THE WOUND AND THE WORD: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECT TRAUMA NARRATIVES

Thesis submitted to
The University of Calicut
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Declaration

I, Aparna Raveendran C., hereby declare that the thesis entitled **The Wound and the Word: An Analysis of Select Trauma Narratives** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bonafide research carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. Umer Thasneem, Assistant Professor, University of Calicut and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

Calicut

28.12.2022 **Aparna Raveendran C.**

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **The Wound and the Word: An Analysis of Select Trauma Narratives** submitted to the University of Calicut for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature is an original bona fide work of research carried out by Aparna Raveendran C. under my supervision and that it has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

Calicut
28.12.2022

Dr. Umer Thasneem
Research Supervisor

Dedication

To My Achan & Amma

For being the wind beneath my wings.

For Arjun

Without whom I would most certainly be lost.

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Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Twentieth century history was one punctuated with a series of cataclysmic events like the two World Wars, the Holocaust and the nuclear bombings. The whole world shivered to its marrows at the horrors of these tragic events. These mind shattering events found articulation in numerous works produced in the post-war years. The catastrophic war and its aftermath triggered a state of collective trauma in the survivors. When the symbolic orders within which people live and make sense of their lives are destroyed, it evokes panic responses. Cutting across the boundaries of time and space, works of art were created bereft of traditional convictions. The aesthetic and moral aporia of the world and the lack of paradigms to represent it compelled writers to develop new techniques and experiment novel ways of representation. Realizing the trouble in depicting the holocaust, post-modernist and surrealistic techniques were used to portray traumatic experience of the war. Responding to the Holocaust's crisis in representation, Art Spiegelman adopts the concept of 'comix'. According to him, it is the mixture of pictures and texts. He observes that comix can dismantle the conventional patterns of words in a page, enabling a formalistic approach to trauma. His graphic novels Maus I and II attempt to address history by portraying the past through the formal structure of the comic book page.

Trauma is often an event of loss. With loss, the subject encounters the absence of a desired object. As the victim can only approach other objects of desire through the lost object, she feels traumatically detached from it. The victim will eventually try to find other ways to compensate for the satisfaction provided by the lost object. The inability of the other objects of desire to replace the lost object leads to perpetual failure of the victim.

On witnessing an event of trauma, a person is overwhelmed with fear. She loses the ability to speak and finds it difficult to describe her experience in words. Without language, the mind registers the shocking event in the form of visual, auditory, olfactory, kinaesthetic and other terrifying emotions. As this kind of processing of the event is not adequate, they get deeply imprinted in the psyche perhaps more than the everyday memories. In the article “Trauma Theory Abbreviated”, Sandra L. Bloom explains the consequences of a traumatic event. According to her, problems arise as the memory of the events that happened during severe stress is not put into words. These events are thus not remembered the way how normal things are remembered. She states that the memories become “frozen in time” in many forms like images, body sensations like taste, smell, touch, pain and strong emotions. Upon discussing the concept of flashback, Bloom defines it as a disturbing re-experience of one of those memories of trauma which is not verbalized properly. Flashbacks occur mostly when people are depressed, frightened, aroused, tensed, or when stimulated by any connection with the traumatic event. During flashbacks, their minds get flooded with the images, emotions and physical sensations associated with the

traumatic event. But, these experiences never get articulated as arousal of fear has turned off the verbal memory system. Subsequently, a person has only the nonverbal memory system associated with a traumatic event.

Without words, the past experience of trauma becomes an ever present 'now'. One of the explicit characteristics a survivor exhibits after a trauma event is dissociation. There are various ways of dissociation of personality. It can range from fainting which shuts off the consciousness to remaining in a state of 'amnesia'. Another form of dissociation is emotional numbing. Unable to come out from the horrors of the past trauma, the victims stays emotionally detached from the people. They keep themselves alienated from everything which gives meaning to life.

Diverse modes of representation serve to explore the complex relationship between acting out and working through trauma. Some of the contemporary art and literature involve a sense of holding on to a trauma in a way that leads to an obsessive preoccupation with aporia, resisting the process of 'working through'. At the same time, a work of art can counteract the opacity of the traumatic event as it objectifies the suffering, structuring it outside as a 'thing'. The agony resulting from the very lack of its representation gets condensed to a lower intensity. Describing trauma and representation in her blog, Divya Sharma writes:

> Pain can be better imagined with the image of the weapon or wound. Here pain as a physical sensation is 'objectified' so that the thing that has caused the pain holds the power to heal the wound and reduce the pain.

> The weapon is treated like a sentient object so the haptic nature of having an object that can translate the vocabulary of pain. (“Representations of Trauma”)

While discussing traumatic realism and representation, Chris Shaw Hughes observes that drawing is a record of touch. The time an artist spends in drawing the image “creates what one could call a patina of that durational experience” (“Traumatic Realism” 6). He states that drawing is an act of remembrance whereby a person is drawn not only closer to the image but deeper into the physical, psychological and historical layers of the trauma itself. Through the archaeology of drawing, the repressed, lost or forgotten histories are regenerated as well as recuperated. Hughes remarks that he considers his drawing as a form of scratching and digging away at the surface in order to unearth the subject beneath, somewhat like sculpting from stone to find - as Michaelangelo suggested - the figure within” (“Traumatic Realism” 6).

One of the common and effective ways of coping up with trauma is through the process of writing. The victims write as a means to coordinate and make sense of their emotions. It is not in any way directed towards a set of readers. The victims writing on trauma makes the event more coherent and reduces the possibility of its repeated recalling to the mind. In the contemporary scenario, there is the practice of Narrative exposure Therapy which proves helpful for individuals with PTSD. In the essay “Trauma and Narrative”, Joshua Pederson addresses the connection between trauma and narrative. She states that

the relationship between the two can be dated back to the history of trauma itself. It is a widely acknowledged fact that stories articulated by the victims of the catastrophe, both individual and collective can have great therapeutic power to recover from trauma. Pederson observes that the same remedy was also the prime concern of "talking cure" developed by Freud and Breuer wherein the patients get healed on talking about the traumatic event. She traces the history of trauma and narrative and acknowledges Elie Wiesel who addressed the responsibility of a survivor. According to Wiesel, it is the prime responsibility of the survivor to narrate their own stories as well as the plight of the dead. Geoffrey Hartman also writes in favour of this survivor responsibility as he says literature can help us "read the wound of trauma" ("On Traumatic Knowledge" 1).

The representations of trauma seek an expression to articulate the unpresentable. According to Andrew Slade, this idiom can be found in "a reconstructed aesthetics of the sublime that emphasizes less the elements of the grand, the noble, the human, and instead focuses on terror and its limit, death: an aesthetics that renders the inhuman in the human". In this context, the aesthetics of the sublime originates in the event of death and constructs the fact of survival. Slade also states that "the presentation of sublime images constitutes the formative, symbolic work of that survival. In the crisis of forms that trauma inaugurates, the aesthetics of the sublime becomes the most appropriate means to reconfigure historical losses" ("Hiroshima" 175). While attempting to present the events of terror and death, the aesthetics of sublime attempt to preserve the terror without reproducing it. Upon reconstructing meaningful signs, the sublime

becomes a privileged field as it allows us to think about the present along with the memories of the abominable past.

Narratives of trauma do not work in relation to endings- it is the story of continuance. The end of the ordeal in fact does not mean the end of the story, but the beginning of it. Tracing the origin, evolution and climax of a trauma fiction provides a compelling insight into not only the workings of the beleaguered mind, but also the power of its resilience. While the trauma narrative is inherently bitter and terrifying, the trauma text works denying the hope that it seems to mistrust, elucidated by the very act of writing. In his article, "Deaths that Wound", Samuel Finegan opines that all autobiographical writing, even if not stimulated by a traumatic event, involves revisiting of the past. He further adds that this action of reconsidering the past mediates it by translating the uncoded experience into a semiotic system. This can help in rendering the past into a coherent whole. Traumatized individuals become potentially therapeutic on using these tools. (4)

The life of man on earth, as per the Christian doctrine is the result of a fall- the fall of man from the Garden of Eden. Human suffering has been a pervasive theme in literature. Violence and mental distress are the central issues in most of the literary and religious texts across cultures. In ancient epics and religious scriptures, we come across many stories of tragic loss and trauma. The medieval romances and folktales too are instinct with sighs and travails of star - crossed lovers and ill-fated adventurers. All great literature of the world in one

way or the other addresses the agony of loss and its dreadful consequences. The epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata have many episodes of loss, grief and death. In Mahabharata, the victim-voice of Gandhari on witnessing the ravages of the war echoes her piteous lamentations for the dead. To represent the veracity of her psychological trauma, the writer has pictorially described the scene – Gandhari holding the corpses of her sons feels extremely tormented and loses her sense of self. She even curses Lord Krishna as she believes that he could have avoided the Kurukshetra war with his divine powers. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* regarded as the greatest of Greek tragedies tells the story of Oedipus' trauma upon realizing that he has killed his father and married his mother. There is a clever interplay between irony and trauma in *Oedipus Rex.* The void Oedipus' trauma creates enables the irony to take up linguistic functions. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* presents Lady Macbeth with nocturnal dissociation and altered state of consciousness haunted by traumatic memories. She is traumatized by her guilt for her part in killing Duncan. The famous line uttered by Lady Macbeth: "Here's the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (50), exemplifies her olfactory hallucinations. Lady Macbeth's feeling of guilt, sleep disorders and her repetitive act of washing her hands are explicit symptoms of PTSD.

In modern times, due to the advent of machines and weapons capable of massive destruction, we have trauma at an unprecedented scale. Stories of Holocaust, the atomic bombings, 9/11 attacks and the Palestinian experiences form the staple of 20th century trauma fiction. Apart from works depicting

collective trauma, novels and autobiographies chronicling personal sorrows and tragic experiences have gained immense attention in recent years. Stories written by rape victims and survivors of airplane mishaps, shipwrecks and other fatal accidents fall into this category. The biographical accounts of people like Henri Cherriere (Papillon) and Axel Munthe, two iconic figures of the 20th century literature, that narrate several traumatic incidents, too share many features of trauma literature.

Along with the narratives of trauma, it is significant to know the concept of resilience. It is the protective factor in the individuals' response to the traumatic events which helps to develop therapeutic approaches in the field of trauma. The conflicting explanation of what resilience is and how it is expressed influence the steps taken to enhance resilience in traumatized individuals as well as those who are at the risk of experiencing trauma.

Over the years, trauma theory has been enriched by researches in Psychology, Sociology, Semiotics and Linguistics. The new model can be called the pluralistic model as it involves a plurality of theories and approaches. Shoshana Felman has stressed the link between trial and trauma in her book *Juridical Unconscious.* According to her, the link between the two terms came to fore as a result of three interrelated occurrences in twentieth century:

> (1) the discovery of psychoanalysis and, with it, the discovery of trauma as a new conceptual center, an essential dimension of human and historical experience and a new type of understanding of historical

> causality and of historic temporality; (2) the unprecedented number of disastrous events on a mass scale that wreaked havoc on the twentieth century and whose massively traumatic ravages were rendered possible by the development of weapons of mass destruction and technologies of death that allowed for unprecedented human assaults on the human body; (3) the unprecedented and repeated use of the instruments of law to cope with the traumatic legacies and the collective injuries left by these events. (Felman, 2)

In recent times, scientific studies on trauma have demonstrated various new perspectives in the genetics and epigenetics of PTSD. Through a genome wide analysis of blood samples, numerous genes associated with mood disorders, PTSD and suicidal thoughts have been identified like ESR1, an estragon receptor, DRD2, a dopamine receptor and DCC. With renewed attention these days on effects of trauma on humans, it is relevant to study various aspects of trauma and the ways of representing it. As “trauma” is something experienced by all at some point of time in our lives, readers can well identify themselves with the traumatized characters in the novels. Varying dimensions of trauma, the mechanisms of tackling personal traumas, and the diverse ways of its representation in literature offer stimulating possibilities for research.

This study traces the emergence and evolution of trauma theory and analyses some of the contemporary trauma narratives. It examines how trauma gets registered as a ‘non-experience’, destabilizing one’s sense of self. This study

also explores the narrative strategies employed in trauma fictions, tackling the crisis of its representation. At the point of extreme traumatization, the process of symbolization, mental representation and narrativization came to a halt. The event of trauma and its memory prevents interpersonal as well as intrapersonal communication. Defence mechanism to cope up with the non-cognition of the event is often adopted. This results in adopting techniques of re-enactments, re-experiences, meta narratives, and many other methodologies of countertransference. One of the major objectives of this study is to trace the various narrative strategies employed by the writers to represent the 'unrepresentable'. It sketches and records the evolution of trauma theory. Along with this, this study also aims to find out how trauma threatens one's sense of identity, making the victims incompetent to cope up with the reality. This thesis is an attempt to study how intense trauma results in a crisis of representation and how creative artists try to negotiate this crisis. It analyses the mechanisms employed by the characters in the select texts to cope up with trauma. The study also highlights the traumatic manifestations in select novels.

The research method employed in this dissertation is textual analysis. Two novels from the west and two from the east are selected as representative primary texts. It aims at analysing these works in the light of contemporary trauma theory. Close reading of the texts is employed in the analysis. Since trauma is a term very much associated with one's psyche, this thesis uses the framework of psychoanalytic theories on trauma. Medical theories on trauma are also incorporated to explore the selected trauma narratives.

This study is divided into seven chapters including introduction and conclusion. After the introductory chapter, the second chapter titled "Theorizing Trauma" traces the evolution of trauma studies. This chapter further discusses the contributions of Jean Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Joseph Breuer, Sigmund Freud, etc. Contemporary theories on trauma by Cathy Caruth, Van der Kolk, Henry Krystal are also evaluated. In addition, the chapter expounds the effects of trauma on memory, language and body of the victim. Furthermore, some of the ways to recover from trauma are also enlisted. As writings on trauma can counteract its verbal silencing, the chapter also foregrounds the need to narrativize trauma as a means to cope up with it.

The third chapter is titled "Presenting the Unpresentable: Narrative Strategies in Jonathan Safran Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close".* Foer's novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is closely studied in the light of various narrative and contemporary theories of trauma. The chapter also demonstrates the various narrative strategies employed by the writer in narrativizing trauma.

The fourth chapter titled "Echoes of Melancholy: Tracing Trauma in Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy"* analyses Auster's *Trilogy* which consists of three novellas – City of Glass, Ghosts, and The Locked Room. By close reading of these three texts, the chapter explores the innovative discursive strategies and various linguistic devices involved in depicting trauma. The chapter also highlights how the traumatized characters in the novel cope up with the events of shock.

The fifth chapter "From Mourner to Avenger: Analysis of Trauma and Revenge in T.D.Ramakrishnan's *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*" attempts to understand how the text resolves the inherent linguistic tensions while narrativizing pain, which is otherwise untranslatable. The chapter also analyses how revenge becomes a tool to cope with the trauma inflicted by the perpetrator.

The sixth chapter "Wounds of Loss: A study of Love Trauma in K.R.Meera's "The Gospel of Yudas" begins by discussing the anatomy of love and how the loss of the loved one traumatizes her beloved. The chapter discusses some of the notable works of K.R.Meera in which love agonizes its characters. By attempting a close reading of *The Gospel of Yudas*, the chapter examines how the novel portrays the traumatic life of the protagonist and how he deals with it. It also explores the diverse linguistic structures employed in the novel to represent the untranslatable trauma.

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter of the thesis. The conclusion does a summary of the preceding chapters and brings in a few other allied points for discussion. The chapter also points out the major findings and limitations of this study. The concluding chapter throws light on the possibilities of further research on trauma and related narratives.

The documentation in this dissertation closely follows the 9th edition of the MLA Handbook. The quotations taken from *Meerayude Novellakal* are translated by Aparna Raveendran C.

Chapter 2

Theorizing Trauma

1.1 Trauma Theory: An Overview

Trauma is derived from a Greek word which means wound. In the seventeenth century medicine, the word referred to physical injuries caused by external agents. Later, due to various socio-political as well as multi-disciplinary approaches, trauma came to be associated with certain forms of psychic illnesses. In *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-from Domestic to Political Terror,* Judith Herman describes three types of psychological trauma that received medical and academic attention during the past century:

> The first to emerge was hysteria...The second was shell shock or combat neurosis. ...The last and most recent trauma to come into public awareness is sexual and domestic violence...Our contemporary understanding of trauma is built upon a synthesis of these three separate lines of investigation. (5)

Early modern studies of trauma can be traced back to the works of the French neurologist, Jean Martin Charcot. To analyze neurological illness, he decoded the language of gesticulations and bodily postures. His findings form the core of modern neurology. Charcot studied and observed various patients at Salpêtrière in Paris, one of the biggest mental asylums for women and was able to

successfully decrypt some of the classic symptoms of hysteria. He considered hysteria as the psychopathological precursor of modern-day psychological trauma. Studies conducted on victims of various calamities and accidents of the day helped Charcot to unravel the psychopathology of traumatic hysteria. He figured out that hysteria many a time resulted from a past traumatic event. He further observed that the memories of the event could destabilize the victim's psyche as they remain hidden from her conscious self. To retrieve those hidden memories, Charcot followed the technique of hypnosis wherein the patient is encouraged to re-experience the event, bringing into the open their subconscious memories and disorders. His use of clinical hypnosis could stimulate the multiple layers of one's psyche which in turn opened up new avenues in the field of psychoanalysis. Lewis Aron and Karen Starr summarize the findings of Charcot thus:

> Charcot believed hypnosis could only occur in those with a constitutionally hysterical disposition….Hysterics were born with a hereditary degenerative constitution, leading them to be highly susceptible to altered states of consciousness. A traumatic event would cause a somnambulistic or dissociated state, enabling the development of an autosuggestion such as, "I'll never be able to walk," a thought that normally would pass because it is connected to many other thoughts, and thus becomes integrated into the mind. But in a dissociative state, the thought quite literally is disassociated, not connected to the stream of thoughts in the mind. It remains isolated in the mind of a patient who is

> highly susceptible to hypnotic suggestion. Through his use of hypnosis to demonstrate the psychological mechanism of hysterical paralyses, Charcot popularized the notion of an unconscious mind. (A *Psychotherapy for the People: Towards Progressive Psychoanalysis* 189)

Charcot's method of curing hysteria had many drawbacks. His observation regarding the hereditary proneness associated with the disease has been proved false. Secondly, the authenticity of the causative experience disclosed by the victims during hypnosis have been questioned. He also couldn't explain the cause of indifferent behavioral patterns exhibited by hysterics. This was because these reactions can be their response to the suggestions made by the doctor rather than the true recollections of the event. Charcot designed his experiments disregarding both the physical and mental condition of the patients. Many a time, his methods proved to be detrimental to the patients. Often, the patient failed to recollect the memory shared during the 'trance' state of hypnosis.

Further studies on traumatic memories and personality disorders were carried out by Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot. His most popular work *L'automatism Psychologique* discusses various consequences of hysteria, the most prominent being dissociation. Through various experiments, Janet discovered that hysterics possessed two personalities- primary and secondary. And he designated this process of splitting of personality as dissociation. He also noticed that the primary and secondary personalities are complementary to each other. According to him, hysterical patients tend to be impassive thanks to both

verbal and operational amnesia. They are incapable of describing the traumatic event and depend upon other witnesses. They remain inert except during hypnosis. Suggestions can provide the patient with much relief enabling him/her to go back to the organic function. According to Janet, the psychogenic fugue (dissociative disorder in which a person forgets who they are and leaves home to creates a new life; during the fugue there is no memory of the former life; after recovering there is no memory for events during the dissociative state) that follows hysteria can be alleviated by re-exposing the patient to the traumatic memories. Janet could easily discern the relation between past trauma and the dissociative state of hysteric patients through hypnosis and abreaction.

A similar method to treat hysteria was developed by Joseph Breuer, the German physician. Breuer assumed that hysteria was triggered by a forgotten physical trauma. Thus, his treatment included bringing the patients to a hypnotic state to help them recall the past trauma and to reveal the associated feelings. Breuer's ideas influenced Sigmund Freud who applied the method to various cases and got promising results. Like Breuer, Freud's primary concern was the repressed/forgotten trauma. He concluded that some parts of the mind were not open to inspection which he termed as the Unconscious. With the technique of 'free association', whereby the patient is asked to say whatever comes to her mind, Freud deduced that there was an interaction between many conscious and unconscious forces in the human psyche.

> The symptoms which we have been able to trace back to precipitating factors of this sort include neuralgias and anaesthesias of very various kinds, many of which had persisted for years, contractures and paralyses, hysterical attacks and epileptoid convulsions,….The disproportion between the many years' duration of the hysterical symptom and the single occurrence which provoked it is what we are accustomed invariably to find in traumatic neuroses (Freud, Hysteria 3).

In some cases, the connection between traumatic hysteria and its cause can be easily established. However, there might be instances, where there will be only symbolic connection between precipitating cause and the neurotic state of the victim. The traumatic hysteria can be distinguished from other kinds of hysteria as the former is a psychical pain or distress arising from fright. In the case of traumatic hysteria, the traumatic memory acts as an extraneous agent which continues to work long after its entry into one's psychic system. This realization is encapsulated in Freud's oft quoted statement: "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (Freud, Hysteria 5). In the absence of an energetic reaction to the traumatic event, the possibility of it fading from memory or losing its impact on the psyche is high. That is to say, if the victim fails to cry or express her emotion with any slightest word possible, "any recollection of the event retains its affective tone to begin with" (Freud, Hysteria 7). Thus, in trauma victims, the memory of the shocking event is denied of a proper wearing away process by means of abreaction and reproduction in states of uninhabited association. Only when the victim communicates her trauma will the hysteric

symptoms disappear. According to Freud, the effect of trauma is characterized by certain belatedness (*Nachträglichkeit)*. The ego experiences the traumatic excitation only during a similar but succeeding experience after the past event.

Freud's attempt to delineate the characteristics of trauma extends to the book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In the book, he describes the behavioral patterns exhibited by most of the trauma victims wherein they compulsively return to the horrors of the traumatic event. Labeling it as 'repetitive compulsion', he tries to understand such behaviors which are characterized by nightmares, waking thoughts, etc. In order to manage and master the unassimilated trauma, the psyche tormented by the foreign body of the traumatic shock, goes back to the original scenes of distress. Therefore, the victim has to translate the repeating traumatic moment to an analytic process of 'working through'. He says:

> An event such as external trauma will doubtless provoke a massive disturbance in the organism's energy system, and mobilize all available defence mechanisms. In the process, however, the pleasure principle is put into abeyance. It is no longer possible to prevent the psychic apparatus from being flooded by large quanta of stimulation; instead a quite different challenge presents itself: to assert control over the stimuli; to psychically annex the quanta of stimulation that have burst in, and then proceed to dispose of them. (Freud, Pleasure Principle 102)

According to Freud, there happens a puncturing of the psyche when a traumatic event triggers an inflow of excitations. This leads to the destruction of its outer shield, the ego, which begins to develop its own defence mechanism to restore the pleasure principle. Consequently, the excess excitations are repressed by the ego. This inordinate repression leads to neurosis. Trauma thus becomes the illness of a wounded psyche. In the essay "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud explains two kinds of responses to loss, which are mourning and melancholia. In both the responses, the victim initially tries to reject the loss. But in the process of mourning, the victim soon identifies and accepts the loss which is considered as a healthy response. Mourning is a conscious process by which the victim transfers her libidinal energy from the lost object to a more appropriate site. On the contrary, a melancholic fails to acknowledge the loss and makes it an integral part of her ego. This reaction can be harmful as the loss begins to act as a foreign body destroying the well-being of both the psyche and the self of the victim. Moreover, the traumatized individual maintains a connection with the loss by not allowing it to recede into history. The mourner thus associates continually with the traumatic event and fails to work through. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud states that trauma is triggered only when the victim is rendered completely helpless - physically and psychologically. Thus an event which turns out to be traumatic for some proves to be no source of great impact for others.

Unlike other theorists, Freud held the view that the repetitive re-experiencing of the traumatic event is a means of wish fulfillment rather than an

act to gain mastery over it. Moreover, he tries to link trauma with his concepts of libidinal energy, pleasure principle and sexuality. This is a highly contentious claim and is likely to face the same reservations and objections as those expressed by Breuer and Jung, Vis-à-vis, Freud's stubborn preoccupation with sexuality.

Carl Jung held the view that a traumatic event is an extremely charged affect which when encoded into a person's psyche can disintegrate it into various forms. Such incursions can cause imbalance to the psychic schema leading to a nervous breakdown. But in course of time, the psyche undergoes suitable alterations to accommodate the excess charge of the overwhelming event. He preferred integrating the dissociated self over the process of abreaction as a coping strategy.

From the above discussion, it is evident that there is degeneration in one or many mental functions of the victims. This triggers compulsive repetition, nightmares, flashbacks, long-term traumatic neurosis etc. There is a blocking of "initiative and all other forms of life-preserving cognition" (Krystal 151).

Jacques Derrida in his book *Ear of the Other* elaborates upon the concept of crypt. Restating the theory put forth by the French psychoanalysts, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, he unravels the metaphorical underpinnings of the crypt theory. Derrida foregrounds the Freudian notions of mourning and melancholia in order to elucidate the concept of crypt. He describes it as the entity constituted for the dead object in the ego of an unsuccessful mourner. "Not

having been taken back inside the self, digested, assimilated as in all "normal" mourning the dead object remains like a living dead abscessed in a specific spot in the ego. It has its place, just like a crypt in a cemetery or temple, surrounded by walls and all the rest" (*Ear of the Other* Derrida 57). Derrida also stresses the close link between loss, memorials and archives. For him, archive is "only a notion, an impression associated with a word" (*Archive Fever* Derrida 29). Besides being a site for the preservation of memory or history, it is a pre-emptive reaction to the future loss; a site which reminds of the impending probability of loss and irretrievability of the past.

