our population vegan, it could be argued that this lifestyle favours the developed nations who can afford pricey avocados and sourdough toast. Let us set aside this elitist micro view, especially since this paper is not advocating for veganism.

Nevertheless, when an estimated 88 million worldwide have chosen veganism as a way of life, it helps reduce our carbon footprint from food. Livestock’s Long Shadow, in a study, stated that the environmental impact of reduced livestock production would result in a drastic drop in methane from belching/farting cows; lowered gases released from animal manure; reduced oil burned while taking their carcasses to the marketplace; saving of electricity and gas needed to cool and cook meat; energy saved from ploughing and harvesting fields that grow crops that feed animals or water that meets their needs.

Therefore, adding responsible food choices with *ahimsa* on the plate, will prove to be a game changer. A holy trilogy of fiction, pop culture and food could work in tandem as a catalyst to save our planet from peril. We must heed Quinn’s plea to his students: “to teach a hundred... and inspire each of them to teach a hundred. That’s how it’s always done” (Ishmael 1992, 268).

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