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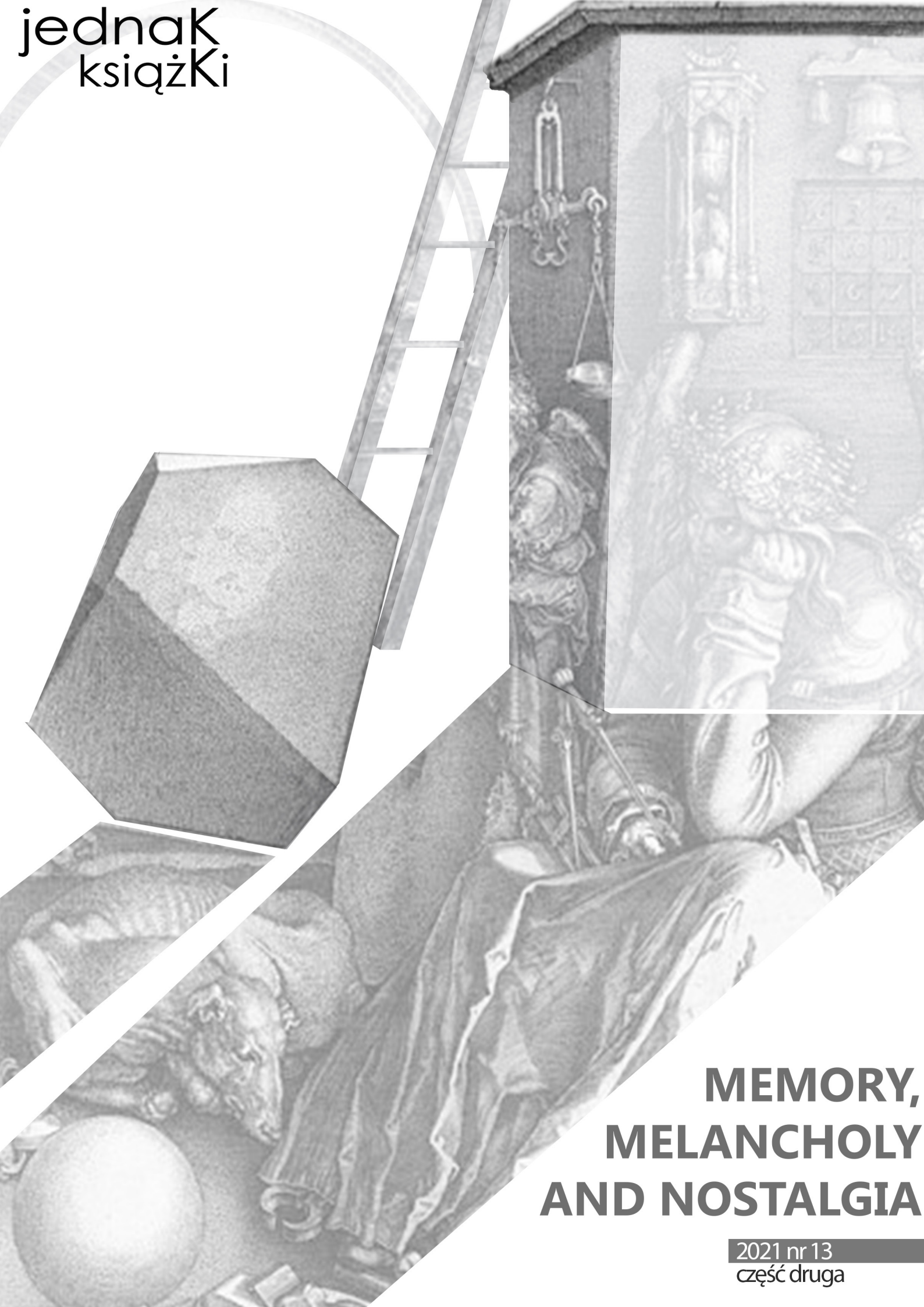

