

Epistemological and Psychosomatic Analyses of Trauma

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Abstract: Trauma has profoundly impacted human beings for centuries. There are a number of reasons behind any traumatic event. Trauma is not only a medical, pathological, or psychological condition or state, but it is also ontological, epistemological, and cultural ones. It defies a clear and perceptible understanding, as it is beyond the realm of epistemic frameworks. This paper explores the nuances of trauma on individuals, examining its origins and manifestations through the conceptual frameworks of prominent trauma theorists Catherine Malabou and Cathy Caruth. We have used modern and contemporary fictions encompassing the works of Saadat Hasan Manto, Katherine Mansfield, Razia Butt, Virginia Woolf, Lisa Genova, Preeti Shenoy, and Franz Kafka. They have covered multifaceted nature of trauma, encompassing medical, psychological, ontological, epistemological, and cultural dimensions. By examining various aspects of trauma within the context of these literary works, the paper seeks to provide a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Keywords: Aporia, Cognition, Conatus, Epistemology, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Shell-shock, Trauma.

Trauma has deeply impacted human lives for centuries, which is not only an event but also a process. It is experienced by an individual and connects to macro level reaching to a society that can be marginalized into religious and sexual community. Holocaust text [1] [2], Partition texts [3] [4], text on Imperialism (postcolonial texts) [5] [6] [7] and texts on illness [8] [9] [10] are cultural works. However, they represent a plethora of human experiences of trauma. Trauma is not only a medical, pathological, or psychological condition or state, but it is also ontological, epistemological, and cultural ones. Trauma can be understood as disruption of the sense of self for which the reason may vary. It might be due to the socioeconomic condition (being jobless, academic failures, unwanted expectations by the family and peers), the homelessness and migration trauma. It may be due to a sudden act of physical violence with the loss

of someone close, post impact of any sort of natural calamity, accident, mishappening and a medical or neurobiological condition. Trauma is not solely shaped by external events but also by what we carry within, especially in the absence of a compassionate witness. It is a unique psychological experience, inherently negative, disrupting one's typical mental state and psychological framework. Trauma results in a disturbance that impairs one's sense of self, causing paralyzing fear and potential fragmentation or even the annihilation of one's identity [11].

Trauma is much more than pathology, or simple illness of a wounded psyche. It is always the story of a wound that cries out, addressing us in the attempt to tell us the reality or truth that is otherwise not available [12].

Literature has given space to the traumatized and wounded subjects and is a very potent tool. This is a very strong medium to represent trauma because literature defamiliarizes reality by default and articulates the subjectivity of traumatized person profoundly [13]. What happened post-trauma or after an accident, the extended embodiment (ability to negotiate with outside world) of a human subject gets interrupted and the difficulty to integrate or connect with the outside world is completely lost. There are many examples in fiction that have reflected trauma and traumatized subject in details [3] [14] [4] and [15]. Pseudo-trauma, as portrayed in Katherine Mansfield's short story 'The Fly,' refers to a conceptualization of trauma that lacks genuine experiential basis and instead has a performative nature. A traumophilic¹ person, who enjoys being traumatized, sees trauma as a marker of prestige, holding it to self gives one a sense of entitlement, considered one's loss more profound, darker, and more sombre than others. A sadomasochistic, patriarchal connection between trauma and privilege is evident in this story, where trauma has become a marker of privilege. In Katherine Mansfield's short story, *The Fly*, the unnamed protagonist, *The Boss*, holds a position of prestige and power, an entrepreneur, in a very masculine space with a modular setting, upright confident, calculative, about his words, as well

¹Traumophilic — A person who loves the state of being in trauma.

as, his actions lost his son in the great war,² a picture of the young guy in the military uniform was displayed on his office table. *The Financial Times, paper knife*, are the markers of the Boss's hegemonic dominant masculinity, which is pitted against the decadent and fragile masculinity of the old Woodifield. The trauma has become the part of commodity economy.

Yes, it is comfortable enough, agreed the boss and he flipped the *Financial Times* with a paper knife. As a matter of fact, he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler³.

The boss is unsettled by the presence of Woodifield's daughters at his son's grave in Belgium, surrounded by the graves of young men who died in World War I. Belgium is seen as a place where visitors come face-to-face with the harsh truth the war's impact by visiting the graves of those who were lost. The girls near his son's grave are a constant reminder of the deep pain and sorrow linked to loss, leaving the boss unsettled despite his efforts to detach from his past trauma.

The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They are quite near at each other, it seems. Old Woodifield paused, but the Boss made no reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard⁴.