To understand Lacan's notion of trauma, it is necessary to understand his 'Mirror- Stage'. Jacques Lacan distinguishes three psychic segments that form a part of our mind- the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. The constitution of these three spheres begins from what he terms as The Mirror Stage. From birth, the infant sees only the parts of her body and thus experiences it as fragmented, lacking coherence. When she recognizes herself in the mirror, the image is whole and coherent. This wholeness evokes a feeling of rivalry in the mind of the infant as 'wholeness is something, she believes, hard to achieve. But there is also a point of identification when the infant recognizes that the image is of her own self and at that point, ego is created. As the infant cannot relate her own self and the image, she develops a love towards her image and the ego then created is termed as ego-ideal. In Imaginary stage, the images of all the things other than the infant are created. In symbolic stage, Lacan claims that the "'subject' is constructed in the Symbolic at the moment of the accession to language; there is,

for Lacan, no such thing as a 'subject' before entry into the Symbolic Order". The Real stage consists of everything which cannot be put in words like 'death'. In a traumatized individual, the event of trauma becomes the Real. A traumatized individual faces difficulties to integrate the events of shock into her symbolic order. It cannot get assimilated the Imaginary order too. Thus among the three spheres, the Real dominates the mind of the Victim.

Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996), explores various facets of trauma theory. As an extension of her doctoral thesis, "Bearing Witness: The Literature of Trauma" (1991), the work focuses on psychic trauma. Tal investigates the impact of trauma on individual survivors as well as the ways in which such experiences get embodied in a wider cultural and political world. Discussing the horrors of the Holocaust, Vietnam War, sexual abuse and incest, she comes up with three strategies of cultural coping – mythologization, medication and disappearance. Through mythologization, trauma is reduced from an uncontrollable, violent event to a set of standardized narratives. The second strategy of medication considers the traumatized individuals as suffering from an illness that can be cured by structures of institutionalized medicine and psychiatry. The third strategy involves what is technically termed Disappearance. Here an attempt is made to affect the erasure of the traumatic memory by questioning its very occurrence.

Studies on trauma got much stimulus with the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Caruth finds

trauma as a problem of the unconscious, unidentifiable at the time of its first occurrence. For her, "trauma is not located in the simple, violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way of its very assimilated nature- the way it is precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth *Unclaimed* 4). Discussing various narratives on trauma, she poses the question of whether trauma is an "encounter with death or an ongoing experience of having survived it" (Caruth *Unclaimed* 7). Caruth underlines the fact that in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Marguerite Duras' and Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima mon amour,* Lacan's interpretation of the dream of the burning child, there is an "oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life:* between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the un-bearable nature of its survival" (Caruth *Unclaimed* 7). In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* According to Caruth, a new mode of reading and of listening have to be constituted to decipher the language of trauma, and to articulate its mute repetition of suffering. This would help us to navigate the impasse imposed by trauma. She adds: "In a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves" (Caruth *Explorations* 11). Here, she implies the possibility of cross-cultured solidarity that traumatic experiences can foster among victims.

The American Psychological Association defines a traumatic event as:

> …one that threatens injury, death or physical injury of the self or others and also causes horror, terror, or helplessness at the time it occurs. Traumatic events include sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, community and school violence, medical trauma, motor vehicle accidents, acts of terrorism, war experiences, natural and human-made disasters, suicides and other traumatic losses. (1)

After a traumatic event, most of the victims exhibit some observable physical and psychic conflicts. Identified as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the survivors express symptoms as if they are re-experiencing the traumatic event. This can be either through dreams, hallucinations, or flashbacks. Any image/sound/smell of the past event would cause her distress and leaves her panicked or paralyzed. Most of the victims slide into a state of perpetual passivity. They feel numb and fail to share their feelings even with people close to them. In *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, Van der Kolk describes how traumatized individuals superimpose their trauma on everything around them. He conducted Rorschach test by which a meaningless stimulus of ink blot made the victims construct mental images or stories of their own. The ink blots acted as a spur to re-live of their past trauma. The test also revealed how the victims lack imagination, hope and mental flexibility (Van der Kolk *The Body*, 29-31).

Describing the effect of trauma on individuals, Karyn L. Freedman says in her essay “The Epistemological Significance of Psychic Trauma”:

> In the wake of a traumatic event, a victim’s emotional state is volatile, to be sure, as she undergoes intense personal suffering. But this is only one side of the aftermath of psychic trauma—the shattered self. The other side is the shattered worldview, the consequence of trauma on the survivor’s beliefs about the world. The shattered self and the shattered worldview are, of course, connected, but they are also ….discrete responses to a traumatic experience….after a traumatic event a survivor experiences a kind of cognitive dissonance as she is faced with a whole new set of beliefs that have cropped up, often very suddenly, which are inconsistent with previously held beliefs. (105)

Many researches simultaneously conducted at Yale, Harvard, and National Institute of Mental Health found that patients with PTSD secrete large amount of stress hormones even long after the tragedy has passed. Though the stress hormone mechanism in our body responds quickly to threat and immediately comes back to equilibrium, it fails to do the balancing act in the case of traumatized individuals. Van der Kolk and his fellow researchers did experiments to know whether the flashbacks of trauma altered the normal brain activity of the victims. With the help of brain imaging techniques, each patient was made to re-experience her past trauma during which their brain was scanned. Re-living the traumatic event causes the right hemisphere of the brain to react in

such a way that the past event once again assumes on immediacy and temporal urgency. The scan reports showed the right limbic area of the brain getting under the impact of intense emotions. There was also a white spot in the left frontal lobe of the cortex called the Broca's area. The triggering of flashback made the Broca's area go offline that prevented the victims from putting their feelings and thoughts into words. The flashbacks lit up only the right side of the brain which is said to be the site of emotions, memories and experiences. The left brain which is more rational and analytical is thus less functional in PTSD patients. When victims are made to relive their trauma, the Thalamus part of the brain, responsible for collecting and coordinating sensations from the sense organs, goes blank. This explains why trauma is remembered as isolated imprints of visual, auditory and physical sensations.

Henry Krystal in his book *Integration and Self-Healing: Affect, Trauma, Alexithymia* has discussed in detail the consequences of traumatic events and the various symptoms exhibited by the PTSD patients. He lists the following conditions: Recognition of and submission to unavoidable danger, The surrender pattern, Catatonoid reaction as a "primal depression", Affective blocking, Continuation of "emergency regimes", Alexithymia, Continuation of cognitive constriction, Pseudophobia, "Dead to the World" reaction, and the problem of aggression.

According to Freud, when an overwhelming event occurs, the victim estimates her tolerance level. The event becomes traumatic when there is

submission to unavoidable danger owing to helplessness. This causes a breakdown in the psychic structures leaving the survivor insecure and vulnerable. The victim becomes impassive and unassertive. As the victim becomes more or less unresponsive and unassertive, there occurs a surrendering to the external enemy or traumatic event. This tendency of submission (to phallic/ sadistic/ narcissist object) is followed by shame. As the victim finds it hard to counterattack trauma, there arises a need to surrender, which in turn generate extreme shame. As a consequence of both surrender and shame, the victim fails to have a confident or assertive personality. Traumatic event leaves the survivor paralyzed and unresponsive. She shows no tendency to escape, accelerating dissociation and emotional breakdown. All the mental functions get shut down. The victim becomes pale, tired and loses natural immunity. In Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a kind of tragic sadness replaces both physical and mental pain. Survivors partially or fully fail to reconstruct their feeling of security. This condition alters their view of self and the world. Her views turns out to be pessimistic and dark. The feelings of helplessness as well as hopelessness cover the thought processes and finally lead to depression.

As an immediate response to trauma, there is blockage of conscious registration of pain and painful effects. A kind of affective anesthesia is observed in the survivors. The numbness continues for a certain period of time which is termed as Affective blocking. It was first reported by Eugene Minikowski, a French Psychiatrist, as the foremost effect of trauma. As the traumatic event destroys one’s feeling of security, she repeatedly experiences states of despair.

There is constant fear of repetition of the traumatic event which increases individual stress. Deep despair and insecurity follow which can be lessened only by understanding one's self. Victims develop anxiety which can lead to dreams and hallucinations. There is a need to transform such state of hyperactivity. PTSD survivors are unaware of her own emotions. Inability to verbalize or describe one's feelings is termed as Alexithymia. The victims find it difficult to communicate their feelings to others as well. They show less concern for human feelings. For them, physical activities become more significant than human emotions and feelings.

The psychic processes that enable us to perform all higher order activities are classified as cognitive functions. These include functions like perception, discrimination, problem-solving, memory, judgement etc. In PTSD patients, the cognitive constriction triggered by trauma at times reaches to an unpredictable degree. This constriction manifests itself in two ways. In the first form, the victims assume an unresponsive or passive role and secludes themselves from family, and society. They exhibit dullness and are socially less active. When they try to return to their job/studies, they find it hard to continue the same. They become emotionally low and can do only minimal work. Survivors lose the ability to anticipate the consequences of their actions as well as that of others. They fail to be the role models of their children and are incapable of offering guidance to others. Contrary to the indifferent nature of trauma victims to external dangers, they show great vigilance in responding to such threats. They become panic and are prone to panic attacks.

A patient already in neurosis develops an anxiety and phobia that there will be a re-experience of the current neurotic state again. During this period, the victim exhibits fear of certain things of the past. She shows fear of one's own dreams as dreams can invoke memories of the past. Here, the object of initial fear is never forgotten. They are repeatedly haunted by thoughts of infantile trauma that refuses to be erased by memory.

The traumatized individual finds herself in a moribund state and as a result of the breakage of proper conscious orientation. For her, in these instances, there is an identification of the self with dead, resulting in self-diminution. The American Psychologist Henry Murray used the term "Dead to the World" reaction to describe this state.

In a traumatic situation, there has to be suppression of anger. But as soon as the security is reinstated, anger breaches the walls of self-control. Most trauma victims are also prone to aggression arising out of a state of desperation.

1.2. Trauma and Memory

Human memory is a complex and intricate phenomenon. To discern its vicissitudes following trauma, one has to explore in greater detail, its subtle mechanisms. Researchers categorize memory into two types- explicit memory and implicit memory. The things we consciously recall come under explicit memory. This again falls into two groups:

- Declarative Memory: A kind of semantic memory with which we are able to describe what we know. It is highly structured and lacks feelings and emotions.

- Episodic Memory: This acts as a link between explicit and implicit memory. Episodic memory involves information of what we have experienced.it helps us to make a sense of our lives. As it is formed out of our own experience, it is more or less autobiographical.

In contrast with explicit memory, implicit memory encompasses all the information which we remember unconsciously or without any effort. It involves activities that the body does habitually. Implicit memory is a combination of skills, emotions and perceptions. It can be Emotional as well as Procedural.

- Emotional Memory: This can take us to the past situation which had triggered emotions as similar to the present state. Our behaviour is greatly dependent on emotional memory. It marks and encodes experiences so as to recall them abruptly at a later point of time.

- Procedural Memory: There can be memories of emotions and feelings which come under implicit memory. The things which cannot be described directly like our habits, gestures, style of doing something is procedural memory. It includes our skills or

> talents, ways of reacting to an emergency as well as our tendency to approach/avoid people or situations.

Memories are indispensible tools to make sense of our lives and the world around us. For a traumatized individual, the diverse memory systems fail to co-ordinate with each other. They become chaotic and incoherent. The study of the impact of trauma on memory has been a crucial concern for scholars. Freud's observation that hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences itself exemplifies the significance of memory in PTSD patients.

Hysteria was initially seen as the breakdown of various structures of memory. Later, the technique of hypnotization and free association attributed it to forgotten traumatic events. While Charcot traced traumatic hysteria to a shocking event that affected the nervous system, Janet considered it as a state of being captivated in a devastating life incident. Overwhelmed by the impact of trauma, the victim fails to emerge from the sealed enclosure of the past and continues to languish in a perpetual state of despair. Since the traumatized individual represses the memory of the traumatic event, she "is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience" (Freud Pleasure Principle 12). Thus, rather than considering it as a thing of the past, the survivor will unknowingly repeat the trauma as an action and not as a memory. Becoming impassive and submissive, the traumatized individual fails to cope up with the necessities of the present. This is how a traumatic event ruptures one's psyche.

Some memories are the registered imprints of our own experience which remains static. These can be recalled at any point of time. Certain memories fade over time and make the recalling process even harder. Many researches have pointed to the subjective nature of registered memories. There is a high chance of transforming our experience through interpretations. They are also subject to can variations during the process of encoding. When we recall a memory, it might not be completely true as it is colored by our own imagination and interpretation. There is a constant rebuilding of memory often making it transitory and susceptible to change. This persistent reconstruction enables one to acclimatize with the needs of the present day. It is certainly the present moment which determines what to remember and how to remember a past event. That is to say, our present emotions and feelings construct our altering relationship with the memories. To have a secured future, we need to ensure that we don't repeat things of the past which were harmful or damaging. This can be done by proper selection of behavioral patterns and responses from our memory. One of the remarkable features of memory is the emotions associated with it. We can learn and unlearn from the sensations and behavioral patterns stored in the memory so as to adapt well with the ongoing life. Researches have also found out that the more adrenaline we secrete, the more accurate our memory will be.

Memories, both good and bad, can change over time. On the contrary, memories of a traumatic event are more or less fixed or static. They form solid imprints on the victim's physical and mental realm. They cannot be decoded or processed and are incapable of producing new meanings. The unassimilated

images, sounds, smells, sensations and emotions associated with a traumatic event continue to haunt the survivor later on. When a traumatic event occurs, the frontal lobe of the brain, Broca's area and thalamus get shut down. Hence there will be less cognition with no words to express our feelings. The inward feelings will never be co-ordinated with the shutting down of thalamus. This is why the event of trauma is registered as incoherent and fragmented making it difficult to assimilate. Patients with PTSD show dissociation as their traumatic memory fail to integrate with the actual memory system. When the victims were treated and asked to recall their trauma, they could narrate it as fragments of images, sounds and sensations. Many of them were also identified with memory loss, a condition called traumatic amnesia. "Traumatic memory thus totters between remembrance and erasure, producing a history that is, in its very event, a kind of inscription on the past ... a history constituted by the erasure of its traces" (Caruth *Literature* 78).

1.3. Trauma and Self Harm

Human mind is characterized by various mental states. Each person has her own ways of expressing one's feelings. And, particularly, the ways of grieving have a great deal of diversity. This ranges from crying hard to committing suicide, depending upon the intensity of trauma, tolerance level of the victim, and the emotional support that she gets. This section analyses one of the most precarious modes of tackling trauma, which is to inflict self-harm.

The historical survey of self-harm includes many examples from ancient myths, religious rituals. body-piercing for beautification and extreme forms of psychotic self-mutilation. Since time immemorial, there have been many religious rituals of self-harm glorifying human suffering. Lamenting the death of Hussein In Ali, the Shia Muslims beat themselves on the 10th day of Mahakam. The believers of Opus Dei do fasting and self-flagellation as a means of enduring pain in service of God. Many Hindu temples in South India observe practices like 'Garden Hookah' and 'Shola Katha'. In the former, the believers pierce their back with hooks and the latter is considered as a self-punishment wherein the devotees pierce their cheek or tongue with a spear. In all these practices, the pain of self-harm is considered as sacred that can relate the believers.

Pain is an unpleasant feeling that arises out of physical, mental and cultural experiences. It can be a 'psycho-biological analgesic that removes anxiety, guilt and even depression" (Glucklich, 11). It is interesting to know that though the branch of medicine originated with the primary focus to reduce pain, there are people who harm their physical body to heal the mental wound. In trauma, the memory of an unassimilated event echoes shock, pain and anger in the victim. When unexpressed, these emotions get internalized, often forcing the traumatized individual, to harm themselves. Self-harm involves various acts like self-bruising, self-biting, cutting body parts with blades/ razors, burning flesh, swallowing pins/needles and self-poisoning. It is often a repeated or habitual act without any suicidal motif.

'Self-harm' was first clinically formulated in 1938 by the American Psychiatrist, Karl Menninger, in his book *Man Against Himself.* As the title indicates, Menninger considers man as his own worst enemy. He juxtaposes the concept of death instinct put forth by Freud against the human instinct of self-preservation. Classifying it as a form of focal or localized suicide, Menninger describes self-mutilation as a suicidal impulse which is “concentrated upon a part as a substitute for the whole” (Menninger, 231).

The concept of self-harm became much popular with the publication of Armando Favazza's book *'Bodies Under Siege: Self-mutilation and Body Modification in Culture and Psychiatry*' in 1987. According to him,

> Self-mutilation is not alien to the human condition; rather it is culturally and psychologically embedded in the profound, elemental experiences of healing, religion, and social amity....culturally sanctioned and deviant self-mutilation are significantly similar...in their shared purposefulness (191).

Thus, for Favazza, self-mutilation is something more comprehensible as an act resulting from unreasonable or unbalanced thoughts. In the end of the 1990s, it was noted that most of the trauma victims had an irresistible impulse to harm themselves. Describing self-harm as the 'addiction of the nineties', the famous American journalist, Marilee Strong, gave an in-depth analysis of the topic in her 1998 book '*A Bright Red Scream: Self-Mutilation and the Language of Pain.* The book includes interviews of over 50 people who commit the act of

self-harm as well as two experts in the field of post-traumatic stress disorder. In one of the interviews, a victim says: “self-injury may be desperate, but it is something I can do. For me, it's a kind of hope, a way out. It's not giving up” (Strong, 22).

Following Strong, many journalists like K.Harrison, Jennifer Egan and Sylvia Rubin wrote articles on suicidal tendencies and self-mutilating behaviour in people. As Favazza rightly describes, the late 1990s was a 'coming of age' of self-harm. And, the theme even started to appear in films. In 2005, the British Board of Film Classification has included self-harm in the category of imitable behaviour: “Portrayals of potentially dangerous behaviour (especially relating to hanging, suicide and self-harm) which children and young people are likely to copy will be cut if a more restrictive age rating is not appropriate”.

There can be various thoughts which trigger self-harm and the act of injuring oneself can have diverse meanings. Self-injury makes perfect sense to those who practice it. “In an act of self-mutilation, gesture replaces language. What cannot be said in words becomes the language of blood and pain” says Kim Hewitt in her book *Mutilating the Body.* Trauma that fails to get communicated through language can often lead to self-harm. This is because the intangible agony of a traumatic event gets transformed into a visible, real cut on the skin. And, the suffering becomes more or less describable.

There are manifold reasons for a traumatized individual to inflict self-harm. Firstly, it is a means to reduce the mental torture and pain. People also

commit self-harm as a punishment to their feeling of guilt and shame. It can also be a protest against a world which is only interested in harming them. The act of injuring oneself can evoke a feeling of control over one's body, making the victim the master of herself. It can also be considered as a painful act of coming back to reality after a shocking traumatic event. Therefore, the wounds of self-harm are indicators of the victim's shame/guilt that reveal the inability to control her emotions. As such, in self-harm, recourse to overwhelming trauma is made in flesh and blood within the boundaries of the skin.

As traumatized individuals find it hard to communicate their feelings, they harm themselves privately. That is, self-harm is done on those parts of the body which are not visible to others. Initially, the cut on the skin does not hurt the victim as she is overwhelmed by trauma. But in later course of time, the pain gets amplified which again can vary from person to person.

1.4. Trauma and Language

Virginia Woolf, in her essay *On Being Ill writes: "*English, which can express the thoughts of Hamlet and the tragedy of Lear, has no words for the shiver and the headache. It has all grown one way. The merest schoolgirl, when she falls in love, has Shakespeare or Keats to speak her mind for her; but let a sufferer try to describe a pain in his head to a doctor and language at once runs dry (6)." It is often said that our experience cannot be approximated even by the best and most subtle language. The reverse is also true that without language,

experience is nothing. But then, how can trauma, which is often described as the "unspeakable", get represented? Does trauma escape language?

Sigmund Freud has described trauma as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. It is said to be a psychobiological process; a complete wordless state which is considerably distinct from past experiences of life. It is an event of horror that can alter the victim's identity. The traumatic event leaves the survivor silent, either by breaking the chain of meanings or by obliterating their capacity to retrieve or generate language. This necessitates him/her to create a new language. Thus trauma becomes a wound inflicted upon the language too. While describing the traumatic event, the survivor uses various linguistic coordinates either consciously or unconsciously. And, to access their post traumatic condition, we need to listen keenly to their choice of words and intonations besides their body language.

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian semiologist, highlights the fact that language is a social tool and a site of conflict. According to him, the basic unit of language is "utterance". He says: "Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances. These we may call speech genres" (Bakhtin, 60). Thus, speech genres impose restrictions upon the speaker as it is more or less a stable generic form of utterance. Bakhtin again categorizes speech genres into two- primary and secondary speech genres. Primary genres are simple utterances that take its form from day-to-day conversations. Secondary speech genres are

more complex as they assimilate various primary speech genres. So, in the secondary speech genre, the primary speech genres become altered and they lose their immediate relation to actual reality. We can pivot our discussion on this division to further unravel the ramification of trauma. To understand the language of trauma, we need to closely observe the interactions of trauma survivors and carefully study the choice of words and narrative strategies. One important source of this will certainly be the first hand account by health professionals who attend to trauma victims. In this case, the exchanges would seemingly use primary speech genres, but at times the mental health professional might bring in secondary speech genres of professional category into the dialogue and interactions. For Bakhtin, dialogic is an essential element for the interaction of persons in an utterance. He says: “The word is shaped in the dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object” (Bakhtin, 309). Thus, the interactions of the trauma victim with the professional do not remain limited to the formal structures of the language and the meanings of its words. On the contrary, in each speech interchange, the speaker brings in her past experiences together with present expectations. This includes utterances which meld various speech genres drawn from each person's heteroglossic backgrounds. The trauma narratives consist of secondary speech genres made out of the primary speech genres of the trauma survivors. They contain utterances which have various genres resulting in the heteroglossia of the text.

In trauma, there is a huge gap between what is experienced and what is said. Trauma empties the person out by creating a breach in him/her. And most

often, after this emptying of subjectivity, her sense of identity becomes strongly anchored in the traumatic event. It is highly difficult to live in the state of trauma and so the survivor has to resort to a pseudo state. This withdrawal from reality is not spatial alone. She moves away from reality linguistically too. The survivor uses a different language which has multiple layers. The first layer is the language of the represented consensus, a kind of jargon and plagiarism which is pseudo symbolic. The second level of the imitative or pseudo symbolic language has referents. These two layers do interpenetrate resulting in a chaotic subjectivity.

Language, like our body, is to a great extend organic and mimetic. Impaired linguistic development can lead to a misrecognition of the self and identity. It is said that the language we articulate articulates us. In the case of trauma survivors, their language is disarticulated which in turn leads to their psychological dismemberment. This is why the validity of testimonials of trauma survivors has often been disputed. Signifiers freely circulate. Words become pseudo symbolic and fall over associatively. They turn into plagiaristic imitations or metaphors in which they present rather than represent.

After a traumatic event, the person loses the protective shield and is exposed to various difficulties. The body, behavior, and language of the survivor change drastically and she finds it difficult to communicate with others using normal language or words. To make sense out of the words uttered by the traumatized individual, the analogy of the visual language of dreams can be

considered. Sigmund Freud, in his work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* puts forth two central concerns for dream to work – Latent dream content and the Manifested dream content. According to him, the repressed content of the unconscious which seeks expression is the Latent dream content. Its expression in one's dream in the form of images and events form the Manifested dream content. The former undergoes four processes before it gets expressed in the manifest dream. For dreams to work, Freud puts forward the logic of condensation, displacement and symbolization. In linguistic terms, Lacan renamed these concepts to metaphor, metonyms, and symbolization there by giving a linguistic turn to the formulation of the unconscious. Visual language of dreams is more or less similar to the verbal account of the traumatic language. The latent dream contents get superimposed to form certain symbols. Later, they work as associations and is expressed in complex images. Then, when it gets expressed as dreams, there is no rational connection between the repressed contents of the unconscious and the dream. When a traumatized individual speaks, she uses metaphors, similes, and symbols. They are personal objects which become expressions of one's inner feelings. More than signifying meaning they communicate the feelings of the survivor. Lacan also states that metonymy is based on the word-to-word connection and the formula of metaphor is one word for another. By analyzing these combinations and displacements, meaning has to be derived from the words uttered by the survivor. These metaphors and metonymies are culture specific. Our self and identity are better described in the

beginning by metaphors. They, at times, typify our outlook of the world in which we live.

The study on trauma linguistics has revealed that the victims use words which reflect cognitive mechanisms. To make meaning of events, words like “think”, “believe” etc. are used. They also use causal words during distress in their attempt to understand and resolve the traumatic event. The study also reveals that the survivors of collective trauma have the tendency to use first-person plural than first-person singular. That is, in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, there is an extensive use of the plural pronouns “we” and “us”. This indicates their tendency to adapt and create new social bonding.