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Autobiographical Remembering:

Memory as Resistance in Bengali Dalit Women's Narratives

PURBASHA MONDAL

Saltora Netaji Centenary College
ORCID: 0000-0003-2968-0495

Introduction

My people in Nandigram, in Singur;
The deceased in Marichjhapi,
I can do little but sit home,
Wet my pillow with tears.[1]

I was invited to attend the Second Conference of the Paschimbanga Dalit Sahitya Academy (West Bengal Dalit Literature Academy) at Nildarpan Auditorium, Bongaon on January 3, 2021. It was organized by the Ministry of Information and Culture, Government of West Bengal. On January 3, 2021 Manoranjan Byapari, who is the eminent Bengali Dalit Writer and the President of Paschimbanga Dalit Sahitya Academy, defines Bengali Dalit Literature as Protirodher Sahitya (Literature of Resistance). In this paper, I aim to discuss how the notion of memory works as a tool of resistance and shapes the narratives of Dr. Puspa Bairagya and Kalyani Thakur Charal in the Partitioned Bengal. These narratives not only concentrate on the neglected history of Bengal, but also provide an overview of the Bengali Dalit Women's Literature.

[1] K.T. Charal, "The Opportunists Steal Your Thunder," in: K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta (eds.), *Dalit Lekhika: Women's Writings from Bengal* (Kolkata: STREE, 2020), p. 134.

I

Born on March 19, 1964 at Dharampur of Nadia (India) and educated at Kalyani University, West Bengal, Dr. Puspa Bairagya joined Barrackpore Rastraguru Surendranath College as a lecturer on July 1, 2005. As a Dalit writer, Dr. Bairagya has received Sarala Singha Padak (Sarala Singha Award) from Bangladesh in 2018. She is a representative writer of Bangla Dalit Sahitya (Bengali Dalit Literature) and, together with with Gopal Biswas, the editor of the literary journal *Surya*. She has done her doctoral degree on "Kabiganer Dharay Bijoy Sarkar" in 2004. What is interesting, she was the first person who completed her PhD in this area.

"The word 'Dalit'," as Raj Kumar writes, "is a political term which symbolises the relatively new identity of a group of people who were earlier known as 'untouchables.'"[2] To quote Professor Kumar again:

> Untouchability is a deeply ingrained consequence of the caste system and is an unacceptable and hurtful social practice. It was abolished when the Indian Constitution came into effect in 1950. In spite of its legal abolition, untouchability continues to be practiced in different forms and degrees in almost all parts of India even today. Thus, the term 'Dalit' clearly suggests that caste as a social system is still prevalent in India.[3]

In "Dalit Literature and Dalit Identity," S.P. Punalekar has focused on the emergence of the Dalit Panthers, the Mass Movement, the Bahujan Mahasangh, the Bahujan Samaj Party, Dalit identity assertion, Dalit literature, and others:

> Dalit writers themselves are either victims of or witness to social inequities and violence. Some have direct or indirect links with social, political, and cultural organisations of Dalits. A few among them are staunch social activists and often use literature as a vehicle to propagate their view on Dalit identity and the prevailing social consciousness. Dalit literature does not constitute a homogeneous or unified entity. There are divergent currents and tendencies.[4]

The works of Bengali Dalit women writers were rejected by the mainstream publishers. That is why *Chaturtha Duniya* was founded by the Bengali Dalit writers:

> Chaturtha Duniya, the main voice of the Dalit Sahitya Sanstha, is the only publication that has, at various points of time, given an opportunity to Dalit writers and has included writings of Dalit women from Bengal and Tripura.[5]

Regarding the caste discrimination, Kalyani Thakur Charal comments:

> In Bengal, caste discrimination is concealed under the shroud of class discrimination—as a result, obliterating casteism is well-nigh impossible. However, some efforts have been made at various points of time to alter the

[2] R. Kumar, *DALIT LITERATURE AND CRITICISM* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2019), p. 1.
[3] Ibidem.
[4] S.P. Punalekar, "Dalit Literature and Dalit Identity," in: Dalit Identity and Politics: *CULTURAL SUBORDINATION AND THE DALIT CHALLENGE* 2, ed. G. Shah (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 214–215).
[5] K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 15.