The boy's grave image represents the protagonist's profound sorrow and struggle to accept the loss of his son. The boss's inability to cry despite his deep sorrow signifies his emotional detachment and suppression. This passage effectively uses flashbacks to depict the boss's continuous battle with grief. The impact of his son's death and his past emotional breakdown on his psyche are evident. The boss seems to hold onto his trauma as a way to maintain control and demonstrate his status. He avoids facing his trauma head-on, choosing to internalize it instead. His decision not to go to his son's grave in Belgium highlights his unwillingness to move on from the initial traumatic experience [13]. The behaviour displayed indicates arrogance and hubris, as he stubbornly clings to controlling his pain. Mansfield uses striking imagery to portray the boss's astonishment and sorrow. The depiction of the earth splitting open to reveal the boy's grave elicits a feeling of abrupt and profound sadness. The passage exudes a sense of sadness and acceptance. The boss's expression of "My son!" reflects his profound sorrow, with his lack of tears indicating emotional detachment and acceptance of his loss. The boss's previous claim about the permanence of his grief now contrasts with his current emotional state, where he struggles to feel the same intensity. It highlights the intricate and uncertain aspects of grief.

²Great War refers to World War I.

³Mansfield, K. *The Fly*, 1922, p. 1.

⁴Ibid., p. 2.

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep forever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son⁵.

Despite being a part and representative of the hegemonic white masculine system, when he tried to cry over the loss of his son in a closed room holding the picture of his son in his hand (performative act of trauma), he failed to emote and failed to perform the act [16]. He lost all his agency, power and ability to cognize and memorize. For a long time, he harboured the trauma of his son's death as a highly personal and cherished experience, keeping it carefully guarded and hidden from others in the notion that he would someday disclose it at his discretion, essentially claiming ownership. This narrative embodies a classic trope of traumatophilia, intertwined with the notion of the commodification of trauma [13].

The following lines are the boss's actions during the fly episode and reveal a complex combination of emotions, including grief, satisfaction, cruelty, and empathy. The boss finds solace in a unique ritual involving a fly that lands on his table, seeking some form of comfort or empowerment from his past experiences. Every time the fly attempts to flee from a blot of ink, the boss strangely desires its survival yet continues to torment it by adding more blots. The boss's behaviour reveals a complex psychological dynamic at play, with a sadomasochistic aspect [16]. The fly symbolizes the boss's inner self, reflecting his ego and challenges. The eventual downfall reflects the symbolic loss of the boss's authority. This analysis beautifully captures how the fly symbolizes the boss's internal struggle, torn between holding onto his past trauma and seeking freedom [13]. Yet, both the boss and the fly succumb to the inescapable grasp of their destinies, rendering their desire fruitless.

All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen deep into the inkpot. It was the last blot fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen. "Come on," said the boss. "Look sharp!" And he stirred it

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

with his pen—in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead. The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paperknife and flung it into the wastepaper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey⁶.

Septimus Warren Smith, one of the protagonists in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, exemplifies a deeply traumatized individual. A World War I veteran who returned with survivor's guilt, who had experienced terrible trench fighting, yet in a post-war metropolitan space London, he felt estranged from the world around him. The following lines describe the physical appearance of Septimus which suggests decadence. Woolf employs descriptive language to elicit sensory imagery, allowing readers to imagine Septimus's appearance and sense the tension in his demeanour. His hazel eyes are said to be filled with apprehension, which is contagious and causes outsiders to feel nervous. The line "The world has raised the whip; where will it descend?" is a metaphor for Septimus's vision of the world as a dangerous power. The whip represents the imminent threat or punishment that Septimus perceives as looming over him, maybe representing the trauma and psychological suffering he receives as a result of his military experiences. The whip also symbolizes torture and punishment.

Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised the whip; where will it descend⁷.

His perception of time and space undergoes a complete transformation, his memories betray him entirely, and he struggles to identify himself and his wife Lucrezia. His communication style is quite vague, showing a strong aversion to any noise; his cognitive function is consistently impaired [15]. His detached demeanour towards the outside world, lack of emotion and inability to express his trauma stemmed from being incapable of distancing himself from the horrors of war. By using a stream-of-consciousness⁸ style, the author successfully highlights Septimus's internal turmoil in the passage. It also conveys the significant influence of trauma on his view of reality, focusing on themes of disintegration, alienation, and existential despair [17]. Woolf's adept utilization of literary devices enables readers to connect with

Septimus's situation and gain a deeper understanding of the intricate nature of psychological trauma. Woolf employs vivid imagery to illustrate Septimus's sense of the world narrowing around him. Everything being drawn towards one central point evokes a feeling of confinement and imminent catastrophe. The vivid description of a terrifying scene on the brink of catching fire creates a sense of overwhelming fear and anxiety. The depiction of the world fluctuating, trembling, and on the brink of igniting symbolizes Septimus's unstable mental condition. The portrayal captures the tumult and uncertainty in his thoughts, reflecting the lasting impact of his time in the war. Woolf uses the stream-of-consciousness technique to explore Septimus's inner thoughts and emotions. Septimus's sense of being observed and judged, along with his conviction that he is obstructing others, underscores his deep disconnection from society [17]. This paranoia is a typical symptom of trauma. It can make individuals feel isolated and disconnected from others, viewing themselves as a burden or obstacle. Septimus's inquiry about purpose reflects his existential crisis and sense of purposelessness. Experiencing trauma can cause individuals to deeply reflect on the meaning and purpose of their lives, particularly when they are grappling with past events and feeling lost in the present [12]. Septimus's trauma is represented not just as a medical category; it is social, political, and existential in nature [13].

Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered, quivered, and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who is blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But what purpose⁹?

Septimus became captivated by the city's constant noise of activity. Every passing car, every hurrying pedestrian and every blinking advertisement acted as a stinging reminder of his own immobility. Trapped in the horrible environment of his Great War recollections, he felt as if time had stopped moving, even though the world around him continued to move at a rapid pace. The sights and sounds of the city echoed the turmoil of battle, causing visceral emotions that left him frozen and unable to break free from his tragic past. In the urban landscape, Septimus was a lone figure, lost among the busy crowds yet imprisoned by the haunting sounds of conflict that replayed constantly within his head. The passage emphasizes Lucrezia's efforts to help Septimus break free from his self-absorption and isolation. The phrase "a little out of sorts" suggests that Dr. Holmes misdiagnosed Septimus's condition. This misdiagnosis highlights the challenges that medical science faces in comprehending and addressing intricate emotional conditions. Physicians frequently overlook underlying psychological and existential factors, opting for a more simplistic approach to

⁶Ibid.

⁷Woolf, V. *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925, p. 10.

⁸Stream-of-consciousness is a literary technique used by modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and George Eliot to depict the inner thoughts and turmoil of characters. The narrative style disrupts the traditional linear structure by presenting fragmented narratives and challenging hierarchical notions of time and space. The characters convey their thoughts within specific time and space settings, enabling a deeper and intricate dive into their inner selves.

⁹Ibid., p. 10.

symptoms [18]. Septimus's situation is much more intricate than simply feeling "a little out of sorts." His time in the Great War has caused him significant trauma. Having been conditioned to suppress his feelings while serving in the military, he was exposed to the brutal realities of trench warfare and the tragic deaths of countless individuals [19]. Septimus's trauma is complex, arising from personal loss, witnessing the suffering of others, and navigating existential and political inquiries. This passage highlights the limitations of medical diagnoses in dealing with the intricacies of human suffering, especially in instances of trauma. Septimus's ordeal underscores the deep repercussions of war and the constraints of traditional methods for addressing mental well-being. This piece eloquently highlights the necessity of a comprehensive grasp of human psychology and the significance of handling trauma with care and empathy.

"Look, look, Septimus!" she cried. For Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself¹⁰.

The phrase "But he wouldn't go insane." "He would shut his eyes; he would see no more" effectively expresses Septimus's synesthetic quality by conveying the blending of sensory experiences. Septimus's desire to turn off his senses foreshadows his eventual suicide, implying that he wants to escape not only the overwhelming sights and noises of the world but also the interior torture of his thoughts and memories. The act of closing his eyes implies a symbolic closure of his perception, a withdrawal from the external world that has become unpleasant to him. By refusing to interact with his surroundings, Septimus seeks refuge in sensory deprivation, where he may avoid the constant barrage of stimuli that exacerbate his mental pain. This paragraph also emphasizes Septimus's autonomy in choosing to end his own life. Septimus takes this radical action despite feeling pursued and harassed by clinicians like Dr. Holmes and Dr. Bradshaw [18]. In his opinion, suicide is the only option available to him, a final act of rebellion against the powers attempting to define and control him. The passage captures the intensity of Septimus's anguish and his desperate attempt to find comfort from his pain, while also anticipating the sad conclusion to his story [15].

But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more¹¹.

The trauma of World War I has a spectral presence throughout the novel [19]. The medical doctors, Dr. Holmes, and Dr. Bradshaw, diagnosed him with a lack of proportion and advised him to rest, avoid thinking, or engaging in physical activities like cricket, and ultimately retreat to a secluded space [15]. Doctors act as detached observers of the situation and devoid of empathy. The lack of connection between the traumatized

subject and the doctor prevents delving into the psyche of the human suffering from trauma or any painful medical condition [18]. Trauma frequently includes a condition called "delayed decoding," in which individuals only comprehend the distressing incident after it has ended. The delayed identification of the event creates a gap at the time of occurrence, hindering the traumatized individual from completely understanding the situation until later. The transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory may take a long time, depending on the intensity and characteristics of the trauma, as well as, the person's resilience and coping strategies [20].

The following excerpt from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* delves into the profound effects of war and trauma on individuals, exploring the emotional detachment and numbness that can ensue from such experiences. Septimus's response to his friend Evans's passing demonstrates a deep emotional disconnect and lack of feeling. Septimus has developed a coping mechanism in response to the trauma of war, where he suppresses his emotions as a means of self-preservation. The motif highlights how war affects individuals psychologically and their capacity to form emotional connections with others [19]. In addition, the passage emphasizes the disparity between societal norms regarding responses to death and trauma and Septimus's actual psychological condition. It is ironic that Septimus *congratulated himself on feeling very little and very reasonably* right after the death of his friend Evans. Woolf effectively uses Septimus's response to Evans's death to delve into Septimus's mental state and how he copes with trauma. His lack of emotion and his belief that feeling little or nothing is a reasonable response to death provide insight into his mental state and the impact of the war on his psyche [19]. Evans's death just before the Armistice hints at the deeper themes of trauma, loss and the consequences of war that are examined in the novel. The novel's exploration of the psychological impact of World War I on characters like Septimus and society as a whole is evident from the beginning. Symbolizing the perception and romanticization of war by Septimus and other characters in the novel is the description of the war as *sublime*. The text demonstrates the prevailing societal views on war at the time of the novel and emphasizes the stark difference between the glorified perception of war and its harsh truths [15].

When Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion of recognizing that here was an end of a friendship, congratulated himself on feeling very little and very reasonable as he was taught by the war. It was sublime¹² (Septimus Smith).

The novel effectively portrays an abrupt and harsh nature of suicide, along with its deep effects on the person's mental state and their loved ones; suicide has been a recurring theme in the fiction, especially dealing with behavioural disorders [21]. Woolf vividly depicts the act of suicide through detailed imagery and sensory descriptions, highlighting the character's

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Woolf, V. *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925, p. 94.

intense physical and emotional suffering. The portrayal of Septimus throwing himself from a window and the following experience of falling impact effectively capture the moment of suicide. The repeated use of *thud, thud, and thud* underscores the harsh reality of the action and its immediate outcomes that highlights the raw intensity and violence of the suicide attempt, intensifying its effect on the reader. The writer effectively portrays the disorientation and confusion felt by Septimus after the suicide attempt, using the phrase *a suffocation of blackness* to imply a lack of consciousness or awareness. The use of vivid imagery by Woolf helps readers visualize and almost feel the character's experience of falling and its impact. Metaphors are clearly present in phrases like *through him, blundering, and bruising went the rusty spikes*, illustrating the character's experience of falling and being pierced by the spikes of the railing or other objects below. Viewing Septimus's suicide from Clarissa's perspective enhances the depth of the novel's narrative structure. Woolf provides a detailed and intricate examination of mental illness, trauma, and the human condition by including various perspectives and points of view. Clarissa's contemplation of Septimus's suicide provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the wider societal and psychological consequences of his death, along with its effects on Clarissa. Clarissa's empathetic reaction to Septimus's death highlights the theme of human connection and solidarity in the midst of suffering, despite their lack of direct interaction. Clarissa's deep empathy and understanding of the human condition are evident through her contemplation of Septimus's challenges and his tragic fate. Woolf illustrates Clarissa and Septimus as doppelgangers, emphasizing their similarities despite their diverse backgrounds and experiences. Woolf effectively highlights the thematic connection between the two characters by weaving together their narratives and inner thoughts, showcasing their shared experiences of oppression and alienation within society. Both Clarissa and Septimus struggle with societal norms and expectations in unique ways, leading to a profound exploration of their identities and roles in society [15].

He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness¹³ (Clarissa Dalloway).

Trauma is something which is outside the event, outside the knowable knowledge system, beyond the parameters of rationale. Thus, an unrepresented phenomenon cannot be possibly represented [22]. It is the inability or dilemma of knowing, which is unknowable, the language that is unspeakable.

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and

not knowing. It is at this specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet [22].

Both psychoanalysis and literature grapple with the challenge of representing the inexpressible aspects of trauma, acknowledging that traumatic events often resist straightforward articulation. Both disciplines, in their own ways engage with the complexities of the human psyche and the challenges of expressing the profound impact of trauma through language.

Caruth¹⁴ delves into the intricate nature of trauma, examining it as both a psychological and literary phenomenon. She highlights the concept that trauma can disrupt the typical functioning of memory and storytelling. Caruth utilizes psychoanalytic theory, specifically the contributions of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, to assert that trauma is an encounter that surpasses our ability to fully comprehend. Caruth introduces the concept of *traumatic realism* as a key idea. According to Caruth, traumatic events have a lasting impact on an individual's psyche, and efforts to depict these experiences often prove inadequate. She suggests that the nature of trauma itself hinders the ability to create a clear and organized narrative, resulting in fragmented and disrupted accounts [12].

Another graphic trope is the character of Bashan Singh in Manto's *Toba Tek Singh* [4]. Bashan Singh¹⁵ cannot integrate with the outside world, and his memory, his sense of space and times have changed. The passage delves into themes of identity, belonging and the effects of political events on individuals' mental well-being. Bashan Singh's intense focus on the "Upri gur gur" phrase and his reactions to conversations regarding India, Pakistan and the Lunatic Exchange demonstrate the disorientation and distress felt by numerous individuals during the partition. Bashan Singh, who lives in the Lahore asylum, displays unique behaviour and speech patterns that mirror the chaos and uncertainty of the India-Pakistan Partition. This text effectively demonstrates how the repetitive use of a particular

¹⁴Prof. Cathy Caruth teaches at Cornell University's Department of Literatures in English and the Department of Comparative Literature, where she succeeded Jonathan Culler as Class of 1916 Professor of Literatures in English. Professor Cathy Caruth has previously taught at Yale University and Emory University, where she established the Department of Comparative Literature. Professor Caruth, a prominent figure in trauma theory, specializes in the study of trauma and testimony, literary theory and contemporary discussions surrounding the destruction and preservation of language. According to Cathy Caruth's traditional trauma model, trauma is seen as an event that causes fragmentation of consciousness and hinders direct linguistic representation.