Trauma survivors most often rely on metaphors to describe the traumatic event. Two things which have similar properties are associated using metaphors. This offers the traumatized individual to use metaphors to communicate their unique outlook to the world. John P.Wilson and Jacob D.Lindy, in their book, *Trauma, Culture, and Metaphor: Pathways of Transformation and Integration* demonstrate that the post traumatic metaphors are lexical, real and the product of one’s cognitive processing. According to them, metaphors offer pathways to discovery, recovery and psychic integration. The conscious and unconscious processes and the intra psychic encodings of the traumatic experience form the basis of the metaphoric expressions. Trauma metaphor can encode memory at the unconscious level. “It reflects unmetabolized aspects of the traumatic event and

its impact upon pre-existing structures of personality. It represents the self in existential moments of phenomenological trauma" (Wilson, Lindy, 6).

In the aftermath of trauma, there is a semi-wordless state. On repetition, the survivor reflects the bodily and motoric- centered dimension of this state using words. This is a point next to the trauma, a point in contiguity with the trauma. Linguistically, this is termed as metonymy. Since trauma leaves the survivor silent, new language, words and phrases need to be created from this state to describe the horrendous event. As such the first verbal articulation of trauma has a sensory-motor descriptive form. Eventually, the sensory-motor expressions that stood next to the trauma take on a metaphoric function which traces on to the non-traumatic everyday life. To abstract meanings from event, metonymic process is necessary. In metonymy, one example stand for a whole and its functions get transferred there by allowing us to conceptualize. On the other hand, metaphor holds abstractions in tension thereby retaining some kind of particularity through difference. There is thus a metonymic displacement of the ordinary available world and its language which fails in its ordering when faced with trauma. The survivor will shift to preconceptual figural resources. The ordinary world and meaning are rendered meaningless and a world of trauma which is discontinuous is created through a trauma process. Samuel Levin, in *Metaphorical World*, suggests that "to think of" is different from "to think" a world. Metaphorical world presents and seeks to bring out a new conceptual grasp of reality through experience of the literal sense. To enable the reader/listener to enter into the world of traumatic reality, the survivor must use

the full range of metaphoric resources. Levin also suggests that if some metaphors are read off conventional concept metaphors and some are taken literally, what was unthinkable becomes thinkable. The world of trauma is non-linear and its figures seek to annihilate. As Levin says we have a "duty" not to think but to "think of" such metaphorical worlds.

1.5. Trauma and Recovery

The overwhelming event of trauma makes the survivor disoriented and depersonalized. The victims cannot make sense of their self as well as the world. For them, everything seems strange and foreign. There is a constant haunting of the traumatic past which prevents the smooth functioning of various memory systems. The survivors often become numb devoid of any emotions or sensations. The first and foremost step to work out trauma is to understand oneself which is termed as "agency". It means to have a clear notion about our self, our emotions, skills and the need of the present. Having confidence in oneself and determination to face all adversities of life is the initial step to agency. The more we know about ourselves, the more easily we can get rid of trauma. Introspection helps us to analyze our strengths and weaknesses. Staying calm, trying to be in peace with the past, and reestablishing the mastery of one's self can quicken the recovery process.

Van der Kolk has described the process of Limbic system therapy in his book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma.* In the traumatic state, there is an imbalance between the rational and

emotional brain. Survivors either become numb or highly reactive. Being in this state can make them more depressed and melancholic with pessimistic attitude towards life. It becomes necessary to get hold of emotional brain to perform limbic system therapy. This aims at fixing the faulty anxieties and reinstating the emotional brain back to its proper function. This will ensure that the daily routines are properly done without any fail. (226-27)

Traumatic event can result in disintegration of self. So, there is a high need to reinstate the regulation of body. Having control over one's emotions, feelings and sensations also becomes important to work out trauma. Various emotion-controlling techniques have to be practiced. To escape from the past trauma, survivors have to communicate their inner fears and anxieties to someone they are comfortable with. Sharing sorrows and pain can reduce the inner weight of grief to a great extent. There is also a need to analyze and evaluate one's own behavioral patterns and responses to diverse stimuli.

As the overwhelming event can make the victim isolated and disturbed, establishing relationships with dear and near ones becomes a primary task. Only when the survivor opens up about the disturbing thoughts, fragmented memory and haunting images of the past trauma with somebody, will she be able to come out of the danger. Bond between fellow human beings can lessen the pain of trauma.

As already stated, Alexithymia is the situation when the survivor cannot describe her emotions with words. As trauma ruptures one's sense of identity and

consequently leads to numbness, the victim becomes impassive with less control over one's body. Alexithymia should be ruled out as it makes the person incapable of describing one's feelings. This can be done by restoring the co-ordination between physical sensations and emotions.

Many often, the creativity of the survivor has helped to master her trauma. It is seen as a means to link the past with the present life. Just as hypnosis and free association, in survivor literature, there is a reliving of the traumatic past. The victim can bring in their most subtle emotions, un-mastered anger of the grieving process, their shame and guilt in a narrative. Thus, narrativizing trauma becomes a retelling of a terrifying repressed memory, a process which can counteract the verbal silencing of trauma. Survivors can become more creative in devising innovative techniques to verbalize trauma. This includes use of metaphors, symbols, images, photographs in the narrative to break open the untranslatability of the traumatic event.

In the book *Trauma Fiction* Anne Whitehead writes:

> Novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection. Trauma fiction overlaps with and borrows from both postmodern and postcolonial fiction in its self-conscious deployment of stylistic devices as modes of reflection or critique. (3)

Traumatic memory being ambiguous cannot be verbalized by a chronological set of events. Writings on trauma disrupt the existing linear structures of narration, time and space. Use of literary devices and innovative writing styles are peculiarities of trauma fictions. The previous sections discussed the advancement of trauma theory over the years, the physical, mental and linguistic consequences of trauma, and the various ways of coping with it. The following four chapters of this thesis examine how trauma which is said to be inscrutable gets sketched as a narrative. The chapters also analyze the aesthetics of trauma fiction underlining the link between the event, writer, text and the reader. While writing a narrative on trauma, the author aims to encompass an unconceivable event within the framework of the text and hence it is illuminating to study both the degree and scope of trauma in literary context.

Chapter 3

Presenting the Unpresentable: Narrative Strategies in Jonathan Safran Foer in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

This chapter analyzes Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as a narrative of trauma which discusses the issues of the dissociated past, fragmented memory, alienation, death and responses to loss. This chapter also studies in detail the incorporation of intertextual elements, fragmented narrative and the photo-texts in narrativizing trauma which is otherwise undescribable.

Many novelists have explored trauma as a literary subject integrating its various patterns into their writings. They use diverse techniques while attempting to sketch the ineffability of a traumatic event. Jonathan Safran Foer, the Jewish-American writer of Eastern European descent, experiments with the contemporary narratological practices to bring about a convincing representation of traumatic experience and memory. Foer is regarded as the writer of catastrophe for his generation. His works include both fiction and non-fiction like *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), *Tree of Codes* (2010), *Here I Am* (2016), *The Unabridged Pocketbook of Lightning* (2005), *Eating Animals* (2009), *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast* (2019). Presently, he teaches creative writing at New York University.

Foer's first two novels, *Everything is Illuminated* and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* turn out to be his response to the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust and 9/11 attack. Being the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, his works are more or less autobiographical. Foer's works center around the death/absence of a grandfather; the narrator in *Everything is Illuminated* says: "The origin of a story is always an absence" (230).

Everything is Illuminated tells the story of loss, grief, and memory of the Holocaust victims. Many theorists like Cathy Caruth and Ann Whitehead have pointed out the effectiveness of non-linear techniques in portraying trauma and this novel proves the same. Interweaving reality with myths, imagination and magic, the novel expresses the emotional turmoil of the traumatized individual. Breaking the conventional structural, linguistic and visual narrative strategies, *Everything is Illuminated* turns out to be an amalgam of modernism, post-modernism, realism and magical realism. The first few chapters of the novel are epistolary as they are organized as a series of correspondence between Jonathan and Alex, who acted as his translator in the Ukrainian trip. Jonathan, a Jew, takes up the mission to trace the history of his ancestral family which was razed by the Nazis during the Second World War. Interspersed between the correspondences involving Alexander and Jonathan are largely fictitious accounts of the Foer family's past, before being uprooted from the native village of Trachimbrod in Ukraine.

In one of Alexander's letters to Jonathan he writes: "You are all cowards, because you live in a world that is once removed, if I may excerpt you" (*Illuminated* 240). This reveals the Jews perception of the world around them. The chapters in the novel are interspaced with letters sent between Jonathan and Alex. The gap between the readers and the reality is abridged by the transfer of Holocaust trauma from the Tranchimbrod chapters to the travel narrative and finally to the letter series. The letter series, though chronological, do not form a linear pattern as they are superimposed amongst the Tranchimbrod episodes and the travel. There is thus the overlap of two time spheres. The subplot of the novel tells the story of Alex's grandfather.

Everything is Illuminated employs humour as a means to address trauma. The novel says: "Humor is the only truthful way to tell a sad story" (90). The conversation between Jonathan and Alex further exemplifies how humor becomes an effective narrative strategy in the novel:

"You are very funny Jonathan".

"No. That is the last thing I want to be".

"Why?'

"To be funny is a great thing".

"No it's not".

"Why is this?"

> "I used to think that humors was the only way to appreciate how wonderful and terrible the world is, to celebrate how big life is. You know what I mean?"
>
> "Yes of course".
>
> "But now I think it's the opposite. Humor is a way of shrinking from that wonderful and terrible world" (158)

Many psychological studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of comedy as a means to cope up with trauma. Humour works by distancing the victim from the upsetting scene of traumatic events. Survivors tend to exhibit fewer symptoms of PTSD on using comedy. Use of dark humour alters the response of the victim as it reassesses the stressful situation by cognitive reappraisal. It can facilitate the adaptive mechanisms on encountering a traumatic situation. Another feature of using humour to narrativize trauma is that it reduces rage and negative feelings. It also eliminates anxiety and tension and helps communication much easier. Though humour does not minimize the seriousness of a traumatic event, it helps the survivor to adapt more easily with the reality.

The various narrative strategies adopted in the novel brilliantly place the events in its own space and temporality. The novel transports the disastrous episodes of the Holocaust through various narrative strands, thus bringing the subject much closer to the readers.

Foer's second novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* portrays the repercussions of both Dresden bombings and 9/11 attack. The central character of the novel is the nine year old Oskar Schell who is deeply tormented by the death of his father. To negotiate between the boundaries of fact and fiction and to deal with the unrepresentability and susceptible memory of trauma victims, the novel employs various narrative strategies. Switching between past and present, the plot interweaves the themes of trauma, death, love, quest and so on. It is characterized by a non-linear plot consisting of letters, diary entries, interviews, photographs, and poly-colored graphic images. The novel also projects images from Oskar's scrapbook, titled "Stuff that Happened to Me", a kind of distortion to the actual process of reading.

Judith Butler, in her book, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence,* says:

> We have to shore up the First-person point of view, and preclude from the telling accounts that might involve a decentering of the narrative "I" within the international political domain….A narrative form emerges to compensate for the enormous narcissistic wound opened by the display of our physical vulnerability. (7)

Foer seems to adhere to Butler's opinion as he structures the novel not limiting it to First person alone. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* shifts between the perspectives of Oskar and his grandparents. It is through the unsent

letters of Oskar's grandparents, which form the alternate chapters of the novel, that their trauma and painful memories of Dresden Bombings are represented.

The innovative structure of the novel is further exemplified in its use of several graphological experiments like blank pages, pages with one word, pages where words are overwritten, with words corrected, edited and circled in red, pages with unspaced words which are unreadable. This pattern clearly suggests the inner turmoil of the trauma victims and their inability to communicate the pain. At times, the traumatized individuals are overwhelmed with the shock of the event and they remain speechless. And, in other instances, the victims try to take refuge in a ceaseless flow of words while addressing their trauma.

Trauma is defined and characterized by dissociation, temporality, delayed expression, haunting etc. To portray these features of trauma, the narratives adopt various features, the most prominent being Kristevan notion of intertextuality. Sigmund Freud, in his book, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* elaborates the concept of 'Repetition Compulsion' where the patient repeatedly acts out a forgotten/repressed memory (70). This reaching out to the stifled remembrances parallels the process of intertextuality. A term coined by Julia Kristeva, Intertextuality is a literary technique that interrelates texts so as to enhance and influence readers' understanding of the text. According to Kristeva,

> The term inter-textuality denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources," we prefer the term transposition

> because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thesis – of enunciation and denotative positionality. If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its "place" of enunciation and its denoted "object" are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy [multiple levels or kinds of meaning] can also be seen as the result of a semiotic polyvalence – an adherence to different sign systems. (*Revolution in Poetic Language* 59)

Kristeva's concept owes much to M.Bakhtin's 'Dialogism', which states that all texts seem to be related to every other, continually referring to works that precedes them. In her essay, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', Kristeva argues: "…any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations: any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (7). The concept of intertextuality was further elaborated by Roland Barthes. In his book, *S/Z,* Barthes foregrounds the claim that a text is not confined to itself rather it is open to plurality of meanings. He also distinguishes between 'readerly' and 'writerly, novels. The novels belonging to the former category are self-contained with a definite set of meanings that progress linearly. On the contrary, the 'writerly' text:

> …has a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signified, it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none

> of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilize extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable; the system of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. (5)

As the primary aim of a trauma narrative is to verbalize the inner chaos of the trauma victims, it adapts various literary strategies that can generate meanings out of the aporia it creates. Thus, the use of both intertextuality and writerly techniques employed become pivotal tools in narrativizing trauma.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close incorporates diverse exemplification of intertextuality to delineate Oskar's trauma. The novel is instinct with allusions and references to multiple literary works and has unmistakable thematic affinity with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The central characters of both these narratives are traumatized by their father's death. They engage themselves to unveil the truth behind the deaths as a means to work out their trauma. In Act V, Scene I of *Hamlet,* the grave diggers excavate the skulls of the dead to make fresh grave to bury Ophelia. Hamlet enters and picks up a skull. On learning that it is the skull of Yorick, the court jester, he exclaims: "Oh, Poor Yorick!" (90) and he then sinks into a thinks of the happy times they both shared. Soon, the realization that everybody will ultimately become dust, even great men like Alexander the Great and Julius Ceasar strikes Hamlet. Here, the skull not only symbolizes loss but foregrounds the universality of death.

In the Hamlet performance put up at his school, Oskar was given the role of acting as Yorick's skull. Just as Yorick who made Hamlet happy, Oskar's father was his source of happiness. While enacting the scene from *Hamlet* on the stage, Oskar alters the dialogue and says: "Alas, Poor Hamlet". Unlike the Yorick's Skull, a betoken of loss, Oskar lacks material things to deal with his trauma; his father's coffin is itself empty. Therefore, rather than acting out trauma, Oskar could only work through it: "…I buried it all inside me" (35). He becomes empty and lifeless like the skull following his father's death. Both Oskar and Yorick occupy a sealed world where they are unable to communicate with the people around them. Thus, Oskar feels "incredibly close to everything in the universe but also extremely alone" (145). He realizes that even the analogy of Hamlet cannot ease his pain as he says: "Shakespeare doesn't make sense" (*Extremely Loud* 129).As the scene from *Hamlet* ends with a realization on life, Oskar too comments: "I wondered for the first time in life, if life was worth all the work it took to live" (167).

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close also has close parallels with Gunter Grass' *Tin Drum.* The protagonists of the two novels have German origin and share the same name, Oskar. In *Tin Drum,* Oskar receives a drum on his third birthday which becomes a constant companion during his journey through New York suburbs. Besides giving voice to Oskar's mute dissent and trepidations of the calamitous world, the drum serves as a tool to revisit his past. Like Oskar with his drum in Grass' novel, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* portrays Oskar with his tambourine. The instrument acts as a stress reliever to Oskar: "I

shook my tambourine the whole time, because it helped me remember that even though I was going through different neighborhoods, I was still me" (88).

The novel frequently alludes to Stephen Hawking and his book, *A Brief History of Time.* Oskar says that the book is his favorite though he hasn't finished reading it. As the title of the book, Oskar finds himself often haunted by that brief history of time when he refused to respond to the last messages of his father in the answering machine. When he started to write letters, the first letter he wrote was to Stephen Hawking asking whether he can be his protégé? Welcoming his request, Hawking, in his last letter advises Oskar to put his imagination towards scientific ends. He also tells him that the "vast majority of universe is composed of dark matter. The fragile balance depends on things we'll never be able to see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. Life depends on them" (197). The letter directs Oskar not to ponder too much over the 'real' and the 'unreal' as the question of what the life eventually depends on seems inscrutable. Oskar looks up to Hawking as his role model who exhorts him to find answers to his life's queries in pure science.

The photographs of banal items and the oral testimony of a victim who had lived through the Dresden bombing too add to the inter-textual elements of the novel. He leaves five messages before he dies but Oskar hasn't told anyone about them. Though he was there in the apartment when his father called for the last time, he was scared to pick it up. One of the recurring images in the novel is of Oskar's heavy boots. For Oskar, the heavy boots symbolize his feelings of

guilt as well as loss. Oskar exhibits all the paradigmatic symptoms of a trauma victim.

The chapters in the novel are narrated by three traumatized characters, structured in the sequence 'Oskar-Grandpa-Oskar-Grandma' repeated four times. The concluding chapter portrays Oskar's analysis of his father's death in 9/11 attack. Thomas Schell Sr., Oskar's grandfather is a survivor of Dresden firebombing. On the night of the bombing, before the air-raid sirens sounded, his girlfriend Anna tells him that she is pregnant. In a letter to his son, Thomas writes: "She said, "I am pregnant". I can't write what we said to each other then. Before I left, she said, "please be overjoyed". I told her I was, of course I was, I kissed her, I kissed her stomach, that as the last time I ever saw her" (210). Thomas survived the Dresden firebombing but Anna didn't. The emotional crisis he faces destabilizes his sense of self, making him vulnerable to frequent panic attacks. In a letter to his son, he writes: "If I could tell you what happened to me that night, I could leave that night behind me, maybe I could come home to you, but that night has no beginning or end" (208). The Dresden event, death of Anna and their unborn child were catastrophic blows for Thomas. He develops survivor's guilt which is one of the explicit symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Thomas' life oscillates "between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth, 1996, 7). Though he realizes the need to let go of the past, Thomas fails in his attempt to forget Anna and forge ahead. His memories of Anna are inextricably tied up with his

present life: “The way you just handed me that knife, that reminds me of _____” but I couldn’t finish the sentence, her name wouldn’t come, I tried again, it wouldn’t come, she was locked inside me….” (16). He becomes highly obsessed with his past- he thinks it is the only way to compensate for his lost dream of spending his life with Anna. He says: “…I was left with the shell of me….” (113). Thomas’ struggle between ‘forgetting’ and ‘remembering’ results in aphasia- a state which prevents him from communicating with others. This state of aphasia can also be seen as his conscious refusal to speak as he is reluctant to let go of Anna’s memories. For an individual to recover from trauma, he/she needs to accept the fact that what seemed improbable earlier did happen. Acceptance of loss becomes an inevitable part in the process of recovery. Hans-Juergen Wirth in *9/11 as a Collective Trauma and Other Essays on Psychoanalysis and Society* writes: “…total separation or suppression of spontaneous feelings is not exactly a sign of success in dealing with trauma, it is necessary to go through the phase of depression and sadness. It must be admitted, not repressed” (43). With Thomas’ state of aphasia, his recovery becomes more difficult. Later, Thomas marries Anna’s sister, a person who is so close to Anna but he fails to lead a happy life with her. He sees her as not as his wife but as the only remaining link to Anna. After marriage, the couple divides the rooms of their apartment as Something and Nothing Places. Nothing Places, which they even mark on the blueprint of their apartment, are inexistent rectangular spaces. Thomas’ insistence on making love in a Nothing Place again proves his inability to accept someone other than Anna as his life partner. When his wife stands as a

model for his sculptures, he doesn't sculpt her. Later, unable to let go of the past, he abandons his pregnant wife and flies back to Germany. This indicative of his 'acting out' stage wherein he stays melancholic, imprisoned by the past trauma.

Having lost the ability to speak, Thomas begins to draft letters to his son, whom he has abandoned before his birth. But all those letters remain unsent except one. In the letter which Thomas has mailed to his son, he tries to communicate his trauma of Dresden bombing. The letter persuades Thomas Jr. to visit his father but even then their communication turns out to be unsuccessful: "It was terrible. All of the things we couldn't share. The room was filled with conversations we weren't having" (278). Thomas' melancholic response to trauma is further exemplified in his use of notebook to communicate with others. He wrote messages in a notebook and then penned down his subsequent responses by flipping its pages. When he ran out of pages, he scrambles the letters and leaves less space between words as if he was writing on pages which were already filled. He later resorts to his tattooed hands for everyday conversations. He tattoes "Yes" on his left hand, "No" on his right and shows to people with whom he wants to communicate. Years later when he learns that his son has died in the 9/11 attack, he tries to unburden himself by punching out the letters on the pay phone. He says: "I was trying to destroy the wall between me and my life with my finger, one press at a time" (272). Though the novel visually illustrates these letters of the alphabet on page, it remains undecipherable both to the receiver and the reader:

> I broke my life down into letters, for love I pressed "5, 6, 8, 3," for death, "3, 3, 2, 8, 4," when the suffering is subtracted from the joy, what remains? What, I wondered, is the sum of my life? "6, 9, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 7, 3, 5, 4, 3, 2, 5, 8, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5, 8, 7, 8, 2, 7, 7, 4, 8, 3, 3, 2, 8, 8, 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 3, 3, 3, 8, 6, 3, 4, 6, 3, 6, 7, 3, 4, 6, 5, 3, 5, 7! 6, 4, 3, 2, 2, 6, 7, 4, 2, 5, 6, 3, 8, 7, 2, 6, 3, 4, 3? 5, 7, 6, 3, 5, 8, 6, 2, 6, 3, 4, 5, 8, 7, 8, 2, 7, 7, 4, 8, 3, 9, 2, 8, 8, 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4, 6, 3, 3, 3, 8! 4, 3, 2, 4, 7, 7, 6, 7, 8, 4!.... (227)

These alpha numerals which run over three pages of the novel again highlight Thomas' inability to communicate his trauma. Throughout the novel, he is seen as a melancholic a'la Freud who fails to assimilate his traumatic past.

Thomas' wife, Mrs. Schell is also a survivor of the Dresden Bombing. Unlike her husband, she wishes to leave behind an account of her past life to her grandson, Oskar. In a letter to him, she writes: "I have so much to say to you. I want to begin at the beginning, because that is what you deserve. I want to tell you everything, without leaving out a single detail. But where is the beginning? And what is everything?" (*Extremely Loud* 73). She even tries to write her own life story. As a girl, Mrs.Schell collected letters, a hobby which later instills in her a form of survivor's guilt. She believes that if she hadn't collected those letters, their house would have burnt less brightly in the Bombing. After losing her dear ones in the Bombing and reaching New York, she tries to drown herself in the Hudson River. Even when Thomas Schell asks her to return and to start a

new life with him, she is caught between the probability of death and the possibility of a new life. Later, she keeps returning to Thomas as she says: “His attention filled the hole in the middle of me” (*Extremely Loud* 80). Though Thomas finds it difficult to escape from his past, he suggests his wife to write her story as a means to unburden her. Thereupon he arranges a desk and typewriter in one of the Nothing Places of their apartment for her to write. As Nothing Places are non-existent places, her life story ceases to exist. Eventually it is revealed that she doesn’t write her life story rather pretends to do so by repeatedly hitting the space bar key.

Mrs. Schell feels worthless especially after her marriage to Thomas Schell. Oskar often observes her remark that she is not very smart whenever she is asked of any opinions. She wishes to have competence in English language so as to communicate her story of survival. Finally, with much enthusiasm, she writes a letter to her grandson. While reading the novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the story of Mrs. Shell is unraveled through the chapters titled “My Feelings” in which she narrates her story. But the narrative omits the episodes of Dresden Bombings and so her traumatic life as well. Losing his only son in the 9/11 attack awakens her past trauma of the Bombings and of her married life. She is emotionally paralyzed that even the twin tower attacks failed to evoke an instant response in her: “Maybe it sounds strange, but I didn't feel anything when they showed the burning building. I wasn't even surprised. I kept knitting for you…” (*Extremely Loud* 203). This passivity exemplifies her PTSD.

But later, she tries to hurt herself when she realizes that her son was present in one of the towers when the plane struck:

> I brought myself to the ground, which was where I belonged. I hit the floor with my fists. I wanted to break my hands, but when it hurt too much, I stopped. I was too selfish to break my hands for my only child.
>
> Bodies falling.
>
> Staples and tape.
>
> I didn't feel empty.
>
> I wished I'd felt empty.
>
> People waving shirts out of high windows.
>
> I wanted to be empty like an overturned pitcher. But I was full like a stone. Planes going into buildings. I had to go to the bathroom. I didn't want to get up. I wanted to lie in my own waste, which is what I deserved. I wanted to be a pig in my own filth. (*Extremely Loud* 213)

As already discussed in Chapter 1, traumatized individuals need to adopt a pseudo-state so as to protect themselves from traumatic reality. This involves linguistic departures too as trauma necessitates the survivor to develop a personal idiolect to navigate her way out of the crisis. This idiolect or individual language encompasses the language of the conscious self as well as the language of referents. These two elements transfuse to form an incompatible subjectivity.