> equation, sometimes under the guise of communalism, and at other times on the lines of gender discrimination. Various little magazines and tabloids have raised the issue over the last decade or so, though very faintly. The more important of these include *Atoeb, Chaturtha Duniya, Adal Badal, Dalit Kontho, Neer Ritupatra, Ekhon Tokhon, Janajagaran. Atoeb* has published a fair number of writings by Dalit women although the quality of the writings has been less than consistent. What is worth noting is that these magazines motivate and encourage women to write.[6]

On November 21, 2020, during the First Conference of Paschimbanga Dalit Sahitya Academy held at Sisir Mancha, Kolkata, Puspa Bairagya declared: "We are Dalits and we are oppressed. Dalits are oppressed due to their caste identity."[7] Bairagya, a feminist Dalit poet, is a Namasudra woman from West Bengal. Her famous poem "Panigrahan" attempts to criticize the patriarchal society where women are commodified in the marriage-market. She is also a social activist. In 2005, she was invited to recite her poems at Raj Bhavan, Kolkata (and she recited two of them). The Governor at the time was Gopal Krishna Gandhi. One of her poems is "Nari-Prakriti" which has been admired by the famous Bengali poet Nirendranath Chakraborty.

Realizing the need to mention the neglected history of Bengali Dalit women, Puspa Bairagya tries to highlight the troubled history of Bengal and records her life-experiences in "Chinnomul Doridro Dalit Poribarer Meyer Bere Otha" ("Growing Up as a Dalit Woman in the Refugee Family"). Bairagya's narrative offers a detailed history of the internal and external struggle of Namasudra community in the Partitioned Bengal.

In *Memory in Culture*, Astrid Erll has discussed Maurice Halbwachs's concept of 'intergenerational memory' as she puts it: "Family memory is a typical intergenerational memory. This type of collective memory is constituted through social interaction and communication."[8] Puspa Bairagya's parents migrated to India from Bangladesh. Originally, they were the inhabitants of Hatbaria village, Jessore (Bangladesh). In the narrative, the writer recollects her childhood:

> The year was 1970. My age was five. Anarchy had already begun in the East and West. The Pakistani Army Razakars had indulged in mass-killing indiscriminately. All the members of my Chotopisi's family were lined up and shot by the Razakars.[9]

The memory of a traumatic event, which is not found in the textbooks, is revived through Bairagya's narrative. Many critics are of the opinion that lots of Hindu women were raped by the Razakars. They also claim that most of the raped women were Dalits. Puspa Bairagya's narrative informs her readers that her village, Dharampur (India), was filled with Muslim Refugees. Halbwachs encapsulates that "general history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up."[10] We must remember that the Freedom-fighters attempted to resist the brutal oppression of the Razakars in Bangladesh. It is to be noted that Bairagya's uncle Binoy Krishna Biswas, who is a highly educated person, was a Freedom-fighter. He receives his pension from the Government of Bangladesh even today.

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[6] Ibidem.
[7] P. Bairagya, *Interview*, by P. Mondal (2020).
[8] A. Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. S.B. Young (UK: Palgrave Macmillan Private Limited, 2011), p. 17.
[9] P. Bairagya "Chinnomul Doridro Dalit Poribarer Meyer Bere Otha," *Neer Ritupatra*, 18 (2017), p. 47.
[10] M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. F.J. Ditter, V.Y. Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 78.