¹⁵Bashan Singh was the protagonist of Saadat Hasan Manto's short story *Toba Tek Singh*. He was in a Lahore mental asylum and completely disoriented. The political decision of exchanging lunatics between the two Nations has greatly disturbed him and he refused to leave the place and died.

¹³Woolf, V. Mrs. Dalloway. 1925, p. 280.

phrase reflects Bashan Singh's mental state and the confusion brought about by the partition. Bashan Singh's swollen legs symbolize swelling of time; lots of time has got into him. Manto uses satire to criticize the absurdity and chaos of the partition through Bashan Singh's nonsensical speech and behaviour. The text eloquently discusses how the phrase "moong ki daal" symbolizes the sustenance of the common man, emphasizing its diminishing quality as time passes. This decline highlights the lack of concern from both higher-ups and government executives for the issues of ordinary people. Manto effectively highlights the absurdity and brutality resulting from the partition of nations and its impact on daily life through humour and irony. The text explores how the trauma of partition intensifies the madness portrayed, causing a change in how individuals view reality and themselves. Manto skilfully utilizes literary devices to depict the psychological and emotional effects of historical events, all while providing a satirical critique of the human condition [4].

Bashan Singh had spent fifteen years as a resident at the Lahore asylum. His speech was quite peculiar, as he kept repeating a seemingly nonsensical phrase: *Upri gur gur di annexe di be-dhiyan o mung di daal of di lalteen*¹⁶. He has gone without sleep for many years, sometimes pausing to lean against a wall for a brief rest. Despite his swollen feet and ankles from standing all the time, he adamantly refused to rest and lay down. He listened intently whenever there was talk about India, Pakistan, and the upcoming Lunatic Exchange. When asked for his opinion, he would respond with great seriousness: *Upri gur gur di annexe di be-dhiyana di mung di daal of di Pakistan gornament*^{17,18}.

The coldness of the political decision of the two Nations' government bureaucrats to exchange lunatics seems meaningless in comparison to the resistance shown by lunatics, who denied the mindless decision. Bashan Singh [4] and Septimus Warren Smith [15] are the victims of anosognosis. The "lunatics" symbolize the turmoil and pain resulting from the partition of India in 1947. There are multiple layers of irony in the situation described. Efforts to "unload" and control individuals deemed unstable reflect those in power trying to manage the consequences of partition, underscoring the absurdity and ineffectiveness of such actions. Furthermore, the chilly weather juxtaposes the emotional intensity and turmoil of the situation, enhancing the surreal quality of the scene. Manto employs vivid imagery to capture the chaotic and unsettling atmosphere of the scene.

¹⁶The lack of contemplation and lentils of the annexe of the above raw sugar of the lantern and the nonsensical phrase talks about a very mundane marker of ordinary life, lentils. It says that the quality of ordinary things is not good, which can be mapped at the macro level, the political decision of the partition and then the exchange of lunatics' post-partition.

¹⁷Gornament: Punjabi pronunciation of the English "government."

¹⁸Manto, S. H. *Toba Tek Singh*. 1953, p. 3.

The depictions of individuals removing their garments, using profanity, singing and engaging in physical altercations evoke a feeling of chaos and insanity. The chilly climate intensifies the feeling of unease and hopelessness. The cold weather also symbolizes the cold and irrational decision of the political powers, who are indifferent to the common men's suffering. This passage explores the blurred line between rationality and irrationality as the actions of two nations' bureaucrats collide with the behaviour of the inmates of the Lahore asylum. The logical choices made by those in charge seem illogical when compared to the group actions of the asylum's residents, who exhibit a unique form of logic. As the officials try to carry out their plans, the disorder and opposition they face from the prisoners highlight the ridiculousness of their efforts. This comparison highlights how what may seem like madness could actually contain more truth and coherence than the deliberate choices made by those in authority. Exploring the fine line between rationality and irrationality, reason and emotion, religion and humanity, truth and virtuality, the passage delves into the contrasting decisions made by two nations' bureaucrats and the behaviour of the individuals in the Lahore asylum. The seemingly rational decisions are juxtaposed with the actions of the asylum residents, creating a thought-provoking contrast. The use of repeated words and phrases like "lunatics" and "cold" highlights the main themes of the passage and strengthens the feeling of disorder and gloom [4].

It was not easy to unload the lunatics and send them across the border. Some of them did not even want to leave the trucks. Those who did get out were hard to control because they started wondering all over the place. When the guard tries to clothe those lunatics who were naked, they immediately ripped the garments off their bodies. Some cursed, some sang, and others fought. They were crying, talking, but nothing could be understood. The madwomen were creating uproar of their own. And it was cold enough to make your teeth chatter¹⁹.