In the novel, Oskar's trauma gets manifested in his use of language. Though he does not explicitly reveal the source of his agony, his thoughts and opinions leave clues of the same. On the day of 9/11 attack, Oskar believed "everyone (he) loved was safe" (24). Contrary to his expectation, he loses his father, Thomas Schell, with whom he had a very close bond. Oskar refuses to attend the answering machine in which his father had left five messages for him. The guilt of not answering the call adds to his trauma of losing his dad. This is evident in his act of replaying his father's last message over and over again. Oskar's family buries an empty coffin as they did not get his father's dead body. Therefore, the question of what must have happened to his father haunts him.

The novel sketches the inner thoughts and ideas of Oskar's precocious mind which jumps from one idea to another. He is obsessed with inventing things. These fancies and hyper activities reveal the nature of his grief and trauma. Oskar wishes to invent a tea kettle that reads in his dad's voice or a set of kettles that sings the chorus of "yellow submarine", a song by the Beatles. The song echoes his underlying grief as it is interpreted by the Time Magazine as "a symbol of the psychedelic set's desire for escape". [Dogget, Peter (6 May, 2009). There's a Riot Going on: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of the '60s. Conongate US PP 107-108.ISBN-1-84767-193-4). Oskar nurses the illusion that if he keeps on searching he will be able to trace his father down. He talks of inventing a birdseed shirt that would help wingless humans to make a quick escape in the event of a disaster. Such an invention, he reasons, would have certainly saved his father's life. The song "The Flight of the Bumblebee" by

Nicolai Rimsky Korsakov soothes him and he wishes to play it using his Tambourine. He uses the song as the ringtone for the cell phone he gets after his father's death. The song is allegorical in the context of Oskar's traumatic state. It is the orchestral interlude of the opera "The Tale of Tsar Sultan". The interlude closes at Act III, Tableau 1, during which the magic Swan-Bird changes Prince Gvidon Saltanovich (the Tsar's son) into an insect that can fly away to visit his father. The song helps him fantasize about being reunited with his father. A trauma victim typically hankers back to a golden past before the calamity struck. Here, Oskar cherishes all the sweet moments he had with his father. He reminisces how he and his dad used to play 'Reconnaissance Expedition' and how he had to interpret the clues given by his father. He states that being with his dad made his brain quiet and that he didn't have to invent a thing. Oskar also declares that the moment before his father started telling stories was his favorite moment. He clings on to the memories of his father just as his grandfather sticks to the memories of Anna. Oskar is often haunted by the remembrances of the final conversation he had with his dad.

"Dad?" "Yeah buddy?" "Nothing". (*Extremely Loud* 14).

Because of Oskar's "heavy boots", he tries to harm himself by inflicting bruises on his body. The tendency to harm one's own self stems from anger, which is more or less an involuntary outburst of subdued feelings. Apart from making bruises, he visualizes many circumstances wherein he responds violently to people. Oskar imagines himself behaving fiercely to Dr.Fein, his psychologist

and Jimmy Snyder, a bully from his class. But in reality, he remains impassive before them. Like most of the trauma victims, Oskar becomes unsympathetic to the feelings of people close to him, especially his mother. He remains heedless to the sentiments of his mother who has lost her husband, even though he says "she should have been adding to the Reservoir of Tears" (*Extremely Loud* 48). Once he tells her that he would have chosen her to die rather than his father if he had a choice. Oskar refuses to accept the ways in which his mother tries to cope up with the loss of her husband: "I wanted to tell her she shouldn't be playing Scrabble yet. Or looking in the mirror. Or turning the stereo any louder than what you needed just to hear it. It wasn't fair to Dad, and it wasn't fair to me. But I buried it all inside me" (*Extremely Loud* 33). He tussles hard to maintain a balance between survival and death. At one point, he hints at his desire to die: "what is so horrible about being dead forever, and not feeling anything and not even dreaming? What is so great about feeling and dreaming?" (E*xtremely Loud* 145).

Oskar exhibits the symptoms of PTSD quite explicitly. He develops phobias, panic attacks, and anxiety disorders:

> Even after a year, I still had an extremely difficult time doing certain things, like taking showers, for some reason, and getting into elevators, obviously. There was a lot of stuff that made me panicky, like suspension bridges, germs, airplanes, fireworks, Arab people on the subway (even though I'm not racist), Arab people in restaurants and coffee shops and

> other public places, scaffolding, sewers and subway grates, bags without owners, shoes, people with mustaches, smoke, knots, tall buildings, turbans. A lot of the time I'd get that feeling like I was in the middle of a huge black ocean, or in deep space, but not in the fascinating way. It's just that everything was incredibly far away from me. It was worst at night. (*Extremely Loud* 33)

Oskar shifts from his state of melancholia to that of mourning after he finds a key in his dad's closet. He believes that finding its lock can make him stay closer to his dad for long. He tries to trace the owner of the key to know more about his dad. He visits 472 people who have 'Black' as their surname. His quest for the lock enables him to meet many people to whom he says his dad was killed. Oskar tries to unburden his trauma by conversing with people. He finally manages to disclose his guilt of not attending his father's last messages to the actual owner of the key, Mr.Black:

> I've timed the message, and it's one minute and twenty-seven seconds. Which means it ended at 10:24. Which was when the building came down. So maybe that's how he died."
>
> "I'm so sorry," he said.
>
> "I've never told that to anyone."
>
> He squeezed me, almost like a hug, and I could feel him shaking his head.
>
> I asked him, "Do you forgive me?"

"Do I forgive you?"

"Yeah."

"For not being able to pick up?"

"For not being able to tell anyone".

He said, "I do." (*Extremely Loud* 277)

As an atheist unable to rely on supernatural explanations, Oskar finds it hard to come to terms with his father's death as his body was never recovered. Later, Oskar seeks the help of the "renter" to dig up his father's coffin as he wanted to know the truth.

> I opened the coffin. I was surprised again, although again I shouldn't have been. I was surprised that Dad wasn't there. In my brain I knew he wouldn't be, obviously, but I guess my heart believed something else. Or maybe I was surprised by how incredibly empty it was. I felt like I was looking into the dictionary definition of emptiness. (*Extremely Loud* 296)

Although Oskar has almost accepted his dad's death, he never wanted the coffin to be empty. So they filled it with the letters written by Oskar's grandfather who is later revealed to be the renter himself who had been accompanying him in the voyages. Oskar's attempt to work through his trauma is evident from his conversation with his mother. He feels elated upon learning that his mother had kept a close watch on him throughout his wanderings in search of the lock. She was even aware of his guilt of not listening to his father's last messages. Oskar

reveals all his secrets to her and promises her to do better in life. Gaining his mother's support, he decides to get back to his normal life. Oskar then crafts a flipbook with pictures of a falling body he finds on the internet. He reverses the order placing the last one first and the first one, last. On flipping it, he finds a man floating on the sky. He imagines that if he had more pictures he would have flipped the book so that the man would be back in the tower, safe. He imagined all the incidents that led to his trauma from backwards to the time where they "would have been safe" (*Extremely Loud* 301).

Many theoreticians have expressed the inability to analyze and incorporate events of trauma in their work of art. In response to 9/11, Baudrillard writes:

> The whole play of history and power is disrupted by this event, but so, too, are the conditions of analysis. You have to take your time. While events were stagnating, you had to anticipate and move more quickly than they did. But when they speed up this much, you have to move more slowly – though without allowing yourself to be buried beneath a welter of words, or the gathering clouds of war, and preserving intact the unforgettable incandescence of the images (*The Spirit of Terrorism* 4).

Images of trauma in narrativizing a shocking event have far reaching significance. As most of the victims are constantly haunted with intrusive images and nightmares, their narrative memory is replaced with these pictures. This validates Lukhurst's argument that the psychic registration of trauma truly resides

in the images. The incorporation of images along with verbal texts in novels like Don Dellillo's *Falling Man*, Frederic Beigbeder's *Windows on the World,* further illustrates this idea. In *Falling Man*, the opening scene describes the images of the 9/11 event:

> It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night. He was walking north through rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. They had handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. They had shoes in their hands, a woman with a shoe in each hand, running past him. They ran and fell, some of them, confused and ungainly, with debris coming down around them, and there were people taking shelter under cars. (3)

The use of pictorial language in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* enhances the interplay between photographs and verbal language. The technique of incorporating images to communicate and mediate human experiences has deeply affected our view of the world and the way we reconstruct it. By adopting Michel de Certeau's terminology of "heterology of representation", Mitchell enumerates the differences between word and image: "they are linked to things like the differences between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between "hearsay" and "eyewitness" testimony; between words (heard, quoted, inscribed) and objects or actions (seen, depicted, described); between sensory channels , traditions of representations and modes of experience" (*Picture Theory* 5). In the introduction to *Future of Text and Image*,

Mitchell defines “image-text” as the composite works or concepts that combine image and text. He uses a slash symbol while using the term “image/text” to indicate a problematic gap between the two in representation. He further observes the possibilities of using visual and verbal components in literary texts:

> On the one hand, there are what we might call “literal” manifestations of the imagetext: graphic narratives and comics, photo texts, poetic experiments with voice and picture, collage composition, and typography itself. On the other hand, there are the figurative, displaced versions of the image-text: the formal divisions of narrative and description, the relations of vision and language in memory, the nesting of images (metaphors, symbols, concrete objects) inside discourse, and the obverse, the murmur of discourse and language in graphic and visual media. And then there is a third thing, the traumatic gap of the unrepresentable space between words and images, what I tried to designate with the “/” or slash. (1)

Cathy Caruth states that “to be traumatized means to be possessed by an image or event” (4). In photo-textual narratives of trauma, both the mediums of image and text contribute to express the untranslatable, augmenting the readers’ experience. Tanya K. Rodrigue refers to imagetext as pictures and words that represent both discursive and non-discursive language. According to her, imagetext also embodies multiple, historical and contradicting discourses. Rodrigue further argues that the use of photo-text as a means of depicting trauma develops trauma scholarship in significant ways: “it complicates scholars’

understanding of the relationship between trauma and language, and challenges arguments that trauma is best represented in either discursive or non-discursive language" (*The Future of Text and Image* 40). She further discusses how trauma discourses challenge the dominant discourses with its multiple and conflicting dialogical engagements, becoming sites for identity (re)construction. Imagetext serves as a tool to depict trauma besides its use as a lens to read and understand the unnarratable. By deconstructing the image/text binaries, it provides an alternate medium to represent as well as comprehend trauma. Rodrigue also states that "imagetext, unlike alternative genres of writing, provides multiple epistemological sites and paths for anyone to (re)construct traumatic experiences and identity" (47). In an imagetext, when the words explain, describe, label, and speak for the photographs, the images illustrate, exemplify, and document the text.

A traumatized person is left linguistically paralysed with a dissociated sense of self. As such, narratives on trauma cannot adhere to linear, coherent and stable language. Contrary to the dominant frameworks of narration, trauma discourses fail to expose the truths of the events and hence eliminates the possibility of accurate representation. The imagetext serves to pronounce the unnarratable, specifying the 'what' and 'where' of the event. It also helps a victim to identify and recollect the experience of trauma besides aiding her to reconnect fragmented memories.

Many theorists have explained the possibility that in the events of trauma, the victim tries to encode the event in sensory based memory systems rather than encrypting it verbally. Such memory units can be stored and analysed as snapshots. Use of photographs in a narrative can have far reaching significance. Roland Barthes distinguishes between photographs and texts: “Since the Photograph is pure contingency and can be nothing else (it is always something that is represented) - contrary to the text which, by the sudden action of a single word, can shift a sentence from description to reflection - it immediately yields up those 'details' which constitute the very raw material of ethnological knowledge” (*Camera Lucida* 28). He further elaborates that unlike language, photographs authenticate itself: “Language is, by nature, fictional; the attempt to render language unfictional requires an enormous apparatus of measurements: we convoke logic, or, lacking that, sworn oath; but the Photograph is indifferent to all intermediaries: it does not invent; it is authentication itself” (87).

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close incorporates images from Oskar’s scrapbook entitled “Stuff That Happened to Me”. Oskar’s Scrapbook reflects his sense of Oskar’s creativity. Writing by and about survivors can be considered as paradigmatic of creative responses to loss. David Aberbach in his book *Surviving Trauma* has described how trauma results in creativity:

> Among the phases of the grief process, yearning and searching is, perhaps, particularly conducive to creativity. During this phase, there is sufficient distance from the loss to recollect and assimilate emotions deriving from the lost person, yet the burden of grief might still be so

> pressing that it seeks a creative outlet. In this state of incomplete mourning, when disbelief and denial of the loss commonly oscillate with acceptance, denial might be expressed in a 'living' work of art, a form of 'holding on, to the lost person/persons, while acceptance might find expression in the form of a memorial to dead. (8)

In his scrapbook, Oskar tries to trace his own quest in the city of New York for the owner of the key he finds in his dad's closet. The book does more than just suggest a shift from verbal to visual, as new techniques of signification emerge from its hybrid composition that surpass the media involved. The conflicting interplay between the text and the photographs of the scrapbook serves to create meanings out of Oskar's wordless state of trauma. The photographs in the novel provide credibility and reality to the events described. Moreover, the heterogeneous mediums of text and image reflect Oskar's struggle to assimilate and cope up with his father's death.

Oskar describes his scrapbook as "my scrapbook of everything that happened to me" which suggests his close connection with the images pasted in it. After getting the key from his dad's room, Oskar searches for its owner. He plans to explore New York and searches information online. He finds some pictures on the internet which he prints out and pastes in the scrapbook. Through the book, Oskar seems to register his search and in so doing he actually registers the process of working through his trauma. Scrapbook thus becomes a way of recontextualizing existing information to a more private commentary on Oskar's personal life. In her book, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the*

Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance, Ellen Gruber Garvey states that scrapbooks "create their own cultural nexus a knot of threads leading into and out of the family or community" (49). Through the scrapbook, Oskar attempts to define his world thereby creating an alternate narrative to fill the void of his father's death.

With the pictures Oskar pastes in his scrapbook, the book gets laden with symbols which allude to things both probable and imaginary. The photographs in the scrapbook are referents of reality, as Susan Sontag observes the reliability of the photographs thus:

> Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we're shown a photograph of it. In one version of its utility, the camera record incriminates… In another version of its utility, the camera record justifies. A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture. Whatever the limitations (through amateurism) or pretensions (through artistry) of the individual photographer, a photograph—any photograph—seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects. (*On Photography* 3)

Oskar's scrapbook becomes more than mere illustration of the novel as it contains images which echo his emotions and feelings rather than representing

his past experience. It is Oskar's attempt to relate himself with the world as Sontag claims about photography: "It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power…Photography is not practiced by most people as an art. It is mainly a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power" (2-5). Oskar's scrapbook mirrors his fears, anxieties, memories and regrets with regard to his father. This is evident on analysing some of the images in his scrapbook. The image of the Gems hints at his father's jewellery business. To indicate the bedtime story which his father used to tell him, the scrapbook has the photo of the sixth borough. The word "purple" written in green ink is another image in the scrapbook. Oskar believes that the word is written by his father on his visit to the art supply store. But later it is revealed that it was Oskar's grandfather who had visited the shop. The scrapbook also has an image of a man falling from the World Trade Centre. The picture gets zoomed as Oskar checks whether the man in the photograph is actually his father. The scrapbook also has the photograph from the locksmith's store, picture of Stephen Hawking to whom Oskar writes letter after his father's death, a snap from the movie adaptation of Hamlet referring to Oskar's performance in school as Yorrick's skull and diagram of the paper plane which he used to make with his father to fly from their apartment to Oskar's grandmother. The scrapbook thus traces the close bond shared by Oskar and his dad. As Michelle Lezana comments: "these pictures permeate, overlap, and accumulate more than one meaning, however all of them still point back to Oskar's restless search for the last traces of his dad" (12). She also points at how

Oskar “longs to grasp the vanishing past in the images that would relate to his story, perpetuating by proxy what happened to him” (14). Many of the images in the scrapbook appear even before the actual narration of the event associated with them. There is a gap between the images in the scrapbook and its narration in the novel, disrupting the linearity of the discourse. Oskar’s scrapbook becomes an ambiguous objet d'art which constructs multiple meanings effacing the conventional notions of time, space and linearity.

One of the significant characteristics of Foer’s novel is its use of motifs. The image of ‘hole’ recurs throughout the novel. It involves keyholes, silences, blank pages, and absence, signifying incoherence and lack of knowledge to comprehend the reality of the present. It also reflects the limitations of language in describing the traumatic experiences. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* describes the challenges of living with a hole or absence.

The image of key holes repeatedly appears in the novel. Oskar’s attempt to find a lock that fits the key he finds in his dad’s closet is his attempt to fill a hole. Oskar believes that solving the mystery of the key would make him closer to his dad. The hole symbolizes the absence/death of his father. It also signifies the void in Oskar’s life after his father’s death. Oskar’s quest is a means to ‘unlock’ his trauma.

Oskar is tormented by guilt as he refuses to respond to the last messages of his dad in the answering machine. He keeps this as a secret and says: “That secret was a hole in the middle of me that every happy thing fell into” (47). The

use of photo-texts disrupts the linearity in narration reflecting the disruptive nature of the 'non-experience' of trauma. PTSD victims yearn for love, care and attention from people around them. Oskar gets close to his grandfather whose attention he says "filled the hole in the middle of me" (55). Later in the novel, he narrates an incident wherein he crawls to one of the binocular machines and sees distant objects close by:

> When the metal lids opened, I could see things that were far away incredibly close, like the Woolworth Building, and Union Square, and the gigantic hole where the World Trade Center was…. It took me a few seconds to figure out the focus, but then I could see a man sitting at his desk, writing something. What was he writing? He didn't look at all like Dad, but he reminded me of Dad (158).

Oskar's grandfather, Thomas, is tormented by the death of his lover, Anna. With the absence of Anna, he says, "I was left with the shell of me" (76). Thomas experiences her absence as a hole in his being. Anna's death torments him to such an extent that he develops aphasia and gradually becomes completely mute. When he tries to pen down his traumatic experience of the Dresden bombing, he is over burdened by a series of signifiers which fail to signify. His narrative devolves into incomprehensible layers of floating signifiers, rejecting the possibility of knowledge and expression. It becomes a hole inside the novel. Felman and Laub explain:

> The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their story; they also needed to tell their story to survive. There is in each survivor, an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one's story….This imperative to tell and to be heard can become itself an all-consuming life task. Yet no amount of telling seems ever to do justice to this inner compulsion. There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in *thought*, *memory*, and *speech*. The pressure thus continues unremittingly, and if words are not trustworthy or adequate, the life that is chosen can become the vehicle by which the struggle to tell continues. (78)

Oskar's grandmother, as she wakes up one morning, feels that there is a hole in the middle of her. She is deeply agonized being the only surviving member of the family after the Dresden bombing. Her husband Thomas suggests her to write her life story to escape from the horrors of the past. She types her story with the help of a typewriter but later it is revealed that she has typed nothing: "I went to the guest room and pretended to write. I hit the space bar again and again and again. My life story was spaces" (113). Her story becomes nothing less than a set of events consumed by holes.

Unlike his grandparents, Oskar is able to translate his traumatic memory into narrative memory. His conversations with his mother and Mr. Black make

him feel lighter. He successfully shifts from a melancholic to a mourner, coming to terms with the death of his father. The novel clearly explicates the traumatically disoriented lives of Oskar and his grandparents. Foer transcends the limitations of language in trauma fictions by adopting various techniques. Fragmented narratives with three diverse first person narrators, having three different styles of narration highlights the innovative structure of the novel. Oskar uses informal language in narration contrary to his grandparents whose stories get unveiled through letters or diary entries. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* experiments with half-finished chapters, colored and blank pages, chapters with unspaced words, anecdotal stories and images of Oskar's scrapbook to transcribe the wounded psyche of its characters. The image of a falling man from the World Trade Centre, a sign of Oskar's working through trauma, gets zoomed so as to see its intricate details. The man ascending to the tower instead of falling on flipping the book in the opposite direction further accentuates Foer's inventiveness in depicting the unfathomable. The novel turns out to be one of the best testimonials of 9/11 till date.

Chapter 4

Echoes of Melancholy: Tracing Trauma in Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy*

This chapter seeks to explore the narrative strategies employed in Paul Auster's novel in *The New York Trilogy* to recount traumatic experiences. It also attempts to trace the use of various literary devices employed by Auster to challenge the limits of language in describing pain and inner conflicts of the psyche. Further, the chapter demonstrates how the characters in the novel are set against the background of their distressing past.

Paul Benjamin Auster, the famous Jewish-American writer and film director, takes a different turn in narrativizing trauma. His notable works include *The New York Trilogy* (1987), *Moon Palace* (1989), *The Music of Chance* (1990), *The Book of Illusions* (2002), *The Brooklyn Follies* (2005), *Invisible* (2009), *Sunset Park* (2010), *Winter Journal* (2012), and *4 3 2 1* (2017). Most of his novels employ equivocal narrative voices and intricate author-character bond, thematizing the conflict between ego and its alter ego. Auster foregrounds the ensuing responses of an individual to an unexpected traumatic stimulus which life offers.

Paul Auster deals with the theme of death, loss, trauma and alienation in many of his works particularly in *The Book of Illusions.* The novel portrays

David Zimmer, professor at the Columbia University who gives up his teaching career traumatized by the death of his wife and son. As a means to cope up with his trauma, he engages in a mission to trace the life of Hector Mann, a long-disappeared comedian. Traumatized Zimmer tries to legitimize the identity of Mann and not his own self. This is suggestive of Zimmer considering Mann as his alter ego. In course of time, the life of Mann gets unveiled through Alma Grund, a character close to Mann. From the accounts of Grund, David learns that Hector Mann's wife, Dolores Saint John, accidently kills his ex-lover, Bright O' Fallon. This makes him traumatic and Mann lives leads the life a runaway, camouflaging his original sense of identity.

Paul Auster portrays the inner struggle and agonies of individuals in many of his novels. *In the Country of Last Things (*1987) is no way different. Narrated from Anna's point of view, the epistolary novel involves letters with fragmented sentences which depict her trauma. Tormented by the loss of her brother in the epidemic, she goes in search of him. Anna suffers from PTSD and as means to cope up with her agonies, she writes letters. The process of writing is a way of recording herself, a coping mechanism to escape from aphasia resulting from PTSD. But the fact that linguistic paralysis that results from trauma is at times inescapable becomes explicit from Anna's words: "If you find yourself looking at a dead child, a little girl lying naked on the street, her head crushed, her face covered with blood, it's hard to say it coldly, directly and coherently. Your thoughts seem to be blocked and you can't combine these words. Somehow, you just can't speak them" (67)Many of the critics have described Auster's depiction

of the city as a masterpiece of describing hell. The link between trauma and memory has been represented through its subtle use of metaphors. The novel also employs the post-modern modes of representation which makes use of the concept of hybridity and fragmented narrative structures (67).

Auster's *The New York Trilogy* consists of three novellas – City of Glass, Ghosts, and The Locked Room. In each of these narratives, we see a writer with a narcissistic impulse trying to trace his ambiguous doppelgänger. Like trauma which ruptures one's ego, the novel too creates an aporia with its multiple narrative voices and characters lacking rational convictions.

The first of the three novellas pictures New York as a typical capitalist metropolis characterized by physical density and psychological isolation. Justifying the title 'City of Glass', the characters in the story get mirrored and replicated. The novel revolves around the character of Daniel Quinn who is deeply traumatized after the death of his wife and son. He chooses to live in isolation so much so that he tries to withdraw from his own psyche. As trauma disrupts one's own identity, the behavioral patterns of the victim become uncontrolled and unpredictable. Quinn is no different. "A part of him had died, he told his friends, and he did not want it coming back to haunt him" (*Trilogy* 4). He was totally lost- both in the city as well as within himself. Quinn neither wished to be dead nor was he happy to be alive. It seemed as if he were living a posthumous life. At times, the loss was so intensely felt that he could do nothing to control it:

> …he has removed the photograph of his wife from the wall. Every once in a while, he would suddenly feel what it had been like to hold the three year-old boy in his arms- but that was not exactly thinking, nor was it even remembering. It was a physical sensation, an imprint of the past that had been left in his body, and he had no control over it. (*Trilogy* 5)

In an effort to adapt with the reality of his existence, Quinn adopts the pseudonym William Wilson and embarks on a writing career. The protagonist of Wilson's work is Max Work through which Quinn tries to translate his feelings and emotions. His adopted name of William Wilson shares intertextual connections with Edgar Alan Poe's short story of the same name. This technique of intertextuality offers us multifarious ways to discern his traumatized psyche overcoming the 'unspeakability' of trauma. Poe's short story *William Wilson* deals with the theme of doppelgänger- two men of the same name who complement the existence of each other. In the end of the story, on killing his double, a mirror appears before Wilson in which he sees his own image soaked in blood. The image in the mirror addresses him as if he is speaking the lines: "You have conquered and I yield….In me didst thou exist—and in my death, see ... how utterly thou hast murdered thyself" (*William Wilson* 242). In 'City of Glass', William Wilson is Quinn's double image: a means to prove his own existence amidst his trauma. Quinn's act of masquerading as William Wilson is an attempt to eliminate all vestiges of his previous traumatic self. Though Quinn projects a composed and brave exterior through the persona of Max Work, his inner self is deeply riven and traumatized. The creation of the fictitious William Wilson is an

attempt to bridge these two antithetical incompatible selves. Thus, Quinn, William Wilson and Max Work become inseparable beings having a single identity.