As her narrative unfolds, we come to know that Puspa Bairagya has focused on various Namasudra rituals like Hyachra Pujo, Kulo Namano, Gasyi Broto which are performed by Namasudra women. Being a Namasudra woman herself, Bairagya plays an active role in these rituals. Her narrative suggests that the Goddess of Panchra is Hyachra and the Goddess was worshipped with wildflowers in the dawn and evening. Bairagya used to enlighten the candles in the morning. They were placed in the corners of her house, temple, and pond. Raj Kumar observes:

> The autobiographer tries to make up the forgotten past by inventing things which suit the narration. Thus, the emergence of a self in autobiography is the making of the author. It is quite interesting that out of infinite topics the narrator has choices to choose anything and everything he/she likes. Of course, it is natural that the narrator selects those episodes of his/her life which fit into his/her intended project.[11]

Following the Matua Dharma (Matua Religion), Puspa Bairagya's marriage ceremony was conducted by the Matua priests, Mrinal Gosai and Basudev Bal, in 1991. Her narrative makes it clear that Bairagya's family rejected a Brahmin priest, thus challenging Brahminical hegemony in the Partitioned Bengal.

Reviewing "Chinnomul Doridro Dalit Poribarer Meyer Bere Otha" Kartik Choudhary in *Yuba Shakti* (dated October 17, 2020) has pointed out that Puspa Bairagya had faced many difficulties in her life, but she never loses her self-respect. Bairagya exposes the hypocrisies of Indian caste system in her narrative. She started her first job as an assistant teacher in Maldanga Rajendra Memorial Institution Higher Secondary School, Burdwan. She became a victim of the caste system in the school as her colleagues started abusing her due to her Dalit identity. When she joined at Barrackpore Rastraguru Surendranath College, she questioned the authority regarding the quota system as the College did not follow the rules of SC/ST quota during the admission. In fact, the College had no SC/ST cell at all. The authority not only humiliated Bairagya, but also delayed her promotion. In her interview, Puspa Bairagya is explicit in this matter:

> When I was alone fighting against the injustice, no colleague supported me. The principal constantly insulted me. That time I was traumatized. I had to consult Dr. Amitabha Mukherjee who is a famous psychiatrist in Kolkata. I am taking the medicines. Now I am writing my own story. I am better.[12]

For Caruth, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on."[13]

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[11] R. Kumar, *DALIT PERSONAL NARRATIVES: READING CASTE, NATION AND IDENTITY* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2017), p. 3.

[12] P. Bairagya, *Interview…*, op. cit.

[13] C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4.

II

Keeping in view the focus of this paper, I would like to turn my attention to Puspa Bairagya's association with the Matua Movement. She devoted herself to the Matua community and echoed Harichand Thakur's teachings in her narratives. Bairagya's parents, Dhirendranath Bairagya and Kalidasi Bairagya, were Matuas. One cannot deny Harichand Thakur's contribution to the Matua society. In his book, *Lord Harichand and Guruchand*, Naresh Chandra Das has pointed out the crucial role of Harichand Thakur for the upliftment of Matuas:

> He at this time began to spread harinam at the village of Orakandi, Ghritakandi, Aruakandi, Routhkhamar, and Mallakandi. Many people began to call his devotees as haribola or matua. In this way the term matua was developed.[14]

Figure I: Harichand Thakur
Photo Taken by Purbasha Mondal

When interviewed Puspa Bairagya's, she commented:

> I'm Matua and I'm proud of my identity. Matua is a religion that allows you to practice spirituality any time. You don't need to be a Sanyasi for that. We worship Harichand Thakur, Shantimata Debi, Guruchand Thakur, Satyabhama Debi. In my village, Dharampur, we observe the Mahotsav in February every year. Matuaism is a philosophy which believes in equality. A Muslim man can be a Matua. This religion believes in humanity. This is the uniqueness of Matua religion.[15]

The word we need to look at here is 'Matua religion.' It is generally believed that the Matua Dharma is a part of Hindu religion. Unlike Hindu religion, Matua Dharma voices against the practice of untouchability. It is interesting to note what the eminent critic, Birat Bairagya, observes: "At first, the primary influence of Harichand Thakur and the Matua Dharma was confined only to Namasudra community."[16] Puspa Bairagya's attitude to Matua Dharma is best summed up in her article, "Matua Dharme Nari" ("Women in Matua Religion") published in *Surya*:

[14] N.C. Das, *Lord Harichand and Guruchand* (Kolkata: Biswas Printing House, 1996), p. 8.
[15] P. Bairagya, *Interview…*, op. cit.
[16] B. Bairagya, *MATUA SAHITYA PARIKRAMA* (Kolkata: Bibhuti Printing Works, 2020), p. 105.