These lines eloquently depict the demise of Bashan Singh, who now resides in Toba Tek Singh. His connection to his space is so intense and organic that he embodies Toba Tek Singh, choosing to die on the no man's land between India and Pakistan to assert his ownership and agency over the land. This story uses trauma as a performative category, an agentic, cognitive, and spatial category [13].

After fifteen years on his feet, he was lying face down on the ground. India was, on one side, behind a barbed wire fence. Pakistan was, on the other side, behind another fence. Toba Tek Singh lay in the middle, on a piece of land that had no name²⁰.

Razia Butt's novel *Bano* [3], based on the event of partition

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁰Manto, S. H. *Toba Tek Singh*. 1953, p. 8.

(1947), was later adapted into the popular Pakistani drama *Dastan* [14] in 2010. The main protagonist Bano, a young innocent girl who was engaged to her cousin and love of her life Hassan, became a victim of partition violence as she was in Karachi (at that time it was in India), was abducted by Basanta Singh and was forcibly married to him, had a son with him. Later when Basanta died in an accident, she got the freedom and went to a refugee camp in Lahore (Pakistan). Hassan was contacted by the camp authorities, and they handed her over to him along with her son. Hassan tried to connect with her, tried to console her and tried to provide her emotional and moral support, but she has become a changed (a New Wounded) subject, now a product of destructive plasticity [23]. She never retrieved back to normal, to her being original self. She could not narrate her trauma, what she went through, she stayed numb, an emotionless subject, and coldness enveloped her persona. She tried to narrate her trauma in pieces and bits but broke down before complete articulation. Bano cannot narrate as she cannot detach herself from the horrors of partition episode. She became a process, an event, and an experience of suffering [13]. She felt a pang of hatred towards her son as he reminded her physical and sexual violence inflicted upon her. But she tried to endure the trauma and after much persistence Bano was ready to get married to Hassan. But a moment triggered and exploded the trauma in her brain when a man at a social work department tried to molest her. She saw the reflection of Basanta in him and in a fit of rage, whatever she had endured so far came out like an explosion and she murdered that man and ended up in mental asylum, with incohesive utterances, not reciprocating to anyone, completely shut off her senses just like Bashan Singh of *Toba Tek Singh* and Septimus from *Mrs. Dalloway*. Conatus²¹ ability also destroys as post-traumatic subject. "A person does not see because he cannot see it." She has become an interrupted subject, who knows nothing, feels nothing, and goes beyond pain and suffering. She is completely metamorphosed into a new kind of identity, a person that cannot be redeemable, not even a bit of her past identity remains inside her [23]. The description of her state of helplessness, the violence inflicted upon her, her dejection, her anxiety, her post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), were described in graphic details.

Trauma disrupts the normative chronotope (space+ time), a monstrous and territorial quality about it. It occupies the familiar space of the subject. The subject remains in the liminal state oscillating between real and unreal like in a state of Aporia, an impasse [13].

Catherine Malabou's texts *The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage* [23] and *The Ontology of the Accident: An essay on Destructive Plasticity* [24] engage with the complexity

of trauma and offers a distributive understanding of it. Our autonomous nervous as well as central nervous system is very plastic and neural in quality. The neurons in our brain are connected in an electric circuit and through synapses (the gaps between neurons, connectors) the messages and commands are received and processed. Malabou delves into the concept of brain plasticity and discusses how the gaps in our synapses can both create and destroy. Destruction and production are two interconnected categories, not always opposing each other. The plasticity of our brain enables us to be creative, resilient, and able to withstand injuries and shocks. Plasticity can be both generative and receptive, but it also has a destructive aspect known as destructive plasticity. The brain's destructive plasticity is linked to trauma, which leads to an overflow of energy in the brain, resulting in dysfunction as the brain struggles to redirect the energy along different pathways. Human neurobiological system is deeply intertwined with emotions and has a significant impact on both the subject and the emotions. The emotional functionality of brain is called *sensorial modality*. Emphasizing the importance of emotional functionality in the brain, trauma theorists [12] highlight the achievement of homeostasis, which is a state of emotional equilibrium. The brain must continue generating emotions to sustain cognitive function. During the inception of any traumatic event, an excess of energy releases and brain has no way to detour that excessive energy and that causes the disturbance in attaining homeostasis. The brain stops functioning, experiencing, and regulating in trauma. Affective variability of the brain gets affected in trauma or accident. The traumatized subject becomes indifferent to his survival and to that of others [23]. Brain achieves homeostasis through autoregulation which is based on the concept of auto-excitement. For example, while watching a movie, we become emotionally charged by the effect of the film, but our emotions self-regulate to return to homeostasis. By the movie's conclusion, our intense emotions are soothed, leading to emotional balance thanks to catharsis [25].

The impact of trauma resulting from illness is clearly portrayed in Lisa Genova's novel, *Still Alice*. Alice Howland, a 52-year-old cognitive psychology professor at Harvard University, finds her life unravelling as she grapples with the early onset of Alzheimer's disease. The overwhelming impact of the trauma the disease has caused overshadows her various roles as a successful educator, mother, wife, woman, and friend. She transforms into nothingness, devoid of memory and a total obliteration of selfhood. It is about feeling disconnected from oneself. The recollection of the past is now forever gone. The struggle to connect with your true self is complex and difficult to understand, articulate and foresee [23].