> In the triad of selves that Quinn had become, Wilson served as a kind of ventriloquist, Quinn himself was the dummy, and Work was the animated voice that gave purpose to the enterprise. If Wilson was an illusion, he nevertheless justified the lives of the other two. If Wilson did not exist, he nevertheless was the bridge that allowed Quinn to pass from himself into Work. And little by little, Work had become a presence in Quinn's life, his interior brother, his comrade in solitude. (*Trilogy* 6)

Quinn's sense of identity was too shaken that he struggles to accommodate his dislocated ego. This foregrounds his attempts to attune to the personae of William Wilson and Max Work. He further switches his role after receiving a phone call which was actually meant for the private detective Paul Auster. Quinn's act of impersonating Paul Auster reveals his urge to leave behind all the vestiges of his traumatic life. It can be seen as a process of acting out his trauma whereby he seeks to distance himself from the wounded self. As the fractured reality of Quinn cannot be completely fixed by the fictional Max Work, he adopts the role of Paul Auster, a detective in real life. This further narrows the gap between Work and Quinn, as well as the author himself as the latter can now execute all the powers of the former in real life. The caller assigns Quinn the task of finding out the person who is sure to kill him. Quinn readily agrees and

promises to meet him the next day. He believes that becoming someone other than himself in both name and profession can mitigate the intensity of his sufferings. Similar to any detective who decodes all the clues to make things clear and final, a traumatized individual has to decipher her trauma in all possible ways to ameliorate the aggrieved psyche. In a detective novel 'there is nothing wasted, no sentence, no word that is not significant' (*Trilogy 8*). Likewise, each and every utterance of a traumatized individual proves remarkable to counteract the 'unspeakability' of trauma. A quest for truth and the acceptance of reality at the end match both the detective genre and trauma discipline. Both the genres foreground the need to trace the link between signifier and signified so as to successfully unravel the truth.

The first case assigned to Quinn who has now metamorphosed himself as the private detective Paul Auster was by Peter Stillman Jr. The task was to trail Professor Peter Stillman, his father, who is to be imminently released from prison. The junior Stillman feared whether his father might be harboring some grudge against him and plotting to eliminate him. Quinn learns that Professor Peter Stillman was a renowned scholar at Harvard who studied philosophy and religion. In order to test his hypothesis of a natural language a child imbibes when she is kept isolated from the world, he locks Stillman Jr. in a room for nine years. This traumatic past of Stillman Jr. makes Quinn more exasperated as he is reminded of the little coffin that held his son's body. "The subject of children was too painful for him, especially children who had suffered, had been mistreated, had died before they could grow up" (*Trilogy* 35). The psychic wound that

resulted from his son's death becomes all the more painful when he comes across any such similar incidents. Although he tries to walk away from his traumatic crypt by changing his name and identity, he is repeatedly drawn into it.

Quinn buys a red notebook to note down the day-to-day progress of the investigation. On its first page, he writes his initials "D.Q." – an act he has never done in the past five years. It is indicative of his estrangement from his pseudonym Max Work and his detective character William Wilson. Though his traumatic persona persuades him to camouflage his original sense of identity, Quinn attempts to reestablish the same. He oscillates between his own self and the newly assumed identity. Quinn's incongruous selves, resulting out of his traumatic tension is quite evident in the last lines of his first entry in the red notebook: "…who are you? And if you think you know, why do you keep lying about it? I have no answer. All I can say is this: listen to me. My name is Paul Auster. That is not my real name" (*Trilogy* 40). The Red Notebook connotes the Red Book of Carl Jung, which is a leather-bound folio manuscript written between 1914 and 1930. Jung describes the contents of the book as "his most difficult experiment which involved a confrontation with the unconscious" (Wikipedia).

To know Professor Stillman better, Quinn goes to Columbia library to read his book *The Garden and the Tower: Early Visions of the New World.* The book is divided into two parts- "The Myth of Paradise" and "The Myth of Babel". The first part discusses his perception that the first men of America considered it

as a second Garden of Eden. For them, people of the land lived peacefully and innocently. The second part of the book relied much on Milton's *Paradise Lost* in foregrounding the linguistic discrepancy of men before and after the fall. Exploring all the possibilities of pun and word play in *Paradise Lost,* Stillman deciphers how each word has two meanings, one before and after the fall. As Adam's duty was to name the things in the Garden of Eden, his words had revealed the essence of things so much so that a thing and its name were interchangeable. But after the fall, words became mere arbitrary signs whereby things and their names got detached. For Stillman, the fall of man is the fall of language itself.

"City of Glass" skillfully links Stillman's work with Quinn's state of trauma. If the fall of man is regarded as an event of trauma, there was a state of peace and coherence prior to it. After trauma, language of the victim ruptures wherein she seeks meaningful words to express her state of mind. Quinn's life became traumatic after the death of his wife and son. He finds it hard to verbalize his trauma as an attempt to reinstate his sense of identity. Quinn's trauma, like the fall of man, results in his loss of language too, very much akin to the events that followed the collapse of the tower of Babylon. This is an instance of the typical linguistic paralysis that afflicts trauma victim.

The traumatized Quinn is quite unpredictable and his entire actions are now centered on Peter Stillman. He fakes his identity and calls himself Paul Auster. Quinn closely tails Stillman through the latter's wanderings in New York.

Upon sketching these routes on paper, he gets different letters everyday which eventually spell out as “Tower of Babel”. The tower is a reference to the mythical story of origin of multiplicity of languages. It symbolizes confusion, disintegration and incoherence. The relevance of the expression “Tower of Babel” is still in question as the readers doubt whether Stillman really meant to make such a phrase. Like any traumatized individual who feels internally shattered, Quinn tries to make sense of the world around him.

Quinn’s life follows a repetitive pattern of repetition as he assumes the role of a detective. Eventually, he decides to meet Stillman Sr. not as Paul Auster but as Daniel Quinn. Stillman welcomes him and starts talking about words and their meanings. During the second meeting, as Stillman fails to recognize him, Quinn introduces himself as Henry Dark, a character developed by Stillman in his manuscripts. In the third meeting, he introduces himself as Stillman Sr.’s son. He feels disappointed as Stillman fails to recognize on all occassions. As he ponders over the helplessness of his situation, Quinn loses track of Stillman Sr. and decides to seek the help of the real Detective Paul Auster. He searches for the detective but ends up meeting Paul Auster who is a writer. Auster says about his writings on Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. Quinn’s story has many parallels with *Don Quixote*. Both the protagonists seek to find “the sense of life in a world which is subject to fragmentation” (Baustista Naranjo, qtd by Julia Wuggenig). The novels discuss at length the theme of identity crisis faced by trauma victims. Like Quixote who is in pursuit of adventure and his own identity, Quinn wishes to have a true sense of self to reintegrate with the world around him. The author of

The New York Trilogy, Paul Auster appears as a character in City of Glass paralleling the appearance of Miguel de Cervantes in Don Quixote. Quinn's act of writing his initials "D.Q" is also a further clue pointing at Don Quixote. At the end of the story, when he fails in his mission, he wonders: "why he had the same initials as Don Quixote" (*Trilogy* 125).

When Quinn decides to visit Stillman Jr. who had entrusted him the task of following Stillman and his wife he fails to trace them down. He shifts to live on the nearby street waiting for Stillman Sr. to visit his son. He then goes to his own apartment only to discover that it has been rented out to somebody else. Quinn goes back to Stillman's apartment and finds the door unlocked. He goes in and starts writing in the red notebook which makes him hallucinate over various things. In course of time it is revealed that Stillman Sr. commits suicide. The whereabouts and whatabouts of Peter Stillman Jr. and his wife remains an enigma as nobody else is able to provide any clues about what had befallen them. At the end of the novel, as the red notebook runs out of pages, Quinn vanishes into thin air leaving the readers as well as the protagonist in an ontological vacuum befitting post-modernist templates.

Trilogy experiments with diverse narrative techniques to represent the unnarratable aspects of trauma. With a story full of twists and turns, the novel centers on Quinn who seeks a way out to breakout of his trauma. The only way he finds to do so is by masking his true sense of identity. He feels empty both physically and mentally after losing his wife and son in an accident. He tries to

become all what he is not, to grab otherness in him. Quinn's obsessive quest to trace Stillman Sr. by faking his own identity is an attempt to efface an absence, a means to confront trauma. Describing the character of Quinn in the article, "The Trauma of Existence in *The New York Trilogy*, Mongia Besbes says:

> His traumatized rejection of himself as being devoid of meaning led him to adopt an alternative that may illuminate his life once more….He has thus sublimated his spiritual and physical dislocation into a psychological reconstruction of an alternative identity. He has ironically become a detective not to look for clues and murderers but to look for what is left of his disintegrated self. (59)

City *of Glass* repeatedly alludes to "glass", an object with which we can only observe our physical appearance but not our inner psyche. Though Quinn wanders through the city of glass, he fails to get a reflection of his thoughts and feelings. Like mirror images, the novel presents Quinn and the disguised self of his doppelgänger detective. Quinn's inability to assimilate the past and his attempt to seek refuge in alternative selves, projects him as someone who cannot make sense of the world around. In "Spaced-out: Signification and Space in Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy",* Stephen E. Alford says, "Quinn's misapprehensions exemplify… a lack of understanding that space and the self are coeval, engendered from the possibility for signification that arises from a place that is neither here nor there"(631).

'Ghosts', the second story of *The New York Trilogy*, also grapples with the same issues like identity crisis, existential trauma, emptiness of life etc. The third-person narrative unveils the story of Blue, a private detective who is hired by White to observe Black. The characters, named after colors, are set against the background of a colorless and stagnant world. This state of stagnancy and vacuity is well reflected in the narrator's statement: "The place is New York, the time is the present, and neither one will ever change" (*Trilogy* 7). Blue starts his job of observing Black and mailing weekly reports to White. In the process, he loses all contacts with the outside world. He feels lonely as his fiancée leaves him. As days go by, his life becomes more impassive as he is stuck with the monotony of observing another person. Blue's reality becomes a cycle of meaningless repetitive events leading to existential trauma.

M.H. Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms* defines Existential Philosophy as "a philosophy centered on "Dasein," or what it is to-be-in-the-world" (180). Therefore, the ambiguous and unnerving feelings about one's own very existence is the root cause for existential trauma. William Barret says:

> The themes that obsess both modern art and existential philosophy are the alienation and strangeness of man in his world; the contradictoriness, feebleness, and contingency of human existence; the central and overwhelming reality of time for man who has lost his anchorage in the eternal (*Irrational Man* 64).

Blue begins to understand the strain of leading a monotonous life for a period which is uncertain. He also blames himself for accepting such a job. He realizes that:

> …he has thrown away his life…Blue feels tears forming in his eyes, but more than grief he feels anger at himself for being such a fool. He has lost whatever chance he might have had for happiness, and if that is the case, then it would not be wrong to say that this is truly the beginning of the end. (*Trilogy* 154).

Soon Blue begins to identify himself with Black. On observing Black, he feels as if he is looking at his own mirror image: "in spying out at Black across the street, it is as though Blue were looking into a mirror, and instead of merely watching another, he finds that he is also watching himself" (*Trilogy* 146). Blue feels that he too is also being spied upon by Black. This doubling of persona or mirror images is another striking feature of the story. Blue remembers three stories which he had read in the past. All the three plots are indicative of how closely the lives of Blue and Black are interconnected. In the first story, a boy is found murdered in a patch of woods outside Philadelphia. The police couldn't get any clues of the case but Gold, the coroner became obsessed with the murder. He made a death mask of the boy and thinks he can solve the mystery. But after twenty years he loses his hope and puts up a photograph of him with the mask offering a reward of two thousand dollars to anyone who can provide information about the little boy. Gold cannot think of a world wherein the murderer of the boy

goes unpunished. Though a perfect stranger, he begins to imagine that the boy has taken residence in the center of his consciousness. Blue senses the presence of Black in him, as analogous to the story of Gold and the boy.

The second story which Blue recalls is about John and his son, Washington Roebling who had successively built the Brooklyn Bridge. John dies after finalizing the plan of the bridge. Roebling too meets with an accident after which he was confined to his room. Still he was able to complete the construction: "…the whole bridge was literally in his head: every piece of it had been memorized, down to the tiniest bits of steel and stone, and though Washington Roebling never set foot on the bridge, it was totally present inside him, as though by the end of all those years it had somehow grown into his body" (*Trilogy* 142).

Blue then remembers the third story which he had read from the magazine "Stranger than Fiction", which details the account of a skier who goes missing in the French Alps and was never found. Many years later, his son on skiing in the same place chanced upon his father's body. When he looked closely at the face of the corpse he feels as if he is looking at himself. The three stories depict the dichotomy between reflection and resemblance: Gold holds not the dead boy but only a mask of him; the bridge conceived in Roebling's mind is nothing but a virtual construct and the unrotten body of dead Skier looks younger than his son. Likewise, Blue understands that the report on Black cannot be an exact mirroring of his life:

> For the past few months his reports have been exceedingly cryptic, no more than a paragraph or two, giving the bare bones and nothing else, and this time he does not depart from the pattern. However, at the bottom of the page he interjects an obscure comment as a kind of test, hoping to elicit something more than silence from White: Black seems ill. I'm afraid he might be dying. Then he seals up the report, saying to himself that this is only the beginning. (*Trilogy* 154)

Blue finds it difficult to write weekly reports as he sees nothing but reflections of himself on observing Black. This explains how deeply Black has been incorporated into Blue's sense of identity that both their existence seems complementary to each other. In the traumatized life of Blue, Black becomes a "crypt" with a corpse that fails to get incorporated/assimilated. In *Ear of the Other*, Jacques Derrida explains the term crypt thus:

> Not having been taken back inside the self, digested, assimilated as in all "normal mourning, the dead object remains like a living dead abscessed in a specific spot in the ego. It has its place, just like a crypt in a cemetery or temple, surrounded by walls and all the rest. The dead object is incorporated in this crypt-the term "incorporated" signaling precisely that one has failed to digest or assimilate it totally, so that it remains there, forming a pocket in the mourning body. The incorporated dead, which one has not really managed to take upon oneself, continues to lodge there like something other and to ventriloquist through the "living." (69)

If writing reports on Black can be considered as an attempt by Blue to successfully come to terms with his trauma, he needs to emotionally detach himself from Black. To do so he decides to visit Black and have a conversation with him. During their discussion, Black refers to Hawthorne and his book *Wakefield.* He narrates the story of the book in which Wakefield leaves his family, rents a room in the city and stays there for years. One day as an overwhelming urge to visit his house takes position of him, he returns, and sees his own funeral and also his wife who has become a lonely widow. Many years pass by and once he chances upon his wife but she fails to recognize him. Wakefield becomes old and on one rainy autumn night while walking through the empty streets he sees his house. He goes near, peeps through the window and thinks how pleasant it would be if he were there. He walks up, knocks the door and enters the house with a crafty smile. Hawthorne's novel Wakefield comes to an abrupt end. This story has close parallels with Hawthorne's life. After graduation, he goes to his mother's house, shuts himself in a room for twelve years to write stories. The discussion of the novel reflects how Blue and Black appear to be the mirror images of each other just like Hawthorne and his character Wakefield. On meeting Black, there happens a reversal of roles when Black discloses that he is a private detective spying on someone which is actually the duty assigned to Blue. Yet again, Black becomes the mirror image of Blue. Hawthorne's life also echoes the solitude of a writer which is evident from the conversation between Black and Blue:

> Writing is a solitary business. It takes over your life. In some sense, a writer has no life of his own. Even when he's there, he's not really there.
>
> Another ghost.
>
> Exactly.
>
> Sounds mysterious. (*Trilogy* 162)

As a means to come into terms with the existential trauma, Blue diverts his attention to detective novels and films. The more he tries to move away from Black, the more he becomes entangled with the latter's self. Disguising himself, he visits Black's room. On reaching Black's room, he feels reluctant to enter and returns. But later he enters, taking advantage of Black's absence and steals some papers from the manuscript Black had been pursuing for some inscrutable purpose. Blue's intrusion into Black's room can be interpreted as his entry to his own inner psyche, as both Blue and Black are replicas of each other: "To enter Black, then, was the equivalent of entering himself, and once inside himself, he can no longer conceive of being anywhere else. But this is precisely where Black is, even though Blue does not know it" (*Trilogy* 174). The papers, he discovers, are nothing but the pages of the report he has sent to White.

On his later visit, Black awaits him with a gun in his hand and admits how he always needed him. He gives his reason:

> To remind me of what I was supposed to be doing. Every time I looked up, you were there, watching me, following me, always in sight, boring

> into me with your eyes. You were the whole world to me, Blue, and I turned you into my death. You're the one thing that doesn't change, the one thing that turns everything inside out. (*Trilogy* 177)

Blue tries to come out of Black's dominance by physically eliminating him. In the article," Inside Paul Auster's Crypt: Autobiography and Spectrality in *Ghosts",* Giorgos Giannakopoulos writes: "When Blue decides to act independently of Black and turns against his authority, he turns into an aggressive and destructive entity, threatening the existence of Black himself, the *archon*, and his archive, comprised by the autobiographical reports" (3). Blue then swats the gun out of Black's hand and shoots him. Before leaving the room, he takes the remaining papers from the table. The report he has been so assiduously sending to White eventually ends up with Blue himself. As stated in the article "Chaos and Complexity in Paul Auster's New York Trilogy, Ginger Jones and Kevin Ells states: "Blue has been pursuing only himself, losing his identity at the expense of finding himself. He exists but he does not exist in himself nor for himself – he is a ghost (634). It is unclear whether there happens a successful mourning of Blue's trauma. But as he tries hard to act against Black and eventually injures him, he becomes successful in his mission.

The last novella of *The New York Trilogy* is "The Locked Room". It is the story of an unnamed narrator traumatized by the "absent-presence" of his childhood friend Fanshawe. The locked room has been a recurring motif in many of the detective fictions. Michael Cook writes: "…the locked room mystery is a

form which not only gives the fullest expression to the elements of closure and enclosure, but allows the greatest possible impact of ratiocination on a plot as perplexing, seemingly impossible, as it is absurd" (*Narratives of Enclosure in Detective Fiction* 6). Locked rooms can either protect a person from external dangers or trap her inside. The protagonists of the three novellas in The New York Trilogy are trapped in some kind of locked room from which they try to escape. The article "Escaping from the Locked Room: Overthrowing the Tyranny of Artifice in Paul Auster's New York Trilogy" describes how the locked room has been a recurrent image throughout the novel:

> Of course, the first part of escaping is to realize that one is trapped; Auster's characters, and in turn the readers who involve themselves in those characters' stories, are slowly and subtly pushed into the locked room of madness, from which logic and reason provide no escape. But then the characters do escape, through a cathartic act of personal will that not only makes them realize the boundaries of the cages that they have been confined to, but which, in so doing, provides the keys with which they can open the doors and escape from the control that is being exerted over them.

"The Locked Room" begins with the unnamed narrator receiving a letter from his friend's wife, Sophie. The letter informs him of Fanshawe's (his childhood friend) disappearance. He reminisces about the good old days of their childhood: "He was the one who was with me, the one who shared my thoughts,

the one I saw whenever I looked up from myself," (*Trilogy* 195). At the age of seven, the narrator and Fanshawe pricked their fingers with pin and made themselves "brothers for life" (*Trilogy* 180). They were born less than a week apart and took their first steps on the same day. They were so attached to each other that one day they asked the narrator's mother whether it was possible for men to get married. The story portrays the narrator and Fanshawe as doppelgängers from the very beginning itself. This motif of doubles is best exemplified in Fanshawe's mother's observation: "You even look like him, you know. You always did, the two of you—like brothers, almost like twins. I remember how when you were both small I would sometimes confuse you from a distance. I couldn't even tell which one of you was mine" (*Trilogy* 237). "The Locked Room" has powerful echoes of Hawthorne's first novel *Fanshawe.*

Assuming that Fanshawe is dead, his wife Sophie decides to publish his manuscripts and solicits the narrator's help. The narrator succumbs to her wish and assures her of his help. He reads Fanshawe's works and sets about publishing them. The work becomes an instant hit in the market: "I realized that once all of Fanshawe's manuscripts had been published, it would be perfectly possible for me to write another book or two under his name—to do the work myself and yet pass it off as his" (*Trilogy* 212). In course of time, the narrator spends a lot of time with Sophie- from calling each other several times to going out for dinner dates. One day he receives a letter from Fanshawe advising him to marry his wife and take care of his son. The letter also warns him against trying to trace down Fanshawe. Deeply disturbed by the letter, he keeps the letter as a secret and

moves on. He marries Sophie and becomes a foster father to her son. Soon the absent presence of Fanshawe begins to haunt him. In his essay "Auster's Sublime Closure: *The Locked Room,* Stephen Bernstein comments: "Ironically it is in his absence that Fanshawe acts most directly on the narrator's life - he becomes the invisible force of inevitability, one very much like fate, guiding the narrator's movements and mental stability" (90).

After the massive success of Fanshawe's work, the publisher asks the narrator to write a biography of Fanshawe. The narrator fears whether tracing Fanshawe would lead to a total breakdown of his own identity. As the work on the biography progresses, he realizes how he was fast losing control over his own subjectivity. By now, the narrator is fully convinced that he won't be able to overcome the trauma unless he personally confronts his alter ego and puts to rest the ghost of his elusive double:

> The book existed for me now only in so far as it could lead me to Fanshawe, and beyond that there was no book at all. It had become a private matter for me, something no longer connected to writing. All the research for the biography, all the facts I would uncover as I dug into his past, all the work that seemed to belong to the book—these were the very things I would use to find out where he was. (*Trilogy* 243)

One of the remarkable symptoms of PTSD is the victim's lack of linguistic as well as interpretive competency. The last line of Fanshawe's letter to the narrator reads: "You are my friend, and my one hope is that you will always

be who you are. With me it's another story. Wish me luck" (*Trilogy* 215). While recalling his friend's words, the narrator subjects it to a kind of Freudian inversion. Thus the declaration statement "you will always be who you are" is transformed into the imperative "…remain who you are. With me it's another story" (*Trilogy* 215). The narrator understands Fanshawe's letter as having an imperative tone. This shows Fanshawe's dominance over him. It also reveals the narrator's lack of linguistic specificity, one of the symptoms of PTSD. The narrator's inability to comprehend the actual meaning of words is further exemplified in his conversation with Fanshawe:

> "I thought you wanted to see me. That's what you said in your letter."
>
> "I said that I wanted to talk to you. There's a difference."
>
> "Let's not split hairs."
>
> "I'm just reminding you of what I wrote." (*Trilogy* 277)

Tormented by the intrusive 'presence' of Fanshawe's 'absence', the narrator now feels a heightened desire to get rid of his doppelganger. Realizing the impracticality of killing Fanshawe in reality, he decides to complete the biography which culminates in the death of Fanshawe. Thus, he hopes to symbolically eliminate the latter:

> There was never any question of telling the truth. Fanshawe had to be dead, or else the book would make no sense. Not only would I have to leave the letter out, but I would have to pretend that it had never been

> written. I make no bones about what I was planning to do. It was clear to me from the beginning, and I plunged into it with deceit in my heart. (*Trilogy* 223)

To collect more details on Fanshawe for writing the biography, the narrator visits Fanshawe's mother, Jane. On his visit, he engages in a sexual relationship with Jane Fanshawe. The narrator's intention to kill Fanshawe is explicit in his sexual act: "…I found myself revelling in my cruelty…I was using her to attack Fanshawe himself" (*Trilogy* 242). In his attempt to record Fanshawe's life, the narrator fails to make a sense of his own existence: "I encounter images of myself in various places, but only at a distance, as though I were watching someone else. None of it feels like memory, which is always anchored within; it's out there beyond what I can feel or touch, beyond anything that has to do with me" (*Trilogy* 266). He also admits that he has learned to live a life with Fanshawe.

The narrator's final encounter with Fanshawe happens at Boston. The two men never see each other as they are separated by double doors. Fanshawe claims that he has taken slow poison hours before. He then asks the narrator to get the red notebook from the room in which he has written the explanations for all his deeds. Upon getting the notebook the narrator asks Fanshawe to open the doors but he refuses. He says he'll die soon because of the poison. The narrator tries to force open the door out of sheer exhaustion, he collapses on the floor. When it

was almost night, the narrator regains his consciousness and moves out. On reaching the south station, he opens the red notebook and starts reading it:

> All the words were familiar to me, and yet they seemed to have been put together strangely, as though their final purpose was to cancel each other out. I can think of no other way to express it. Each sentence erased the sentence before it, each paragraph made the next paragraph impossible. It is odd, then, that the feeling that survives from this notebook is one of great lucidity. (*Trilogy* 283)

To release himself from the grip of his doppelganger, he tears the pages of the red notebook and drops into a dustbin. This act reflects the narrator's attempt to erase Fanshawe and everything associated with him from his life. In fact, this is the final step in working through his trauma. The narrator successfully copes up with his trauma and starts a new life. In *Conversations with Paul Auster*, the author comments on the narrator of "The Locked Room":

> But in the end, he manages to resolve the question for himself—more or less. He finally comes to accept his own life, to understand that no matter how bewitched or haunted he is, he has to accept reality as it is, to tolerate the presence of ambiguities within himself. That's what happens to him with relation to Fanshawe. He hasn't slain the dragon, he's let the dragon move into the house with him. That's why he destroys the notebook in the last scene. (*Trilogy* 36)

The concept of doppelganger becomes a remarkable motif in all the three novellas. The word ‘doppelganger’ has its origin in German which translates to “double walker” or “look alike”. Earlier the term referred to ghost or spectre. But today it is used to denote something which is akin to something else like the mirror image. In many of the novels, doppelganger becomes a literary device, adding more layers to the character as well as the novel. In folk tales and literature, there are vivid descriptions of “doubles”, more or less living, more or less like themselves. Otto Rank’s study *Der Doppelgänger* (“The Double”), studies the double as a cultural phenomenon. He observes that there are many superstitions associated with one’s shadow and her reflections in the mirror, which is an initial stage in the development of the double concept. There are various beliefs that if a person’s double is wounded, she will be wounded too. The double was thus considered as a vital external part of one’s body. For Freud, the double is one of the many aspects of “uncanny”. He further states that “the double is an uncanny harbinger of death” (“The Uncanny” 350). Guy de Maupassant’s *The Oval Mirror* portrays the obsessive artist who is painting the portrait of his wife. As the picture grows, she fades and with the last brush stroke she dies. Dostoevsky's *The Double* narrates the story of an insignificant bureaucrat of Petersburg, Titular Councilor Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin, who cannot resolve his inner conflict between his mental image of himself and who he really is. From this conflict emerges his double, that is, Golyadkin hallucinates a copy of himself, who exhibits all the traits which he himself desires but rejects on moral grounds. In Edgar Alan Poe’s story, *William Wilson*, the narrator, William

Wilson, has a double of the same name, looking exactly similar, including his clothes; but the double only whispers.