> On January 14, 1994 Arundhuti Roychowdhury was reading the Veda of Sarada Pith. In Puri, Shankaracharjya Achalanandaji forced and stopped her to read the Veda. Because according to Hindu religion, women are the doors of hell and they do not have any right to practice the dharma. She is from a Brahmin family but still she cannot read the Veda. Veda means knowledge or Vidya. This doctrine has taken the right of Vidya. Here lies the distinction between Brahminical Manusmriti, old Hindu religion, and Matua religion. If we read *Sri Sri Harililamrita* and *Sri Sri Guruchand Charit*, we see Matua Dharma Sadhikas, Malabati, Sadhana Debi, Kanchan Debi, Janki Debi, and others, play an important role in the Matua religious movement.[17]

In Matua Dharma, man and woman have the same rights in every sphere of life. The motto of Guruchand Thakur was to educate the Dalit women of Bengal. In this context, I would like to quote Raj Kumar who observes that "women's movement in India has generally been concerned with issues related to the upper caste and class women and it has never had any programme to deal with liberation of Dalit women from their oppressive livelihoods."[18]

According to Halbwachs, history is related to the past. Puspa Bairagya writes about the reading habits of her family in the narrative. She has mentioned *Sri Sri Harililamrita* and *Sri Sri Guruchand Charit*—two books which are not much discussed in the textbooks of India. Pierre Nora in *Between Memory and History* observes: "There are *lieux de memoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory."[19]

III

Kalyani Thakur Charal achieved popularity with her autobiography Ami Keno Charal Likhi ("Why I Call Myself Charal)" which was published on August 16, 2016. It is worth remarking that 16th August is observed as the Chuni Kotal Day by the Dalit people of Bengal. Chuni Kotal (1965–1992), student of MSc in Anthropology at Vidyasagar University, was the first woman to graduate from the Lodha community who was repeatedly abused by professor Falguni Chakraborty. Thus, Kotal, the superintendent of a Scheduled Castes and Tribes Students' Hostel, became a victim of the caste system and committed suicide on August 16, 1992. It is important to quote A.K. Biswas's opinion on Chuni Kotal's suicide:

> According to published reports in some leading dailies, in a seminar which Chuni attended three days before the fateful day in the Anthropology Department of the university, the said culprit had intentionally described the Lodhas as "hard criminal" to inflict further injuries out of vengeance. It was no longer possible for Chuni to bear the constant stream of vitriolic and disparaging comments from her teacher inside and outside the classroom. This generated predictable notification in her.[20]

Dr. Biswas also observed:

> She committed suicide in the teeth of unrelenting and humiliating persecution on the campus by her teacher, Falguni Chakraborti. Chuni had protested in writing to the authorities of the University against her harassment and her abuser. Nobody

[17] P. Bairagya, G. Biswas (eds.), "Matua Dharme Nari," *Surya*, 3 (2001), p. 89.
[18] R. Kumar, *DALIT PERSONAL NARRATIVES…*, op. cit., p. 216.
[19] P. Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations*, 26 (1989), p. 7.
[20] A.K. Biswas, "Requiem for a tribal girl," *THE HINDUSTAN TIMES*, November 29 (1992), p. 1.