Alice speaks the followings line while looking for glasses for her husband, John, at the beginning of the novel. The following line hints at an upcoming tragic event and unexpected circumstances. The author intentionally uses similes to describe memory disturbances as unpleasant and intrusive. The verb "rearing" implies an unavoidable situation [8].

²¹Conatus is the tendency of all living things to preserve their being. The human innate desire to self-preserve and emotions played a crucial role. If the emotional ability destroys, then the cognitive ability also gets destroyed.

Memory disturbances like these were rearing their ugly little heads with a frequency that ruffled her²² (Alice Howland).

The following lines are the poignant reflection on the territorial quality of trauma, it deterritorialized a subject. The verbs, *bombarded*, *penetrated*, and *scattered* suggest war-like language, a language that connotes destruction, the destruction of the identity of Alice Howland. The lexicons, *hollow utterance*, *empty gaze*, *no hope*, and *nothingness* imply nihilism, a complete existential crisis, and also connote absurdity of human condition. Alice's emotional state is vividly portrayed as being bombarded, highlighting the intensity of her devastation. The metaphor used highlights the abrupt and intense effect of the news from the doctor on Alice's emotional state. The imagery effectively captures the deep sense of detachment Alice experiences from both herself, and her environment [11]. Alice's change in self-perception, transitioning from feeling her emotions directly to viewing herself from afar, underscores the disconnection often felt in reaction to trauma. The author skilfully emphasizes Alice's sense of detachment and emptiness in the aftermath of the traumatic news through the repetition of phrases like *her voice seemed to be coming from a distance* and *hollow utterances*, *empty gaze*. Malabou heavily draws from Deleuze on deterritorializing aspect of trauma [26]. Trauma has territorial quality about it as the newly formed subject has occupied the territory of the old subject. A traumatic metamorphosis happens post-accident, and a subject completely transforms into something other than what it had been in the past. This passage offers a deep look into Alice's emotional journey, emphasizing how trauma can deeply affect one's identity and view of the world where we cannot have control over everything in our lives and at times, we feel completely helpless [8].

Alice was devastated as if something has bombarded over her, the sound of her name uttered by the doctor penetrated her every cell and seemed to scattered her molecules beyond the boundaries of her own skin. She watched herself from the far corner of the room like an ethereal presence. Her voice seemed to be coming from a distance, hollow utterances, empty gaze, no hope, a feeling of nothingness enveloped all over her. She heard her voice asking what did that mean²³ (Alice Howland)?

She developed into a well-known example of the destructive plasticity, in which trauma results in the loss of one's identity and the construction of a new identity that is unrelated to the older one, entirely erasing the subject's memories and history. The experience of suffering facilitates the development of a lasting identity [11]. The subject experiences a disruption in her perception of time and space, leading to a state of disorientation. The process of transforming the subject in a nihilistic manner can be considered a state of *traumatic metamorphosis* [11]. This medical condition results in the affected person's inability

to express his emotional or physical discomfort. Individuals who are managing an illness or disability undergo a state of suffering that persists as a continuous process [27]. Viewing trauma solely as a medical condition would involve adopting a reductionist viewpoint, which is inadequate for achieving a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon. There are two distinct types of traumatic cognition. The first is a deeply ingrained, unique, micro-level occurrence that is distinguishable by neural, visceral, and psychological expressions, and the second category is characterized by its external nature and relates to the encounter with estrangement and seclusion from an individual's societal milieu [11].

Shenoy's novel, *Life is What You Make It*, effectively portrays the trauma through the character of Ankita Sharma. Ankita is a young, attractive, lively, and intelligent woman who possesses a large social circle and garners attention from many admirers. Following a significant event in which one of her male acquaintances took his own life after being turned down in his romantic advances towards her. Ankita experienced a profound sense of self-guilt. Over the course of six months, she withdrew from social interaction and communication with loved ones, becomes suicidal, and ultimately receives a diagnosis of bipolar disorder and gets hospitalized in a mental health facility. Ankita's traumatic experience is a result of the circumstances that envelop her, gradually infiltrating her psyche like an elusive adversary. This is a characteristic feature of trauma, which tends to be territorial in nature [11]. Neither Ankita nor her family is cognizant of the impending eruption of this trauma. The gradual encroachment of trauma gradually erodes her sense of self, cognitive abilities, and rational faculties, ultimately resulting in an over-determination of her identity [28]. The following passage serves as poignant manifestations of the trauma and suffering experienced by Ankita Sharma, the novel's youthful protagonist. The adjectives and verbs like, *huge*, *dark void*, *phantom pain*, *amputees*, *cut off*, *trapped*, *curling up fists*, *dug deep into flesh*, *knife*, *cutting*, *terrifyingly* have a menacing quality that implies a dark destructive force enveloping Ankita from inside out, a complete annihilation of self and agency.