In *The New York Trilogy*, the postmodern technique of Pastiche is employed in all the three novellas. Pastiche is a concept put forth by Fredric Jameson in his book *Postmodernism ,or,the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. According to Jameson, "pastiche is like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter" (*Postmodernism* 4). He further adds*:*

> …parody capitalizes on the uniqueness of these styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original. I won't say that the satiric impulse is conscious in all forms of parody: in any case, a good or great parodist has to have some secret sympathy for the original, just as a great mimic has to have the capacity to put himself/herself) in the place of the person imitated. Still, the general effect of parody is - whether in sympathy or with malice - to cast ridicule on the private nature of these stylistic mannerisms and their excessiveness and eccentricity with respect to the way people normally speak or write. So there remains somewhere behind all parody the feeling that there is a linguistic norm in contrast to which the styles of the great modernists can be mocked. (*Cultural Turn* 4)

All the three novellas in *The New York Trilogy* employ the conventional elements of detective fiction. These stories involve a quest to find or trace the whereabouts of Peter Stillman Sr., Black and Mr. Fanshawe. But contrary to the detective fictions, these texts never solve these mysteries, deconstructing the genre of Detective novels. Analyzing 'City of Glass' in his book *Beyond the Red Notebook,* Dennis Barone states:

> As a writer of detective fiction, Quinn had always assumed that "the key to good detective work was a close observation of details. The more accurate the scrutiny, the more successful the results" (105). As a detective, though, Quinn seems satisfied to attend to the surface, seeing it as an end in itself, a means of escape from his troubling memories. When he is compelled to go beyond the surface, to derive some insight from his observations, to hypothesize about underlying meaning, Quinn finds that things don't "yield themselves" in reality as easily as they are made to in fiction. To be sure, Quinn's knowledge about crime and detection is wholly conditioned by their representations in films, books and newspapers, but while this knowledge serves him well as an author, Quinn's reliance on the literary model of detection gradually declines as he sees its inadequacy in an "actual" situation. At first, Quinn doesn't feel handicapped by the fact that he has no knowledge of real crime and detection, for "what interested him about the stories he wrote was not their relation to the world but their relation to other stories" (14). (*The Red Notebook* 78-79)

In ‘Ghosts,’ Blue takes up the role of a detective even though he is not one. The protagonist involves in a quest to trace the life of Black but at the end of the novel it is revealed that he was actually tracing himself. The specifications of detective genre are imitated as a metaphor to indicate an individual’s search for the self. In ‘The Locked Room’, the narrator is not a detective but he eventually imitates the role of a detective on tracing the life of Fanshawe. This is evident from the narrative’s statement:

> I was a detective, after all, and my job was to hunt for clues. Faced with a million bits of random information, led down a million paths of false inquiry, I had to find the one path that would take me where I wanted to go. So far, the essential fact was that I hadn’t found it. None of these people had seen or heard from Fanshawe in years, and short of doubting everything they told me, short of beginning an investigation into each one of them, I had to assume they were telling the truth. (*Trilogy* 256)

All the three novellas present characters who are in a real quest to find their own lost identities. They have a traumatic past which is dissociated. These characters resemble each other in many aspects. The interconnectedness between these stories can be seen as the red notebook appears in the novellas. In ‘City of Glass’, both Quinn and Peter Stillman Sr. makes note in the red note book. In ‘Ghosts’, Blue uses a notebook but its color is not specified. In ‘the Locked Room’, the red notebook is owned by Fanshawe. As such, these novellas can be considered as the pastiches of each other too. The novel with its incoherent

narrative style, free floating referents, ambiguities, and other linguistic inconsistencies disrupts the conventional notion of story-telling. It represents the trauma of existence and the various responses to it. Thus the novel transcends the ineffability of trauma by sketching its various dimensions in the best way possible.

Chapter 5

From Mourner to Avenger: Analysis of Trauma and Revenge in T.D.Ramakrishnan's *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki*

This chapter tries to explore various linguistic and narrative stratagems used in T.D.Ramakrishnan's *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* in conceptualizing trauma. It also attempts to understand how the text resolves the inherent linguistic tensions while narrativizing unrepresentable pain and agony.

Thathamangalam Damodaran Ramakrishnan is a contemporary Malayalam writer, best known as novelist and translator. He has to his credit three cult novels in Malayalam- *Alpha, Francis Itty Cora* and *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki.* In 2017, he won the Vayalar Award and Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for *Sugandhi.* T.D.Ramakrishnan is a writer who experiments with themes those match with contemporary aesthetic predilections. His craftsmanship is well reflected in his efficient use of modern communication technology and altering boundaries of cyber space. T.D. successfully interlinks history and myth to address contemporary issues.

T.D. Ramakrishnan's novel *Alpha* narrates the story of thirteen people who are made to live in the island 'Alpha' situated in Sri Lanka. They start their life afresh as primitive beings for twenty five years, communicating with each other through sign language. They are also uncontrolled by norms or rules of the

society. The novel is about an experiment carried out by a professor of anthropology to find out whether they can realize in twenty five years what humanity has achieved over these decades.

Francis Ittycora synthesizes disciplines of history and mathematics, dismantling all the conventions of narrative styles. It resembles Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*; a book which Mr. Ramakrishnan says is his favorite. Like many modern writers, he employs magical realism in his novels. He believes that human imagination is magical which indulges in wild fantasies that may seem absurd. Further he attempts to make a quantum leap to meta-reality. He also uses myths in his novels. According to him, myths have always been a repository of human imaginations which alters as time progresses. The writer is fascinated by myths as well as silences in history and he structures his novels interweaving both.

Set against the backdrop of Srilankan political turmoil and chaos, *Sugandhi* juxtaposes history, myth and fiction to analyze the aftermath of civil war between Sri Lankan government and LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). Through the female protagonist Sugandhi, the novel foregrounds the traumatic predicament of women who become victims of war, rape, power politics and male gaze. Apart from portraying the susceptibility and helplessness of women, the story exposes their multiple strategies to negotiate with trauma.

The novel begins when the narrator Peter Jeevanantham and his group arrive at Sri Lanka with the aim of shooting the movie 'Women Behind the Fall

of Tigers'. As a film funded by the Sri Lankan government, the movie's focus is on the life of Dr. Rajani Thiranagame, portraying her as the person behind the fall of tigers. Peter had once associated with LTTE for a movie where he met Sugandhi, one of the liberation activists. But on failing in his task of making the film, he had to wriggle free from the clutches of the organization. Presently, being the script writer, Peter engages in a quest to find Sugandhi to play the role of Rajani. Charles Samaveera, one of the military authorities of the highest rank, takes Peter and his team to Divine Pearl, one of the torture camps of the army. There, Peter meets Thamizholi (administrator of the LTTE'S Ladies Wing) who shares certain information about Sugandhi.

The novel attempts to sketch the traumatic lives of Women, particularly Sugandhi, victimized by the Sri Lankan authorities. T.D Ramakrishnan makes use of both online and offline periodicals to trace the life of Sugandhi. Antony, the novelist friend of Peter, mails him the first chapter of Sugandhi's autobiography and reveals that the chapter has been dedicated to Peter. Sugandhi begins the chapter 'Notes on the Life of a Woman Warrior thus:

> I am Sugandhi. This is the name I adopted on joining the Iyakkam. My parents had named me Andal Devanayaki. I was in Columbo till the age of three. My father, Ratnasabapathy, was a professor of Tamil in Columbo University. My mother, Kanakavalli, was a gynaecologist in Castle Street Hospital. ….Soorya Jyothy was my brother. I don't

remember their faces anymore. My memories evolve from their murder. (*Sugandhi* 18)

She further narrates the incidents happened on 24th July, 1983, the day she lost her parents and brother. When the three year old Sugandhi was travelling with her parents and brother in a car, a huge mob stopped them and dragged her father out. The agitated mob stabbed him shouting 'Tiger! Tiger!' and set the car on fire. Sugandhi was pulled out of the car by one of the assailants. The death of her loved ones traumatized her. Her trauma intensifies as she gets shifted to the refugee camp. Later, she is taken care of by her uncle and aunt who reside in West London. The love and care she receives from them helps to heal her mental wounds. To assimilate the dreadful memories of the childhood and to counteract her PTSD, she decides to join the Iyyakkam. She was convinced by Anton Balasingham's wife Adele that the Iyyakkam was a revolutionary movement aimed at fulfilling the dream of Tamil Eelam. Her decision to join the group was solely motivated by her desire to exact revenge against Sinhalese racists who have massacred her family members.

Peter fails to trace the whereabouts of Sugandhi from Antony's mail which had only the notes written by Sugandhi four years ago. Though the mail doesn't mention where she is now, Peter feels relieved that she is alive. While scrolling through the website "Karuppu" to find Sugandhi's writings, Peter unexpectedly comes across "The story of Devanayaki" by Meenakshi Rajarathinam. This story is about the myth of Andal Devanayaki, who lived in

the tenth century A.D. at Kanthalur. The novel magnificently incorporates myth and history, a means by which the author tries to communicate the 'unintelligible' trauma to the readers at various levels.

By interlacing the traumatic lives of Sri Lankan war widows with the myth of Andal Devanayaki, T.D.Ramakrishnan tries to make sense of the broken realities while narrativizing the accounts of rape, bereavement and systematic plunder to which the community of Andal Devanayaki was subjected during those barbaric times. This juxtaposition of myth legend and contemporary events helps in situating a overwhelming traumatic experience in a reconstructed narrative framework. The book *Myth, Literature and the Unconscious* explains how myths serve to release, sublimate and integrate repressed drives of the individuals. Jacob Arlow in his essay "Ego, Psychology and the Study of Mythology" states:

> The myth is a particular kind of communal experience. It is a special form of shared fantasy, and it serves to bring the individual into relationship with members of his cultural group on the basis of certain common needs. Accordingly, the myth can be studied from the point of view of its function in psychic integration—how it plays a role in warding off feelings of guilt and anxiety, how it constitutes a form of adaptation to reality and to the group in which the individual lives, and how it influences the crystallization of the individual identity and the formation of the superego. (375)

Arlow also describes the function of myths as shared cultural fantasies that encourage defensive and adaptive ego functions in the service of personality as well as super-ego development. Analyzing Ernst Cassier's observations on myths, David Bindey comments: "Mythical symbolism leads to an objectification of feelings; myth objectifies and organizes human hopes and fears and metamorphosizes them into persistent and durable works. Myth is then a symbolic expression of emotion and instinct with an objective character of its own…" (*Myth and Literature* 10). Myth serves as an explanatory model which aims at understanding the inconceivable through metaphorical immediacy. There is always a concurrently terrifying as well as fascinating spell attached to it which contrasts the logical interpretations of reality. The use of myths in a narrative can offer diverse possibilities. One of them, as Jill Scott observes in "Translating myth: The Task of Speaking Time and Space" is to: "bridge one spatiotemporal context to another and to grant continued and renewed significance to a time-tested cultural narrative" (1).

The mythical story of Devanayaki happens at Kanthalur, a place well known for its galaxies of scholarships. Born to Periya Koyikkan and Chamba, Devanayaki's charm captivated all the young men of Kanthalur with her beauty. Apart from her interests in music and dance, she learns Science and Politics. After studying *Arthashastra*, she also receives secret training from her father in the art of using weapon. She becomes the eighth wife of Mahindra Varma, the king of Kanthalur. Later, the king Rajaraja Chola from Thanjavur conquers Kanthalur and Mahindra Varma is captured alive. Many stories about

Devanayaki's fate after the battle abound. In one version, Devanayaki escapes through an underground passage and reaches Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple. An aura surrounds her and she gets transformed into Devanayaki. Further, she attains the status of 'Jnanasaraswati' or The Goddess of Wisdom. In another story, she later becomes the wife of Thanumalayan, a saint. Losing her memories after the battle, she marries the saint and assumes the name 'Anasooya'. It is also that the dynasty of Nanchi Kurava Vamsa originates from her. In yet another version, unlike Poomani Pananaar's 'Kanthalur Pattu' and many stories associated with Kanthalur, Devanayaki does not commit suicide nor does she escape from the place. According to *Susana Supina* by Srivallabha Bhudhanaar, she becomes the queen of the Chola dynasty by marrying Rajaraja Chola. Later Devanayaki delivers a baby girl, Kooveni. When Kooveni becomes three years old, she gets brutally raped and killed by the secret troop of Mahindra, the Sinhala King. "...Kuveni's corpse was found near the Chidambaram temple. Her body had the marks of sexual abuse with 'Pattavessi' written on her chest. The murder of her daughter traumatizes Devanayaki. The novel illustrates many instances which reflect her symptoms of PTSD. According to *Susana Supina* it took several months for Devanayaki to recover from the shock of her daughter's death. She goes to Sree Vallabha Bhuddhanar in the choodamani vihara to accept Buddhism. But as she is desperate to take revenge upon Mahinda and has not completely gotten rid of worldly desires, Buddhanar sends Devanayaki back. Upon her way back at Tiruvarur, she becomes involved with Rajendra, Rajaraja Chola's son. This is in essence a form of revenge against Rajaraja Chola who

couldn't do anything against Kuveni's murderers . Rajendra sculpts the idol of 'jnanasaraswati'and installs it on the Thiruvathira of Margazhi. Devanayaki performs dance but on remembering Kuveni, she bursts into tears at the end. Further, she asks Rajendra two things: she wishes for Mahinda's death and she wants another child to fill the void of Kuveni. But as her hatred towards Mahinda grew to the extremities, she herself sets for a mission to avenge for her daughter's death. Devanayaki plans to burn 'Sinhasailam', Mahinda's palace. She reaches Sigiriya where Sinhasailam is located. She waited for a chance to kill him. She hatches an elaborate plan to murder Mahinda. But later, on becoming the disciple of Nishanka Vajran, she masters all the tantric practices and in the process loses all her desires to exact venegence. Upon realizing Devanayaki's desire to eliminate him he flies into a rage and chops of her breasts. When he tries to kill her, she rises into the sky, places one leg over Sigiriya and the other over a hill, Sreepada Mala. She destroys 'Sinhasaila' which turns into a burial ground. She becomes a liberated soul and people start worshipping her. Devanayaki's breasts getting chopped off by Mahinda has echoes of the Shurpanakha episode in Ramayanam. For making lustful advances to him, Lakshmana kills Surpanakha by cutting off her nose and breasts. As breasts symbolizes female erotic power, its chopping off can be construed as an inverse of castration.

The myth of Devanayaki has close parallelism with the experiences of Sugandhi. They become doppelgängers of one another. Sugandhi gets married to Stalin and they have a daughter, Kadalppura. Stalin, a Sea Tiger working under Soosie, gets killed in an encounter with the Sri Lankan navy and their daughter

goes missing. Like Devanayaki who becomes traumatized after the death of her daughter Kuveni, Sugandhi too becomes tormented with her daughter's disappearance. Sugandhi's plans to blast the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) parallels Devanayaki's destruction of 'Sinhasailam'. Describing the use of myth in the novel, Deepa Rachel Thomas Comments:

> The elevation of myth to the point of becoming history leads in turn to become a redemptive canon. Myth becomes the rectifying conscience that repairs and resolves the present of Sri Lanka and orients the future. The mettle of Devanāyaki even while encountering death and her promise to wipe the tears of the Sri Lankan community, indifference to its ethnic differences, is a rectifying testimony. And it is this that makes Devanāyaki distinct among other Tamil deities and myths. Devanāyaki revenges and rises, not alone for her husband neither for her chastity, but for the entire human species out there who are suffering injustice as she has suffered. Devanāyaki finds her manifestation in Sugandhi, the future of Sri Lankan injustice towards Tamil or ethnic minorities. It orients us for the future that it emphasizes on a creative movement to attain freedom from injustices, where a new dispensation is opened up. ("Myth-History Interface" 167)

Through many online websites and secret organizations, Peter gathers information about Sugandhi. He learns that Sugandhi's opposition against the

anti-democratic policies of the LTTE did not go well with organization. Consequently, she was forced to marry Stalin, one of the Tamil Tigers. She continues her protest against the Sri Lankan government. Due to her uncompromising activism, Sri Lankan government chops off her hands. Later, Meenakshi Rajarathinam, a woman who has two daughters, Arul and Yamuna, adopts her.

The novel oscillates between past and the present, interweaving the lives of Devanayaki and Sugandhi. Peter, on his quest to trace Sugandhi gets some clues from his friend Manju. Manju leaves a note for Peter which says: "There is a music video uploaded on You Tube called SAD. I think the woman in the video is your Sugandhi" (*Sugandhi* 65). The video begins with loud sounds where in a large crowd pleading with the UN observers not to leave. The visuals of Sri Lanka's Killing Field along with scenes of rape carried out at gun point flash on the screen. The video also shows a singer who discards her clothing upon reaching the highest point of ecstasy. The video ends when the singer in her trans like state slips into a comma. Peter realizes that the singer is not Sugandhi but he finds SAD as the abbreviation of Sugandhi Alias Devanayaki. The following lines in the SAD's website repeat throughout the novel, as a trope to emphasize Sugandhi's trauma:

I am Sad Sad

I am Mad Mad

Kill Me Kill Me Kill Me

I am the one with lost dreams

I am the one with forgotten love

Sad-Mad (*Sugandhi* 65).

Much later, 'Save Sri Lanka from Fascism' (SSF) movement is launched by a woman who introduces herself as Meenakshi Rajarathinam. In a personal mail to Gayathri Perera (one among the members of SSF), Meenakshi asks to arrange an online meeting in Skype. In the meeting, Meenakshi does not come online but shares a recorded video message. She explains how Sri Lankan Military had captured her to present to the VIPs. In a secret room near Temple Trees, she is repeatedly raped for three days. Eventually, she is shifted to Divine Pearl where she is forced to stay for three weeks. When Meenakshi tries to escape, she gets caught. She was brutally raped using modern instruments. Unable to bear the tortures, she confesses. The military officer orders to cut off her hands and disfigure her face with acid as the punishment for attempting to escape. After burning off her face with acid, they plan to cut off her hands. But before executing the act, the General gives her a chance to escape from the torture provided that she speaks to the TV channels in support of the President. Finding no other way, she agrees but when the reporters come, she reneges on her promise and speaks her mind.

Meenakshi escapes to Canada with the help of HOPE, a human rights organization. After three months, a hired criminal enters her apartment, chops off her hands and escapes with her severed limbs. She doesn't die. The recorded

video message ends there. On the next day, at 10 pm, Meenakshi comes online. She reveals that she is not Meenakshi but Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki. On leaving the Iyakkam, she changes her name to Andal Devanayaki. Dr. Rajarathinam (Meenakshi's husband) was her mother's colleague who gets killed in the massacre of 1983 like her parents. Meenakshi was her neighbor in Canada. When Sugandhi's hands are chopped off, it is Meenakshi, her neighbor who saves her. Sugandhi criticizes the Iyakkam for its anti-democratic set up. She explains how the leadership eliminated people who disagree with them. In the case of women, the leaders of the Iyakkam would get them married off to somebody from Tiger leadership. Sugandhi's marriage to Stalin was one such kind.

SSF consists of a group of women who are deeply traumatized by the atrocities of both the Iyakkam as well as the Sri Lankan Government. Many of them were widowed at a very young age. They wish to fight against the Lankan dictatorship in every way possible. The SSF activists plan to stage a protest during the Common Wealth Summit that was being held in Columbo, demanding freedom of expression, and rehabilitation of people and widows injured in the war. They also wanted the government to put an end to the attack on Muslims. The activists believed that the protestors crowding the city of Colombo on the day of the Summit would make the dictator surrender. They had also planned a Nano operation to assassinate the President. But all these plans are boomed. The secret agency of the government arrests many of the activists including Arul and Yamuna (Meenakshi Rajarathinam's daughters). They are raped using torture

pens and iron robots. In the climactic scene, the novel seamlessly merges the myth of Devanayaki and the life of Sugandhi. Sugandhi drives the car with her foot and reaches the venue of the summit. Being a suicide bomber, the bomb explodes and she embraces the flames just like Devanayaki, who after burning 'Sinhasailam' is raised to the sky.

Women belonging to the SSF movement attempt to work through their trauma by means of revenge. Thomas Hobbes defines revengefulness as "desire by doing hurt to another to make him condemn some fact of his own" (*Leviathan* 39).C.S.Lewis describes in detail the motifs behind the act of revenge in his book *The Problem of Pain*. According to him, "Revenge loses sight of the end in the means, but its end is not wholly bad—it wants the evil of the bad man to be to him what it is to everyone else. This is proved by the fact that the avenger wants the guilty party not merely to suffer, but to suffer at his hands, and to know it, and to know why" (*Sugandhi* 92). PTSD patients are prone to thoughts of vengeance and feelings of rage towards the perpetrators in instances of rape, rejection, insult, betrayal etc. Revenge fantasies that victims harbour may be at times so uncontrollable and dangerous that the victims might exhibit paranoid traits when under stress. Karan Horney states the functions of vindictiveness as:

> (i) to provide a form of self-protection to the person against the hostility from without, as well as against the hostility from within (ii) to restore injured pride; and (iii) to provide the hope for, or sensation of, a vindictive triumph. (iv) to keep under repression feelings of hopelessness

about one's life. (qtd in *Collected Papers on Schizophrenia and Related Subjects 179*)

Though the core element underlying revenge fantasies is hatred towards the offenders, the victims often have a medley of emotions. It involves anger towards the perpetrators, fear to fight alone, helplessness over the callousness of the world, revulsion against the injustices, etc. There can be various reasons for the traumatized individual to inculcate fantasies of revenge. Many studies on trauma and vindictiveness have observed some of the emotional benefits of having revenge plans against those responsible for the crime. In the article, "Understanding and Ameliorating Revenge Fantasies in Psychotherapy", Mardi J. Horowitz says:

> Revenge fantasies are persistent because they also provide additional positive emotional effects. The victim can feel good about gaining a sense of power and control by planning vengeance and may experience pleasure at imagining the suffering of the target and pride at being on the side of some spiritual primal justice. If that self-righteous feeling is surrendered, revenge fantasies may activate shame or guilt. Simply calling this medley of emotions "anger" in therapy can be unempathic.

Lucy Lafrage discusses the role of the fantasies of vengeance in representing and mastering rage and rebuilding the lost self. She states:

> The use of the revenge scenario to restore a damaged sense of individual meaning and value and to make this known to others is an aspect of

> revenge dynamics…. Pieces of the story of revenge tend to be fleeting, broken up, and perceived by only one participant at a time. Revenge is often an organizing plot in the background that we recognize only in retrospect, or at least at a considerable distance from the here-and-now process.

Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* has discussed in detail the characteristics of trauma and the various ways of coping with it. According to her, PTSD patients might resist the process of mourning which causes stagnation while trying to recover from trauma. This resistance gets manifested as either revenge or forgiveness/compensation. Herman explains how the revenge fantasy becomes the mirror image of traumatic memory reversing the role of perpetrator and the victim:

> It often has the same grotesque, frozen, and wordless quality as the traumatic memory itself. The revenge fantasy is one form of the wish for catharsis. The victim imagines that she can get rid of the terror, shame, and pain of the trauma by retaliating against the perpetrator. The desire for revenge also arises out of the experience of complete helplessness. In her humiliated fury, the victim imagines that revenge is the only way to restore her own sense of power. She may also imagine that this is the only way to force the perpetrator to acknowledge the harm he has done her. (*Trauma and Recovery* 135)

According to Herman, revenge fantasy can never bring relief to the traumatized individual. The violent graphic revenge fantasies can be equally frightening and disturbing as the images of original trauma. Herman also states that the thought of revenge can intensify the victim's fear, destabilizing her sense of self: "They are also highly frustrating, since revenge can never change or compensate for the harm that was done. People who actually commit acts of revenge… do not succeed in getting rid of their post-traumatic symptoms; rather, they seem to suffer the most severe and intractable disturbances" (*Trauma and Recovery* 135).