> heeded her pleas perhaps on the pretension that they were above caste, tribe, faith, etc. Her death unleashed an uproar, obliging the Left Front Government to institute the Commission of Enquiry with retired Justice S.S. Gangopadhyay of the Calcutta High Court … the abuser got a clean chit as "trivialities" that had occurred between him and his victim were not the reasons to cause intense pain for Chuni Kotal to commit suicide! A news report subsequently appeared in the media to suggest that Lodha children had started dropping out of schools as that fate of Chuni held out lingering clouds of threats on their future if educated like their first graduate! No elucidation as such is perhaps necessary! How sad "trivialities" of her teacher in the University cost her life and there was a harrowing outburst of the Inquiry Commission for the tragedy![21]

In his essay entitled "Namasudra Itihas Charchar Bhumika" ("The Importance of Practice of Namasudra History"), Biswas has quoted the Census of India (1911, vol. V, Part 1, Report of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim, Calcutta): "The largest number of Hindu criminals are Kayasthas and Brahmans."[22]

In Bengal, the suicide of Chuni Kotal gave birth to the Dalit Sahitya Sanstha which "became the main platform for Bengali Dalit writers."[23] In "PROTEST" (translated by Asit Biswas), Chuni Kotal writes:

> The blood of Lodhas redden barren field
> All around sound, catch, let they be killed.
> Someone rush to jungle path, crossing ditch, aside
> Feeble old man rolls down to cross plot divide.[24]

In 2021, the Chuni Kotal Memorial Lecture organized by *Chaturtha Duniya* was delivered by Rajat Roy who is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Presidency University. Roy spoke on "Ganatantrik Rajniti o Samajik Nyay."

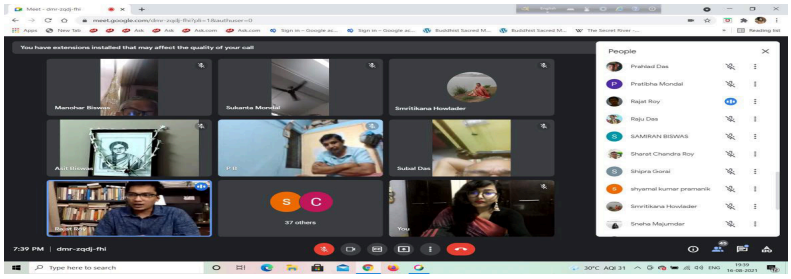

Figure II. Chuni Kotal Memorial Lecture (2021)
Screenshot taken by Purbasha Mondal

[21] A.K. Biswas, "Saraswati Karketta: Latest Victim of Caste Slur and Harassment in Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta," https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article8913.html [accessed 19.08.2021].
[22] A.K. Biswas, "Namasudra Itihas Charchar Bhumika," in: ed., K.K. Thakur, *Banglar Namasudra* (Kolkata: Bibhuti Printing Works, 2021), p. 44.
[23] K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p.15.
[24] C. Kotal, "PROTEST," in: eds. A. Biswas, S.B. Sarkar, *Dalit Poems, Songs and Dialogues from Bengal in English Translation* (Kolkata: Ababil Books, 2019), p. 82.

Kalyani Thakur Charal was highly anxious about the reception *Ami Keno Charal Likhi* would get. Later she realized that the autobiography made her a popular face of Bangla Dalit Sahitya. She has dedicated her autobiography to Usharanjan Mazumder who is one of the pillars of Bangla Dalit Sahitya Sanstha (Bengali Dalit Literature Association). In "Bhumika" ("Introduction") Kalyani Thakur Charal notes:

> I had a childhood, adolescence too. I almost did not realize my youth. I got the news that Bengali Dalit Women's Autobiographies are not available on the internet.[25]

She expressed her fears regarding the publication of her autobiography as she received the enormous pressure from various political parties. In an interview with Kartik Choudhary, Kalyani Thakur Charal observes:

> Dalit Literature is the literature of self-respect and pride. It is the literature of those who were oppressed and deprived for centuries. When we talk about this reprehensible hatred towards us, clearly, love won't ooze from our words, only anger will. This anger is sort of a building block of Dalit Literature.[26]