A huge, dark void was inside me now. It was alike a phantom pain which amputees experience when a limb is cut off. The limb does not exist anymore, but the pain they feel in that limb which no longer exists is very real. I felt trapped in it. I curled up my fist as tightly as I could, and the fingernails dug deep into the flesh of my palm. The deeper my nails dug the better I felt. Then I saw the paper knife and cut my wrist with its blade and a line of blood appeared. I felt better, now the pain was real. It was not a phantom pain which was terrifyingly unbearable²⁴ (Ankita Sharma).

On the outside, I looked like death. And inside, I felt like it²⁵ (Ankita Sharma).

²²Genova, L. *Still Alice*. 2007, p. 33

²³Genova, L. *Still Alice*. 2007, p. 79.

²⁴Shenoy, P. *Life Is What You Make It*. 2011, p. 119.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 148.

The terminology utilized in this context is insufficient to elucidate Ankita's state. The demarcation line between interior and exterior, obscurity and illumination, wellness, and illness, becomes indistinct in this context. The individual experienced an overwhelming sense of apprehension akin to an abyssal emptiness, a mortality-like sensation and a dream-like state that entirely consumed her.

This following passage delves into Ankita's introspective exploration of her fragmented self, represented by various symbols of despair and hopelessness. The use of imagery like *a broken toy* and *deep sense of hopelessness* conveys the destructive nature of trauma, an experience that defies conventional understanding [28].

I tried one more time. It was simply no use. It was like somebody had switched off some important part of my brain which controlled reading, comprehension, and even thinking. I felt like a broken toy, I felt a deep sense of hopelessness. I did not know what to do. Life, as I knew it, had vanished handing me in its place this mockery to make sense of. Everything I had taken for granted disappeared. In a fit of pure frustration, I swept the file containing my notes, the Kotler book, and a few other sheets of paper off my desk²⁶ (Ankita Sharma).

The following passage conveys the poignant state of Ankita's feelings of despair, worthlessness, and a sense of isolation. Emphasizing Ankita's strong aversion to certain activities and experiences, the repetition of phrases like *I don't want* reinforces the sense of despair and disconnection from the world around her. Describing the speaker's experience as a *world of darkness and void* serves as a metaphor that effectively communicates the intensity of her emotional turmoil. The metaphorical language vividly conveys the speaker's feelings of despair and the lack of brightness or purpose in her life. The imagery highlights the theme of isolation and the breakdown of communication. The speaker's predicament highlights the irony of her attempt to convey her emotions through writing, only to discover the limitations of words. Ankita's emotions reflect a prevailing theme of depression and despair as she grapples with feelings of insignificance, hopelessness, and a longing to break free from her present circumstances. Ankita's reluctance to interact with her classmates and her perception of verbal abandonment highlight the theme of alienation. Struggling to express emotions and feeling lost in a *world without words* implies a loss of identity and self. The theme eloquently captures the significant influence of depression on an individual's sense of identity and purpose.

I feel let down and depressed and worthless. I don't know what is happening to me and why I am feeling this way. I don't want to do MBA and don't want to meet my classmates; that make me sick. There is nothing to look forward to. I try to write what I am feeling, but the words too seem to have abandoned me. This is frightening, the

world without words, this world of darkness and void. I don't want to be here anymore²⁷ (Ankita Sharma).

In Kafka's short story *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa found himself turned into vermin; but there are still some humanist traits left in him, he is able to recognize his family, his sister, father and mother, he talks in human voice, and re-oedipalized (kinship) himself [29]. The story is a failed attempt to describe destruction of trauma and its explosive effect on the subject. Although the subject has transformed into another form, but still it retains its human traits of thinking and emoting and re-possess a form; a traumatized subject victimized by destructive plasticity is more potent and it defies any kind of forms, definitions, and articulations, beyond the existing knowledge structure. The explosive trait of trauma is what constitutes destructive plasticity in which anything of the past, any form and any closure cannot be possible [23].

There exists a fundamental disconnect between the real-life experience of trauma and its portrayal through language or art. Traumatic events can be extremely overwhelming for individuals, causing their brains to struggle with encoding and processing these events in a coherent manner. The brain, responsible for organizing cognitive patterns, may find it challenging to effectively handle the impact of such experiences. Therefore, trauma is commonly regarded as inherently incapable of being adequately represented in a meaningful manner [30]. Absence should also be articulated and acknowledged in order to understand ourselves. A phenomenon which asserts its presence by its absence or unavailability or cannot be definable or is incomprehensible does not mean that it should not be addressed or talked about. There is no philosophical and ontological framework in which we can understand the creation of trauma or an accident, but it can be created or summoned up, a new kind of language (traumatic language) should be invented to decode the subjectivity of traumatized subject. Those words can make incoherent utterances comprehensible, those unspeakable truths, those silences in which the screams of the helpless, pathetic subject echo [13]. Literature, especially fiction, has been giving words to those unknowable and indecipherable pains and poignant sufferings and unlamentable losses of human lives. Finally, trauma may be described in so many ways using different words to summarize a difficult or very difficult situation either by the person who is suffering or the ones who are witnessing. In any case, the pain will remain unsuppressed and only time may heal feels of trauma.

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