In acts of rape, women body becomes a site for inflicting trauma. In "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words" Sharon Marcus describes the politics of rape: "We understand rape as a language and use this insight to imagine women as neither already raped nor inherently rapable…. Many current theories of rape present rape as an inevitable material fact of life and assume that a rapist's ability to physically overcome his target is the foundation of rape" (387). The word "rape has its origin from the Latin word "rapere" which means "to seize". People in power consider rape as a tool to subjugate/ control women. It is also used to keep them in a state of constant fear. Many theorists consider rape as a kind of terrorism upon female body to make them depended on men. It is the political system and oppressive attitude of the patriarchy which gets reflected in the act of rape. Thus, rape becomes an act of power-play. In "Socio-Political Dimensions of Rape", Sarbani Guha Ghosal identifies desensitization as one of the factors which results in the growing number of rapes:

> There is a kind of desensitization effect associated with rape. Every society is somehow desensitized to the painful experiences of rape victims and put their moral integrity in question. This attitude often motivates the act when someone is out to dishonour any individual member or a particular community. Rape can be considered as the easiest way to achieve this. (78)

Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki describes trauma inflicted upon womanhood, particularly motherhood. The novel describes the strange interrogating method employed by the supporters of the government, "first rape, then question". Gayathri Parera is one among the Sri Lankan war victims who was brutally raped by the government supporters after her husband was gunned down in front of her very eyes. Julie was also raped by the despicable man nicknamed 'lion' for his ferocity. He makes her pregnant. The officers were so cruel who believed that impregnating women rebels and making them live with the child could be the greatest punishment given to them. They find women's sense of chastity as their prime weakness. Julie's child was later killed by the lion himself. Though deeply tormented by the incident, Julie decides to fight back against the Sri Lankan government. With the motif of revenge, the novel departs from the conventional depicts of women in which she is granted little agency.

The novel *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* becomes a medium where myth, history and fiction converge. It is dedicated to Rajani Thiranagama, a true warrior of the time. She fought for a time when people could live peacefully

enjoying freedom. She endures all forms of pain inflicted upon her and decides to fight against her opponents. She says: "One day some guns will silence me, and it will not be held by an outsider, but by the son born in the womb of this very society, from a woman with whom my story is shared" (*Sugandhi* 86).

Like other trauma fictions, intertextuality becomes a significant feature in the novel. The novel deals with multiple narrators who present different fragments of the story, finally making it a coherent whole. To portray the political tensions between the Tamil minority and Sri Lankan government, and to depict the traumatic lives of the war widows, T.D. Ramakrishnan makes use of the myth of Andal Devanayaki. The story narrated by Meenakshi Rajarathinam, the reference to the archeological document of Susana Supina and the various blogs and websites from which Peter gets to know about Sugandhi add to the intertextual elements of the novel.

Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki is also regarded as a historiographic metafiction. In the novel, Peter plays the role of the historiographer who narrates the incidents of the past. Peter appears as a scriptwriter of the film "Women Behind the Fall of Tigers". He collects information from various sources to unveil the story of Rajani as well as Sugandhi. The fragmentary often dissociated pieces of information Peter collects suggest the suspension of the traditionally accepted historiography. The novel employs innovative writing strategies interweaving history, myth and fiction. It explores the national trauma of Sri Lanka after the civil war, the trauma of the War widows and particularly the

trauma of motherhood. In the mythical story, the brutal murder of Kuveni traumatizes Devanayaki. Her revenge against Mahinda stems from this trauma of losing her only daughter. Similar is the case with Sugandhi. Her daughter gets killed by the supporters of the government. The absence of both these children's fathers in the scenes of their murder decentralizes the dominance of male figures. Unlike many narratives on violence in which men dominate and exercise the power to kill, *Sugandhi* revolves around its female protagonists who avenge for the death of their daughters. In a review about the novel *Sugandhi*, Meena T. Pillai states:

> It is the political intensity of the novel that is most striking about it. As the tale of the Tamil- Sinhalese strife unfolds its historical dimensions, the personal and the mythical enter the framework of the story to reveal the constructed-ness of all histories....Each attempt to retell the past ends in a crisis, a friction between fiction, reality and myth. Thus the central narrator, who is in fact a scriptwriter, plays with alternative modes of understanding the Tamil Eelam's mythical past, the fraught ethnic history of Sri Lanka and its turbulent political present. (The Hindu)

Hence, the novel deals with the theme of trauma and revenge, adopting the techniques of fragmented narrative structure and heteroglossia. Negotiating the limitations of representation, the novel with its unique narrative strategies unveils the national trauma of Sri Lanka, particularly the war widows.

Chapter 6

Wounds of Loss: A study of Love Trauma in K.R.Meera's *The Gospel of Yudas*

This chapter analyzes the novel *The Gospel of Yudas* written by the Malayali writer, K.R.Meera. It explores the theme of love trauma and studies how the narrative negotiates the challenges of language in narrativizing the same. It also expounds the intricate struggles of the traumatized protagonist to live in harmony with the realities of life. The intertextual elements, imageries and symbols used in the novel are also analyzed in detail to unravel the techniques of representing the ineffable trauma.

"Love is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired" – Robert Frost

Love might be one of the most ardent emotions a person can ever experience in her life. Despite being a monosyllabic four letter word, the feeling it evokes is so intense and dynamic. The etymology of 'Love' rambles back to the Proto-Indo European word 'leubh', is used to describe 'care' and 'desire'. In Old English, 'lufu' meant 'deep affection'. The word is also said to be derived from the Sanskrit word 'lubhyati' (he desires). Nathaniel Braden writes: "Romantic love is a passionate spiritual-emotional-sexual attachment between a man and a woman that reflects a high regard for the value of each other's person" (*The Psychology of Romantic Love* 3). There can be various shades of love-

material/platonic, romantic/sexual, requited/unrequited, compassionate/obsessive, and so on.

In *The Brain and Love*, Marvin Rosen states: "The anatomy of love rests in the brain within the limbic system" (29). Helen Fisher's book *Why We Love* analyses the chemistry and brain circuitry involved in love. Making use of the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) for brain, her team observed that one's thoughts and feelings of romantic love are determined by varied levels of the chemical dopamine. She says:

> The VTA (ventral tegmental area) is a mother lode for dopamine-making cells. With their tentacle-like axons, these nerve cells distribute dopamine to many brain regions, including the caudate nucleus…. it produces focussed attention, as well as fierce energy, concentrated motivation to attain a reward, and feelings of elation, even mania—the core feelings of romantic love. (64)

Love, one of the most polysemous words, is also one of the universal themes in literature despite generic boundaries. Ideas of love dates back to Plato's *The Symposium* in which he says: "Love is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete" (26). Literary history has offered many facets of romantic love over the centuries. Ranging from the love deities of Aphrodite and Eros in Greek, to the stories of love lorn knights of the medieval ages, metaphysical love of Donne and Marvell, and many more, we have witnessed

umpteen fashions of love. Love takes many forms, some strange and shocking, some more familiar, but all are part of phantasmagoria.

Malayalam Literature has also countless stories portraying different shades of love like O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha*, Lalithambika Antharjanam's *Agnisakshi,* Vaikkom Muhammed Basheer's *Balyakalasakhi,*Perumbadavam Sreedharan's *Oru Sankeerthanampole,* Kamala Das' *Neermathalam Poothakalam,* M.T.Vasudevan Nair's *Manju* , etc. Many malayalam women writers have their own reservations about the concept of love. "It is agonizing to carry someone in your heart as the journey progresses; the weight of your heart gets doubled with the weight of another life inside it" (77), says the renowned Malayali writer, journalist, and columnist K.R.Meera. As against many narratives of love by male writers, Meera's novels rebuild the ideas of love shaped by patriarchy.

Meera, a multi award-winning author, humanist, socialist, and environmentalist explores the intricacies of gender dialectics. Her first short story collection, *Ormayude Njarambu* won Gita Hiranyan Endowment Award instituted by Kerala Sahitya Academy. *Ave Mariya*, her short story, received Kendra Sahitya Academy award in 2004. Her novel *Aarachar* received much acclaim and received many prestigious awards. With a voice which is fresh yet empathetic, the novels of Meera bear the marks of her struggle to break free from the accepted mode of representation. Readers find in her works the intricacies of love, its dynamics. *Aa Maratheyum Marannu Marannu Njan, Yudasinte*

Suvushesham, Karineela, Malakhayude Marukukal reflect Meera's discontent with accepted forms of love. Instead, she tries to focus on its toxic and malicious side. She destabilizes the conventional definitions of love, foregrounding its belligerent and venomous side. She says: "Love and spectre are one and the same. They search relentlessly for desirable bodies, destroying the coffins that confine them" (107). Meera's novels reconstruct all the patriarchal concepts of love as her novels deal with love and the trauma of being unloved.

Meera's *Karineela* (Dark Blue) tells the story of Geetha, a married woman with two children. Before the story begins, the writer warns the reader that she is narrating her own experience which does not confine to the frames of morality. The first person narrative intensifies the readers' dilemma whether to treat the novel as a piece of fiction or as the writer's own life story. The central characters of Meera's novels are women who are caught in an unhappy marriage, deprived of sexual, emotional or human rights. In *Karineela*, the protagonist, a married woman, seeks for her man in previous births. Her desire is so strong that she gives up everything to be with him, to seduce him.

The narrator and her husband are on a search to buy a new house. Their search leads them to an ancient house owned by an ascetic. Upon meeting the ascetic, the protagonist falls head over heels in love with him. When her husband says that the ascetic is unwilling to sell the house, she mutters to herself: "I do not need the house anymore. I need its owner" (*Novellakal* 6). She develops a habit of frequently visiting the ascetic's house. Geetha describes how her hands crawl

on his shoulders like a snake; how she bites his lips with her poisonous teeth making him blue. She repeatedly compares her love to a venomous snake. The absence of the ascetic makes her traumatic and she constantly yearns for his presence. Finally, she soothes herself hoping that in the next birth she can find him and with her venomous love, she can make him blue again: "My love is like a house on fire. Even in the rain of passion, it burns passionately. Flames spread to the sky. This birth is over. There will be another birth. The monk will return. My bite will make him blue once again" (*Novellakal* 12)

The opening lines of *Meera Sadhu (The Poison of Love)* states: "Love is like milk. After its shelf life, it curdles, tastes sour and becomes poisonous. Madhavan fed me that poison. But I didn't die. Instead I killed him" (103) .The novel portrays the story of Thulasi who is again a victim of unrequited love. After her engagement with Vinayan, her college friend, Thulasi falls in love with Madhavan, a handsome journalist. Eventually, she elopes with him. Though she learns that Madhavan is a great womanizer, she is unable to hate him. Meanwhile, she gives birth to her first child. Madhavan, who becomes a famous TV person, starts ignoring his wife and child which makes Thulasi depressed. As their son is an exact replica of his father, Thulasi starts talking to the baby about love, in an explicit act of PTSD. After their second baby is born, things deteriorated and Madhavan decides to divorce her. At the same time, his latest girlfriend gets pregnant. Thulasi agrees to the divorce but asks him to spend a night with her. They make love and when he was about to sleep, she tells him that she had killed their two children:

> I showed him the line of ants that fed the deceased bodies of our children. He screamed. I was naked, my hair untied. I broke out into a hysterical frenzy running all around the room. With me, I felt the earth revolving. The bed, the fan, the sofa, the cupboard which had the letters of Madhavan's lovers, the ant eaten bodies of my children-everything started to revolve. (*Novellakal* 143)

After spending three months in a mental asylum, she flees to Vrindaban, Madurai and becomes one among the Meera Sadhus, a group of women either widowed or deserted by their relatives. Her trauma transforms into revenge as she sets her mind on exacting vengeance on Madhavan by killing him. After twelve years, Madhavan and Thulasi meet. He pleads with her to come back. Though she remains silent, she thinks of her past – his perfidy and their dead sons. She runs away from him, bursting into the same old hysterical laughter. She buys bananas for the monkeys in the temple sanctuary and lay them out on the floor. When the monkeys come to grapple the bananas, she begins fighting with them. They bite all over her body and blood starts to ooze out. She laughs again thinking of Madhavan's lovers begging on streets with shaved heads. At last she says: "Madhavan is mine. I will love him again with hatred. I will love him to defeat him, to sanctify him and finally to dissolve into him" (*Novellakal* 144).

Thulasi's trauma gets communicated through her use of language. On first meeting Madhavan, she feels overwhelmed in his presence: "Being with him, my heart brimmed with an unfamiliar fondness. On parting, it boiled over tossing my

heart back to desolation" (*Novellakal* 108"). But towards the end of the novel, she describes love as a deadly poison. She compares Madhavan's love to many strange objects like curdled milk, spectre, snake that has gulped its own tail, and salt which can corrode a vessel. She even compares love to Poothana (an evil character who comes to kill Lord Krishna): "Disguised in the simplest way, it embraced me with poisonous breasts" (*Novellakal* 136). Thulasi's attempt to harm herself is yet another means to gain control over her body. In the article, "Being Loved and Unloved: An Analysis of Love Trauma in K.R.Meera's *Meera Sadhu*", Aparna Raveendran C. remarks: "By committing self-harm, she becomes the master of her own body, thus defeating Madhavan who once owned her" (94).

Known for her phenomenal portrays of beautiful and brave women in her novels, K.R.Meera has always been vocal about the equality and freedom of her women protagonists. Her novels like *Hangwoman, Khathakan, Khabar,* portray characters of Chethana, Bhavana and Sathyapriya respectively who seek to establish equality with their male counterparts. Also interesting is the author's take on the concept of love. Meera unleashes centuries-old notions of pure love to demonstrate the righteousness of women's choices.

Meera's another novel *Yellow is the Colour of Longing* tells the story of two strangers who meet at a doctor's out-patient section. They feel attracted to each other and soon develop a bond. The woman could break herself from the accepted norms of the society whereby the relationship between a married woman and another man is immoral:

> Hence, the same yellow - jaundice that once caused physical illness in the woman and caused the death of the man, is attributed to the desire and longing they possessed. When the desire in the man killed him, the longing in the woman gave her new hopes to live forward. Both the conventional morality and reflective morality co- exists in a patriarchal society made man and woman. By default, the conventional morality asks for acceptance of the societal norms just to preserve the social order, reflective morality solely depends on the individual's perception of his/her moral right and wrong. The characters in the story could hardly supress their feelings for each other. Unlike the age-old portrayals of romanticized or idealized love, the carnal desire, the lust, the unending longing for flesh exhibited by the characters are depicted along with all its absurdity. (Review of Literature 2201)

Aarachar or *Hangwoman* centers on Chetna Graddha Mullick, a twenty-two year old woman who was forced to become the first ever Hangwoman of the country owing to her family profession. She is then able to break all the oppressive power structures of the society that nullify women's existence. This transition of Chetna to a dignified woman upsets every male opponent including her father and lover. The novel discusses the themes of love, depression and death.

The Gospel of Yudas (Yudassinte Suvishesham) is Meera's yet another poignant narrative dealing with excruciating love and loss. In an interview given

to Blink, she narrates about conceiving the idea behind *The Gospel of Yudas.* She says:

> It was written in semi-consciousness, in a delirium-like state in 2007. I wrote the novel in spite of chikungunya fever….I felt blank but when I looked onto the screen, flashes of color due to the fever reminded me of the lake in my village where I was born. I was also reminded of my childhood wish to fall in love with a Naxalite. News reports, anecdotes, memories, fantasies and fears came rushing in and Yudas was born.

The story is set against the backdrop of Naxalite movement in Kerala during the Emergency Period of 1980s. While reviewing the novel, Meera Kandaswamy states: Without veering away from the singular plot of a young woman's obsessive quest for dangerous love, it manages all at once to capture the aftermath of police brutality, the macabre face of the state machinery, the price of betrayal and the blind sense of sacrifice that makes some young men and women decide to give up their lives for the sake of a promised revolution. (The Hindu)

The short novel portrays the traumatic life of J.U.Das aka Yudas, also nicknamed as 'crocodile Das'. Das was arrested and tortured mercilessly. The Police wanted him to reveal the secrets of the Kerala Naxal group during the Emergency period. Unable to withstand the atrocities inflicted upon him, Yudas utters the name of his dearest kin, Sunanda. Soon Sunanda is brought to the camp: "Her sari was stripped off. Policemen thrashed her legs and sprinkled

chilly powder over the injuries. They stamped her chest to a pulp; crushed her nipples until they fell off" (*Yudas* 170). Das could no longer witness the brutalities upon of his lover. He then reveals the name of Rajan, another member of their group hoping that the policemen would stop torturing Sunanda. Subsequently, Rajan was arrested and subjected to the same kind of third degree punishments. Both Sunanda and Rajan were brutalized to such an extent that they die in custody. The policemen force Das to throw their bodies in the gorge. He had no other option than to obey them.

Das' trauma stems from the guilt of betraying his close friends. He sees himself as Yudas, the biblical character who betrayed Jesus, the son of God. He tries to escape from his past by barricading himself from the world. He takes up the occupation of a retriever of bodies of people drowned in rivers and lakes. Das attempts to move away from his past scarred by the memories of brutal violence of people in power and the death of his beloved.

It is the German-American neurologist and psychiatrist William G. Niederland who introduced the concept of survivor guilt. Niederland defines survivor guilt as "the ever present feeling of guilt, as accompanied by conscious or unconscious dread of punishment, for having survived the very calamity to which their loved ones succumbed" (*Yudas*238). He further adds that the survivor cannot justify her own survival as she believes that she deserves the same fate of her dear ones. Her identification with the past gets reflected in the manifestation of various symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Survivor Guilt is a state

of mind when a person feels guilty of surviving a traumatic event. It is a visible symptom of PTSD. The underlying feeling of the victim is the guilt of one's own survival when the person close to her has died. In some instances, the victim also feels that she should have done more to save her loved ones. The persistent feeling of survivor guilt can also indicate a final link between the survivor and her loved one. The survivor will feel numb overwhelmed with the guilt. "This numbing of feeling beyond normal bounds is a necessary anaesthetic, enabling the survivor to function under severe stress. This numbing exacts a high price: for the gates of feeling are closed not only to the trauma but also, to some extent, to the sources of life and growth and happiness" (*Surviving Trauma* 5). In the novel, Das wishes to live with the memories of the past as he does not want to end the only connection with his beloved, Sunanda.

Das' traumatic past is revealed through the character of Prema, who gets infatuated to him. Prema is the daughter of Vasudevan, who worked at Kakkayam camp during the Emergency period. She realizes that Das was one of the victims of her father's brutal deeds. Prema follows Das, probes into his past life to make sense of his strange behavior. She gets to know more about the ex-Naxalite, his love for Sunanda, and his current state of being beleaguered by an invincible sense of survivor guilt. Das could only relate himself with the biblical Yudas, the traitor. When Prema calls him "Das", "Yu-Das", he corrects. (*Yudas* 166). Though Prema constantly declares his love for him, Das ignores her as he is burdened with the horrors of the past:

I can never ever forget her, Prema.

On closing my eyes, I still see the gorge. I see her body drowning deep down….

I see it right in front my eyes. I shall continue seeing it forever! (*Yudas* 178)

Das' act of retrieving corpses from the lake is his penance for throwing the dead bodies of his loved ones in the gorge. His trauma gets manifested in many forms. It varies from the feeling of guilt and worthlessness to self-loathing and revenge. The novel explicitly recounts his revenge when he recovers the dead body of Parameshwaran's son. Parameshwaran was one among the policemen who brutally tortured Das at the Kakkayam camp. After retrieving his son's body, Das yells "Naxalbari Zindabad" with folded fists. He kicked the dead body and challenged Parameshwaran to arrest him if he dares.

It is Sunanda's sister who discloses Prema about the lives of Naxalite group particularly Sunanda and Das. She tells her of Das' occasional visits to Sunanda's house after her death. Das visits Sunanda's house and gives her sister some money. This is part of Das' attempt to pay reparations for the crimes he has committed. Prema wishes to bring Das out from the shackles of his traumatic past. She tries different ways to do the same. One such means was to provoke Das. Prema says sadistically: Sunanda is dead. Your incessant talks neither benefit you nor the long dead Sunanda" (*Yudas* 70). Das becomes extremely angry when Prema adds that Sunanda did not love him but Rajan. He lunges at

her throat, tightens his hands around her neck. After a moment he is seized by an essence of guilt and begins confessing to Prema. Das talks of the destructive machinery of the state that was responsible for his current turmoil. His language heavily laden with metaphors is indicative of his PTSD: “Fish reminds me of dead bodies. There are dead people at the bottom of every water body. On diving deep into the water, you will find fish slithering out of every corpse” (*Yudas* 75).

One day Prema meets Parameshwaran, a fellow cop who worked with her father at the Kakkayam camp during the Emergency Period. Parameshwaran was nicknamed as ‘Beast’ owing to his barbarity and meanness. He recollects the horrid brutality against the Naxals in custody during Emergency. Prema feels tormented listening to the atrocities inflicted to Das and Sunanda. One her way back, she sees a convoy jeep carrying cops passing by. She gets frightened as one of the cops stares at her. “I felt his laced boots on my chest. I sensed as though the nipples from my breast were being ripped off….” (*Yudas* 92). A couple of days later, Prema begins to reflect sadly on the fate that befell Das. This is an instance of secondary grief afflicting Prema. ‘Vicarious trauma’ is the term given to trauma aroused by close association with the traumatized individual. It is also known by different terms such as caregiver burden, compassion fatigue, and is also called secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is generated out of human empathy towards the traumatized. The term was first developed by McCann and Pearlman (1990). Prema internalizes the effects of trauma on Das and constantly identifies with him. This identification or empathy with the trauma victim instills in her the symptoms of Secondary traumatic stress (STS) or Vicarious

Traumatization. In *Testimony: Cries of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History,* Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub states:

> …the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. the relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and conflicts that trauma victim feels. (57)

Though Prema's father is one among the policemen who had tortured the Naxalites, she dreams of being with a Naxalite. Prema's desire stems from her intense secondary trauma. For her, water becomes a symbol of both desire and death. Prema's secondary trauma is further exemplified in the novel when Sunanda's niece, Sangeetha goes missing. Upon learning about Sangeetha's missing, she goes in search of her. After a long search, someone spots her slippers near a thirty to forty feet deep gorge. The possibility that Sangeetha following Sunanda's fate makes Prema distressed. All of a sudden, tucking the loose end of the sari into her waist, she jumps into the gorge. Frantically remembering Das and the way Sunanda drowned in the reservoir at Kakkayam, she sank deeper and deeper. Prema thinks: "This was my revolution against some people whom I am unsure of…. perhaps against the History itself. It must have been against myself too" (*Yudas* 128). Like Das who retrieves bodies from the lakes, Prema grabs Sangeetha's body from the bottom of the gorge and pulls it

up. As she does this, the images of Das and Sunanda flash in her mind. Thinking that Das could love only martyrs, she wishes to drown herself in the gorge next to Sangeetha. This arises from her feeling that Death has credited Sunanda with a power, which Prema can never attain. After the death of Sangeetha, Prema is completely transformed. She resolves never to follow Das pleading for love: "I have repaid his debt. I have taken back what he had once given to the gorge" (*Yudas* 132). The act seems as an offering of love to Das who has lost Sunanda in a similar gorge. Here, Sangeetha becomes the doppelganger of Sunanda.

Realizing that Das cannot reciprocate the love she has for him, Prema comments: "Yudas began to hang rocks again on the tattered veins of my broken heart" (*Yudas* 102). In the end when Prema meets Das, he confesses: "I am a prisoner of my own memories for life. It is a camp of torture with no exits" (*Yudas* 143). The symbol of gorge recurs throughout the story. Das' life is inextricably linked with water bodies. He says: "I could live only in the vicinity of water. I have lost many of my dear things to water. I have to recover them. I will plunge into any abyss to retrieve them for the sake of the world" (*Yudas* 145). It feels as if he needs to continue swimming to regain what he had lost in the water. Here we see Das' failure to come to terms with his trauma. Das constantly attempts to distance himself from Prema. He is unable to reciprocate her love. He espouses the strategy of escapism as a means to withdraw from reality. It can be seen as a coping mechanism after the traumatic event.

Intertextuality is one of the prominent features of trauma fiction. The name 'Yudas' alludes to the biblical character of Judas. The name has become a

synonym for traitor or betrayer. The lines, “Oh! Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name…” get repeated throughout the novel. This line is a remark made by Madame Roland on seeing the Statue of Liberty. Soon after saying these words she was beheaded. When Roland’s husband learns about his wife’s death, he pins a suicide note to his chest: *“*From the moment when I learned that they had murdered my wife, I would no longer remain in a world stained with enemies”.

In trauma literature, survivor uses diverse symbols to narrate her experiences of trauma. The Gospel of Yudas is remarkable for its use of various symbols. The image of corpse recurs throughout the novel. It symbolizes the living dead, who is devoid of vitality. Corpses are material objects that relates to a subject which is absent. It acts as a medium between the living and the dead. It also signifies a relation – a relation between life and death; between the past and the present. Again, corpse is the “remains” of someone which denotes a human departure. There is an absent subject who has left it behind. Corpse evokes memory of the deceased, wherein the memory has a material substrate. This substrate enables the possibility of uncertainty and heterogeneity in memory. Thus, in the novel, corpse symbolizes the ‘absent-presence’ of Sunanda and the vestiges of Das’ traumatic past. It can also be seen as the only existing medium between Das and Sunanda.