Kalyani was born in 1965 at Bagula, Nadia. She is the chief editor of *Neer Ritupatra*. In "My Childhood" (translated by Suchetana Ghosh Dastidar), she writes:

> During my childhood I saw my mother exhibit a strong passion for reading. But we had no books other than the *Sri Sri Harileelamrita* and the *Sri Sri Guruchand Charit* at home. Ma would read books in breaks between sewing a kantha. She would sometimes borrow *Prabhas Khanda* from our neighbour Minadi's mother to read. At times like these, the elders of our neighbourhood—my grandmother, Lakkhimashi's mother, Bengipishi—would sit around and listen to her reading aloud.[27]

Pierre Nora contends: "*Lieux de memoire* are created by a play of memory and history, an interaction of two factors that results in their reciprocal overdetermination."[28] Kalyani Thakur Charal in "My Childhood" offers the traumatized history of Bangladesh:

> This old woman would tell us many stories of Bangladesh. They left Bangladesh after 1971 to settle permanently in this country. To flee from the Razakars, they would lie submerged in ponds choked with weeds for hours with only their noses above the water level. She told us stories of how village after village was set ablaze.[29]

According to Halbwachs, "each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory."[30] Kalyani Thakur Charal's poem, "AUNT BASINI, THE JHUMUR DANCER" depicts the tragic life of Jhumur dancers in Bengal:

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[25] K.T. Charal, *Ami Keno Charal Likhi* (Kolkata: Bibhuti Printing Works, 2016), p. 5.
[26] K.T. Charal, "Kalyani Thakur 'Chandal': Depiction of Dalits' Struggles is the Beauty of Dalit Literature," Interview by Kartik Choudhary, *Forward Press*, March 1 (2021).
[27] K.T. Charal, "My Childhood," in: K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 144.
[28] P. Nora, op. cit., p. 19.
[29] K.T. Charal, "My Childhood"…, op. cit., p. 145.
[30] M. Halbwachs, op. cit., p. 48.

Do all Basinis find divine resort,
If they dance to the Jhumur note?
Babu Sridhar is her 'ustad' master
When she dies, the kites will eat her.[31]

In "Autobiographical Memory," H.L. Williams and M.A. Conway observe that autobiographical memory is related to episodic memory and semantic memory. It cannot be denied that Kalyani Thakur Charal writes about the Andhar Beel, a site of memory:

> My favourite spot in the village was the beel. It was called Andhar Beel, or the Dark Lake. It was very deep and thus the water was quite dark in colour—hence the name.[32]

The beel acts as a memory-metaphor which has inspired her to write more on the local history. In the month of Chaitra, they sang:

O Queen of Clouds,
Wash the leaves with your showers,
The leaves stink, now fill the sink,
A land has four corners,
Kaley dear is planting the rice.
My dear, your bullocks and plough
Are scorching in the sun.
They get scorched in the sun.
O rain, come upon us in torrents.[33]

It is interesting to note here that this ritual is basically observed by the Namasudra women. Kalyani Thakur Charal's narrative, which attempts to provide a counterculture of Bengal, highlights the rich culture of Namasudras.

IV

Kalyani Thakur Charal is the most widely read Dalit poet whose popularity can be found outside Bengal. Kalyani Thakur's poem, "Nepora Doi Mare Chirokal" has been translated into English as "The Opportunists Steal Your Thunder" by Srishti Dutta Chowdhury. In this text, the speaker expresses Kalyani Thakur Charal's view on Nandigram, a place where many Dalit men and women were shot in 2007:

Revolution comes when you permit it.
But the Nandigram dwellers are the ones who get shot.
The same people of Nandigram are jailed.
The bhadroloks have never been hit by bullets and
Will never be.
They are awarded medals, when necessary.[34]

These lines refer to the Nandigram violence (occurred in East Midnapore, West Bengal) which throws some light on the traumatic past of Bengal. Rothberg observes:

[31] K.T. Charal, "AUNT BASINI, THE JHUMUR DANCER," in: A. Biswas, S.B. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 120.
[32] K.T. Charal, "My Childhood"…, op. cit., p. 145.
[33] K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 153.
[34] Ibidem, p. 134.