The novel starts with an epigrammatic yet provocative statement “A traitor can never sleep”. Structured around an aquatic ecology, the trope of water

takes many forms in the novel. Water symbolizes baptism, destruction, recuperation and redemption. The image of the unsleeping traitor extends to unravel his internal trauma of losing his beloved, Sunanda. His trauma is so intense that even if he immerses himself in water for hours or gets intoxicated, he would remain conscious. Water entraps him but still makes him calm down. Similarly Das is wounded by his past but he finds no way to escape from it. In Christian churches, Baptismal water is considered holy as in these rituals a person is symbolically reborn as one whose sins are forgiven. The novel also narrates the story of Prema, her obsession with Yudas and her numerous encounters with him over years. The extensive waterscape is not only a mere channel for narration. It becomes the only available medium for articulation and resistance. . All of Prema's experience with water is of submersion and sinking which is symbolic of her unrequited and unconsummated love. To grab Das' attention, Prema deliberately drowns in the lake: Shimmering green, pale yellow, orange of ravenous depth, deep red—the colours of the lake unfold as a vision to the sinking woman (*Yudas* 16).

At the end of the novel, when Prema and Das take shelter on a boat, "a trove of enigmatic secrets lay snuggled in the lake's depth, tucking their flaps above their heads, beneath the nests of grinning chromides" (*Yudas* 148). Here, water symbolizes the unconscious. A person can only see the surface of water; she cannot measure its depth at a glimpse. Similar is the case with the unconscious. Water takes on a new rhetoric when later in the novel Sunanda's niece Sangeetha defends her struggle against those in power. "They dig up all our

lands. But we won't back off until we put an end to this. One way or another. We need our lands to farm. We'll sow the seeds. We'll reap the harvest. Our cattle must have fields to graze on, and move about. Our wells must have water" (*Yudas* 121). At this point, water no longer connotes the corpse lying deep down or an unending desire, but signifies livelihood and sustainability. Apart from the protagonists, the readers are also tied to the ebb and flow of water. Readers are also caught up in the fluidity and toughness of the aquatic imaginaries, where words and images repeat in the novel paralleling the traumatic mind. Thus lakes transforms into a palimpsest of narratives with unintelligible layers yet giving clues of representing a psychic wound. On almost every page, the readers come across pearl fish, chromides, algae and heaps of mud, symbolizing decay and fertility. Each chapter is drawn to a memory associated with water. Several years of silence and absence interrupt the infrequent encounters of Das and Prema but whenever they meet, it is in the purlieu of water.

Prema keeps stalking Yudas and yearns for his love but Das engages himself in retrieving dead bodies from the lakes as a means to compensate for the deaths of the Naxalites, he thinks he has betrayed. In her article "Communicating Resistance in/through an Aquatic Ecology: A Study of K.R.Meera's *The Gospel of Yudas"*, Gayathri Prabhu *states:*

> Yudas, as we are told and shown repeatedly in the novel, can only live in the vicinity of water, to which he has lost many things dearest to him, and the compulsion to dive is to express and recover the lost object or person

> (Meera 2016: 145). The surfacing of corpses in the lake and the repetitive baptismal atonement of the "traitor" cannot be seen as distinct from the oppressive machinery of the state, for he always finds policemen waiting on the shore.

The novel is enriched with themes of love. It epitomizes Das' love for Sunanda. Even though Sunanda's dead body drowns in the gorge, Das' love for her is unsinkable. But Das is unable to reciprocate Prema's love for him. Though unconsummated, many sections of the novel hint at transference of their passion through water. "I was lying on top of a thin layer of dirt below which the lake billowed" (*Yudas* 68), says Prema. In another instance, she describes: "I felt the waves sway under the mat. I was slumbering in his lap atop a carpet of water" (*Yudas* 76). Thus by the blurring the boundaries of land, water and their bodies, the novel materializes the consummation of love between Das and Prema.

Another significant motif in the novel is fish. Fishes are cold-blooded creatures which are emotionless. They also lack passion. In the novel, fish symbolizes Das who remains detached from all the relationships as well as from the reality of life. Prema asks Das to teach him swimming but he refuses. Depressed, Prema responds by plunging into the lake thirsting "for water like a fish thrown out of it" (*Yudas* 16). And at the depths of the lake, on closing her eyes as soon as she begins to lose consciousness, she sees a corpse, and "my memory flapped its open gills like a pearl fish out of the water before it became

still" (*Yudas* 17). This merging of desire, rebellion, impetuosity, memory, love and death in the solitude of lake sets the tone of the entire novel.

The novel *The Gospel of Yudas,* with its use of diverse literary devices, conceptualizes the traumatic lives of Das and Prema. In the end of the novel, Prema assumes the form of testimony. She becomes, as described by Felman and Laub, "the companion in a journey onto an unchartered land, a journey the survivor cannot traverse or return from alone" (Testimony 59). "I will take him to my shore when he wakes up" (*Yudas* 148) says Prema at the end of the novel. Analyzing the statement, Gayathri comments: "Just as there is a diver for every corpse, her voice tells us that it is the job of the living to watch over each other, but we are not sure whose lot that would be. "One of us, or perhaps all of us" is the last line of the novel, once again placing individual destiny firmly within the ethic of collective resistance" (60).

Meera's novels serve as a domain for her women protagonists to establish ideological supremacy. Her women characters create a space for themselves, emerging and establishing themselves from the vacuum of patriarchal norms of the society. It is undoubtedly the inner strength of these characters, whether it be, Chetana Graddha Mallick in *Hangwoman,* Tulasi in *The Poison of Love,* and Radhika in *The Deepest Blue,* which helps them to move forward in life neglecting all the structures of power that might harm them. The way K.R.Meera deals with the themes of loss, death and love haunt the reader, reflecting a dark

image of the world. Yet the readers are sure to rejuvenate from the bold characters that these novels offer.

On analyzing *The Gospel of Yudas,* we see the traumatic lives of Das and Prema. Das' PTSD is quite explicit in his behavior as he engages in retrieving corpses form lakes and rivers all through his life. He is a prisoner of his past which is scarred by the dreadful memories of his beloved's death. The deep empathy which Prema feels for Das makes her traumatic too. She develops symptoms of secondary trauma. She is doubly traumatized - first due to the unrequited love towards Das and secondly as a consequence of her empathetic feelings for him. Like all other women protagonists of Meera's novels, Prema is a strong woman, determined to achieve what she yearns for. The novel can be read as a narrative of trauma which portrays the lives of individuals who are destined to live with unhealed wounds of the past. As set in the background of an aquatic ecology, the novel uses metaphors associated with water to describe trauma. The novel, with its disjointed narrative structure and language inherent with arbitrary signifiers, challenges limitations of language in depicting the trauma which otherwise denies its representation.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Based on the analysis in the preceding sections, this concluding chapter restates the main ideas discussed so far and enumerates the findings of this thesis in order to hopefully arrive at certain tentative premises concerning the study of trauma and trauma narratives. This chapter also tries to envisage the course of future studies in this domain.

As stated at the beginning, the focal area of the study is the origin, development and evolution of trauma theory. At the very outset, it seemed imperative to narrativize the representation of phenomenon of trauma and analyse the diverse techniques adopted by creative writers to represent it in fiction. The intricate relationship between traumatic subjectivity and its representation in the select narratives was subjected to a critical analysis in the previous chapters. On analysing these fictional texts, this study identified diverse narratives techniques employed by the writers of fiction to surmount the issue of the untranslatability and unrepresentability of traumatic event. Further, attempt was made to demonstrate how narratives of trauma, experimenting with post-modernist modes of representation dismantle the conventional linearity of narration. The troubled link between the world, self and representation necessitates the need to have non-linear and fragmented narrative models which resonate with the crisis of referentiality.

As already stated in the previous chapters, an event becomes traumatic when the victim fails to comprehend and assimilate it. Trauma ruptures the spatial and symbolic order at the individual and collective levels. As something which is not fully assimilated by the victim, trauma often haunts the survivor and compels as well as complicates the possibilities of its articulation. The traumatic subjectivity with its inherent elusiveness fails to get represented within the framework of conventional tools of narration. Consequently, the fictional representation of trauma is characterized by a referential dilemma, necessitating a genre of trauma fiction with experimental themes and styles.

This study began with a general analysis on trauma which forms the crux of the introductory chapter. The second chapter traced the origin of trauma theory and discusses its effects on human psyche. Observations and findings made by Jean Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Joseph Breuer, and Sigmund Freud were also discussed. Studies on trauma mainly rely on the conceptual frameworks of psychoanalysis according to which all mental agonies arise from the fantasies and unsettled clashes of one's childhood. Freud gave many significant insights on trauma defining it as an excitation powerful enough to break the mind's protective shield. He admitted his inability to provide a complete account of the mechanisms that enable mourners to cope up with trauma. However, in his studies, he sought to sharply distinguish mourning from melancholia, the two responses to loss. In mourning, the subject works through the loss and recognizes the reality of the "loss". In melancholia, on the other hand, the subject identifies so intimately with the lost object that it continues to haunt her very ontology.

As pointed out in the study, the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* revolutionized the studies of trauma. Caruth identifies trauma as an unsolvable problem of the unconscious which is not fully perceived at the instance of its occurrence. The second chapter also discussed the neuroscientific theories of trauma put forth by Bessel Van der Kolk to explore the physiology of trauma and its effect on various parts of the brain. A description of the symptoms exhibited by PTSD patients elaborated by Henry Krystal was also discussed. In that context the chapter also examined the effects of trauma on memory and described various structures of memory and examined how these structures fail to coordinate during an event of shock. Studies prove that the victim will repress the memory of the traumatic event. But not being a thing of the past, trauma gets repeated in the life of the victim as an action and not as a memory. The traumatized person becomes lethargic, submissive, and incapable of meeting her present-day needs. A traumatic event thus tears apart not only our own psyche, but a distinct form of memory. Trauma prevents the coordination of information from different parts of the brain. It can shut down episodic memory which fragments the sequential pattern of events. It also adversely affects the procedural memory.

Another section of the second chapter deals with PTSD and the tendency of victim to inflict self-harm. Many of the traumatized individuals show the tendency to harm themselves. This can result from the intangible agony of a traumatic event which gets transformed into a visible, real cut on the skin, enabling the victim to describe her pain. People commit self-harm as a

punishment to their feeling of guilt and shame. It can also be a cynical form of protest against a world only interested in harming them. The act of injuring oneself can endow the victim with a sense of mastery over her own body.It can also be considered as a painful act of coming back to reality after a shocking traumatic event.

Effects of trauma on language form the final section of the second chapter. Trauma can cause linguistic paralysis in patients. Trauma, a complete wordless state, leaves the survivor silent either by breaking the chain of meanings or by obliterating their capacity to retrieve or generate language. This section explores how the victim uses language laden with symbols, metaphors and metonyms to transcribe trauma. It enumerates various strategies to cope up with trauma. One of the significant ways to do is by narrativizing the event.

The third chapter analyses the novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. The novel is one of the greatest examples of trauma fiction as it dismantles the existing structures of narration to depict trauma. The chapter also explores in detail the traumatic lives of its protagonists, Oskar and his grandparents. By adopting fragmented narrative structure that disrupts the temporal and symbolic coordinates, the novel transcends the limitations of traditional narrative conventions. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* makes use blank pages, pages with one word, pages with words overwritten, corrected, edited and circled in red, and pages with unreadable words without spaces to convey the unconveyable and make sense of the senseless violence inflicted on

the young sufferer. The use of photos and pages with doodles and empty spaces add to the distinctiveness of the novel. These experimental strategies symbolise the challenges faced by the characters in the novel to live with an inexorable trauma.In his quest to find the owner of the key which he finds in his dad's closet, Oskar meets many people with whom he shares his grief. In doing so, Oskar is able to 'work through' his trauma to some extent unlike his grandparents. The features of intertextuality and various literary devices employed in the novel were also examined in detail.

The fourth chapter examined *The New York Trilogy* written by Paul Auster. All the three novellas of the Trilogy- 'The City of Glass', 'Ghosts' and 'The Locked Room' portray the lives of traumatized individuals. Like trauma that fractures one's ego, the novel creates an aporia with multiple narrative voices and characters devoid of rational belief. The novel parodies detective fiction as the protagonists launch themselves on quests that invariably hit various mysterious cul-de-sacs of sorts. Each novella starts with the occurrence of an unpredictable event which destabilizes the protagonists' sense of self. The chapter analyzed these characters' 'working through' of their trauma by the act of camouflaging their identities. The concept of doppelganger becomes a striking feature of the novel which is also dealt in detail.The chapter also explored the themes of metafiction and textual self-reflexivity which depart from the conventional linear mode of story-telling. With respect to the (mis)representation and exclusion depicting a deep sense of loss, an attempt to trace the determiners of trauma is also made.

The fifth chapter analysed T.D.Ramakrishnan's *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki,* a novel which portrays the aftermath of Sri Lankan civil war. The chapter explored the blending of myth and history in a literary text for effectively portraying the traumatized lives of the war victims particularly women. The focus in the analysis was the psychodynamics of revenge which forms the central motif in the novel.

The final chapter analysed love trauma in K.R.Meera's *The Gospel of Yudas.* The chapter observed the novel as belonging to the genre of trauma fiction in which the protagonist exhibits symptoms of PTSD like survivor guilt, anger, aloofness, nightmares, etc. The concept of secondary/ vicarious trauma was also discussed in the chapter as among the characteristics of trauma.The use of symbolic language, fragmented narrative and intertextuality are some of the strategies employed by the author in depicting trauma.

Some of the remarkable features of trauma fictions as employed in the texts taken for this study are:

Fragmented narrative structure: Trauma victims have to put together and interpret various incomprehensible events to make sense of their life. They also need to decipher the gaps between these random events to have a broader vision of life. Narratives on trauma follow the idea of writing which eschewed the conventional linear structure, subverting the accepted norms employed by rational thinking. Thus trauma fictions often have a non-linear structure, oscillating between past and the present. The use of such a technique replicates the disorientation of the

trauma victims who are often haunted by the past and who fail to develop an organic connection with the reality. The fragmented structure of the novel also reflects how the survivors perceive the world- as disjoint, contradictory and baffling. Furthermore, it exemplifies the inability of the survivors to transform their traumatic memory into a coherent narrative memory. The author employs analepses or prolepses flashback/flash forward techniques to represent the lives of the trauma victims. In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the unsent letters' of Oskar's grandparents form the alternating chapters of Oskar's narrative. *Sugandhi Alias Andal Devanayaki* narrates the life of Sugandhi which is interspersed by the mythical story of Andal Devanayaki.

Plurality of narrative voices: Trauma is a multi-layered experience with diverse manifestations. Traumatic experience is not just a set of events; it is defined as the interrelationships of these events, the subjectivity of the survivor and the complex ecology wherein the survivor and her experience are interpreted. This plurality of trauma makes it complex and renders it difficult to comprehend. However, it can also unravel trauma in time and space providing multifarious possibilities of interpretations. Plurality of narration involves alternate narrators, epistolary episodes, interwoven first and third-person narratives, and so on. It provides the reader to have multiple perspectives so as to evaluate the incidents described.In K.R.Meera's *The Gospel of Yudas*, the story is narrated by Prema. But it is Sunanda's sister who communicates Das' past with Prema. Much of the details about the Naxalite group are unveiled through Sunanda's diary. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close,* the chapter is narrated by three traumatized

characters, structured in the sequence ‘Oskar-Grandpa-Oskar-Grandma’ repeated four times.

Intertexuality: As already described in the second chapter, intertextuality is defined as a set of relations a text shares with other texts belonging to diverse domains. The text thus becomes intertext which provides the reader numerous ways of interpreting it. A term coined by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality refers to a series of links that connects one or more texts in various forms such as quotation, allusions, references, parody, structural parallelism etc. Thus an intertext transforms or modifies a text preceding it. The concept of intertextuality can be better understood by analysing Ferdinand de Saussure’s theory of the sign, signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, language consists of sentences which are interdependent on each other. Words and sentences of a text replicate with others in a network. Meaning is produced through the interaction and interplay between these elements.To describe the concept of intertextuality, Bakhtin introduces the term hybridity which is “a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (The Dialogic Imagination 358).

For Barthes, “Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the

text" ("From Work to Text" 39). He identifies intertext as an anonymous formula whose origin cannot be traced or located; "of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks" ("From Work to Text" 39).

Narratives on trauma depend on other texts to meaningfully articulate trauma. The use of intertextual elements foregrounds the need to interpret and re-interpret the texts. In Paul Auster's *City of Glass,* Quinn adopts the pseudonym of William Wilson to write detective novels, which reminds of Edgar Alan Poe's detective novel, *William Wilson.* In 'Ghosts' (the second novella of *The New York Trilogy)* there are references to Nathanial Hawthorne's *Wakefield.*The biblical reference to Yudas in Meera's *The Gospel of Yudas,* the similarity between Fanshawe, the character in Auster's 'Locked Room' and Hawthorne's novel *Fanshawe* are also examples of intertextuality.

Broken/ Metaphorical Language: Metaphor is a form of expression in which an object is referred to in terms of something else having similar properties.Jacques Lacan stresses the affinity between metaphor and metonym thanks to their parallel mechanisms of condensation and displacement. In fact our engagement with the world is often negotiated through a complex network of metaphors and metonyms. Trauma victims experience a mixture of various emotions like anxiety, anger, confusion,etc. which they find it difficult to express. Therefore, they use metaphors to communicate their traumatic experience. Metaphors elicit basic reasoning structures that can be used for further interpretation of traumatic experiences. Just as allegory is a favourite art form for artists in in repressive

regimes, metaphor becomes a significant tool in the representational kit of trauma victims in order to overcome the restrictions upon self-expression. In the novels selected for this study, victims use either broken or metaphorical language to describe their trauma. Metaphors describe one experience in terms of another. Thus they specify and amplify the ways in which a traumatic event can be conceived and processed, informing the meaning and importance attached to it. Das's language in *The Gospel of Yudas* is laden with metaphors. His constant references to corpses and fishes have metaphorical undertones. The aquatic ecology which forms the background of the novel is also metaphoric.

The Motif of the doppelganger: The doppelganger motif has been employed by many writers to represent the impact of trauma on victims who suffer from a sense of dissociation resulting in a feeling of splintered consciousness. The logic of repetition and contrast is brought to an extreme in the doppelganger motif's explicit duplication of the protagonist. It also symbolizes the disrupted self of the protagonist as her sense of identity is imperilled by the presence of the double. These narratives focus on the symbolic significance of the doppelganger, bringing the suffering of the protagonist into sharper relief. Paul Auster extensively employs this motif in *The New York Trilogy.*While Fanshawe acts as the double of the narrator in *The Locked Room,* Black dons the same role in *Ghosts.*

Use of Photo-Texts: The use of photographic images in texts is a method employed to invest them with a sense of verisimilitude and thus overcome the

problem of verbal representation. Such texts attain the status of true testimonials of an event difficult to erase from memory. In a photo-text, the continuity of the verbal digesis is interrupted both by visual images as well as the ensuing search for verbal connections. The clever juxtaposition using photos and text is a novel feature of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* that makes use of doodles from Oscar's scrapbook, his photographs of gem stones, and images of the 9/11 attack and Dresden bombing. The novel *Andal Devanayaki* has incorporated a colour photograph of the wall painting at Sigiriya and the photo of 'jnanasaraswathi' as a means of interlinking reality, fiction and fable.

This study underlines the necessity to carry out further research in trauma and trauma narratives. But there are many inherent challenges in this pursuit. Theories of trauma do not fully address the wounded histories of many non-western countries. This is subtly described in Arundati Roy's God of Small Things when Larry and Rahel marry:

> But when they made love he was offended by her eyes.... He put it somewhere between indifference and despair. He didn't know that in some places, like the country that Rahel came from, various kinds of despair competed for primacy. And that personal despair could never be desperate enough. That something happened when personal turmoil dropped by at the wayside shrine of the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation.... In the country

> that she came from, poised forever between the terror of war and the horror of peace, Worse Things kept happening. (10)

Just as the national trauma of Indian Society has been shown hidden in the eyes of Rahel in God of Small Things, there is a silencing of age old oppressions and agonies of many countries of the east. Most classical texts of trauma theory are very westo-centric and euro-centric in their orientation. Theorists like Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman largely focus on events like Holocaust and 9/11 to the exclusion of large scale human tragedies taking place in Asia and Africa. Stef Craps, in *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* reminds us that though trauma is considered as a uniform, timeless and universal phenomenon, it "is actually a Western artefact, 'invented' in the late nineteenth century" (20). In the essay, *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response*, Michael Rothberg says, "…trauma studies has remained stuck within Euro-American conceptual and historical frameworks" (225).

According to trauma theory, trauma is the consequence of a distinct cataclysmic event. But in the case of non-western trauma, this is not true. For example, Western colonization has resulted in the acute traumatic state of the colonized. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* says: "The truth is that colonization, in its very essence, already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals" (181). In another book, *Black Skin White Masks* he narrates the state of at most trauma that racism results in. But, the sustained

issues of colonialism, slavery, racism, and casteism which account for the trauma of the East find little place in the field of trauma studies.

Caruth a la Freud considers melancholia as one of the crucial stages of a traumatic experience. But in the case of collective trauma, this aspect is probably less pronounced compared with personal trauma. Studies on cultural trauma illustrate this. “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander, 1). Discrimination on the basis of Caste, class, race and gender is one of the strong causes of cultural trauma. Dalits, Black Americans, and Women face trauma mainly because such discriminations. In such cases, it is not a single event but a series of events, some of them, dating back the very genesis of modern nations that leave a community traumatized. In the United States, the ‘One drop rule’ was prevalent which states that a single drop of black blood can make a person black. This compelled Frantz Fanon to write in *Black Skin, White Masks:* “For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white” (12).

In colonialism, there is the creation of the “ideal” as western while the non-western is posited as the “real”. When Freud’s concept of melancholia is applied in the wider framework of colonialism, it is this unachievable ideal image of west that instils melancholia in the non-West. Here, melancholia is not the result of a loss. Instead, it is the consequence of an unachievable perfection as the

"ideal". While referring to the melancholic phase put forth by Freud, Roger Luckhurst in his book, *The Trauma Question* makes the following remark:

> ...there is a kind of injunction to maintain the traumatic condition. To be in a frozen or suspended afterwards, it seems to be assumed, is the only proper ethical response to trauma, displacing any other memorial relation to the past, and situating memory entirely under the sign of post-traumatic melancholia (210).

Here, Luckhurst criticizes the trauma studies for its fixation upon the corporal manifestations of PTSD than the original event. Moreover, to redress the trauma of colonialism, racism, and genocide, the sufferers need to work out their trauma. As the oppressed has started to question the authority of the West and the "Whites", the injunction to continue in the state of melancholia is not really the outcome of trauma. This calls for a need to remodel or re-theorize the existing models of trauma.

As trauma is a universal phenomenon experienced by humans across the world, the methodology of psychoanalysis needs to have a wider scope to accommodate in its entirety the psychic confrontations of the whole of mankind. But, as a set of theories formulated by European theoreticians for redressing the psychic conflicts of western population, the discipline of psychoanalysis does not serve its purpose of universality. This accounts to be the first reason for the need to have a 'decolonized' trauma studies. Secondly, human mind does not exist in seclusion. It is dependent on the socio-political scenario of one's life which

includes the familial background, religious beliefs, regional culture, living environment, etc. Moreover, since the inner psyche of an individual is the subject of concern in psychoanalysis, its Eurocentric ways to redress trauma cannot be applicable to the people of the East who have an entirely different socio-political and cultural set up. Many literary critics have attacked the theory for its intense western concerns. Addressing the issue, Marinella Rodi-Risberg says:

> Much of trauma studies still relies on seminal works that focused on the Nazi Holocaust, modernism, and postmodern texts of the twentieth century by European and Euro American authors with mainly (post)deconstructive and psychoanalytic literary methods that were geared toward horrific events in the Western world. Yet, an increasing number of scholars emphasize a pluralistic trauma scholarship. Such a scholarship means developing a culturally knowledgeable trauma theory that considers cultural differences in terms of various forms of representations of experiences in extremis, refusing an ethnocentric and depoliticized discourse of dominance. (*Trauma and Literature* 122)

Victims of love failures, rapes, wars, accidents, suffer from personal trauma. Individuals experience mental stress caused by factors which we cannot be categorised into lists. Massive trauma may afflict "any society, ethnic group, social category or class which has been exposed to extreme circumstances of traumatization, such as natural disasters, technological catastrophes and social, political, cultural, gender, ethnic or religious persecutions that leave them with

lifelong problems" (Krystal, 24). The West has all the facilities like counselling centers and trauma care clinics to help citizens cope up with trauma; most of the East lacks such "luxuries". The need for good counselling centers is increasing day by day to help them to make sense of the chaos going around them. With this being the case, studies on trauma have wider scope and relevance in the present day. Many theorists have taken up the task of decolonizing the trauma studies. There is a high need to have a trauma discourse pertaining to humans across cultures.

Through creativity, a person can confront and attempt to work through trauma by her own means, carrying out the process of mourning. The unresolved elements of grief can become both the motivating force as well as the content of creativity. Thus, creativity plays a major role in the wake of loss. It gives the bereaved a sort of control over her life by providing ways to construct a new reality. The satisfaction which a traumatized individual gets after producing a work of art can palliate her grief. It can also distance the subject from her grief which can be therapeutic. Psychological responses to trauma vary drastically from person to person. People adopt various strategies to either communicate their trauma which is also a means to 'work through' it. This can include paintings, poems, personal blogs, etc.Without considering these diverse genres, as part of delimiting the area of research, this dissertation closely examined only the fictional narratives. This limitation simultaneously serves as a possibility for future research. Similar to the portrayal of trauma in fiction, representation of trauma in other contexts provides a scope for further investigation.

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