> The traumatic realist project is an attempt not to reflect the event mimetically but to produce it as an object of knowledge and to transform its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to posttraumatic culture.[35]

In one of her autobiographical poems, "THE POEM OF THE DOWNTRODDEN" (translated by Sudipta Mondal), Kalyani Thakur Charal recalls the experiences of her ancestors:

> My grandfather
> Was not allowed entry to the perimeter of Sanskrit school
> My father had to learn, on fan-palm leaf with
> great hardship,
> To write his name in lampblack.[36]

These above quoted lines suggest that Kalyani's grandfather was not allowed to read Sanskrit as he was from Namasudra community. The Dalit people had no right to read Sanskrit language because they were labelled as 'Untouchables.' The poet expresses the detailed images of her father's struggle in the Partitioned Bengal. She articulates her mother's experiences in the following lines:

> My mother had to carry cow-dung in her left hand
> While going to bring prasad from Thakurbari
> Did you not understand?
> With the cow-dung held in the left hand,
> Had to smear the spot where she stood.
> Alas! Cow-dung was purer than the touch of the
> Feet of Dalit.[37]

The word, 'cow-dung' leaves a hint that the poet belongs to an agricultural family in Bengal. In *My Childhood*, Kalyani Thakur Chandal writes:

> We had many cows. They were called Lakkhi, Shyamali, Sonali, Rupali. They were like our siblings. We would cut the grass growing on the levees, separating two fields of jute or paddy, to feed them. The first time I experienced the sorrow of death was when one of our cows died. My mother could not even get up to cook a meal that day.[38]

Caruth opines:

> Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness.[39]

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[35] M. Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 140.
[36] K.T. Charal, "THE POEM OF THE DOWNTRODDEN," in: A. Biswas, S.B. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 115.
[37] Ibidem.
[38] K.T. Charal, "My Childhood"…, op. cit., p. 146.
[39] C. Caruth, op. cit., p. 92.

In "THE POEM OF THE DOWNTRODDEN," Kalyani Thakur Charal's use of irony indicates the memory of her traumatic past:

I am bound to hear from my office colleagues
Words like Chandal, Chamar, Dom
Being used as abuses
All these are names of a clan or community
My educated colleagues are oblivious of it.
Still I remember
Dalits do not exist in Bengal
Dalits can exist all over the world, but not here
Casteism exists all over India
Not here.[40]

In the workplace, Kalyani has been abused by her 'educated' colleagues who are the caste-Hindus, and the poem suggests that her colleagues believe that 'casteism' does not exist in Bengal.

In *Ami Keno Charal Likhi*, Kalyani voiced for the Promotional Reservation. This is what she says:

> In 2011–12, I wrote a lot of letters regarding the Promotional Reservation. I informed everything to the Commission and DOPT. Absolutely alone. I used to run to the Head-Office.[41]

She seems to point out that the Promotional Reservation is very important for the Dalits as the caste-Hindus are responsible for the marginalization of Dalits in Bengal. It is evident that Thakur's narrative provides a hint that the caste-Hindus did not allow the Dalits to get their promotion.

Kalyani Thakur Charal was deeply influenced by Harichand Thakur, Guruchand Thakur, and other Matua Sadhaks. Her father, Krishna Chandra Thakur (born in Jessore), was one of the prominent Matua Sadhaks in the Partitioned Bengal. In "THE CASTE WITHOUT A KING" (translated by Shubh Brat Sarkar), she depicts the great figures of Matua Movement, Harichand Thakur, Guruchand Thakur:

Striving to erase through two hundred years
Of those very names
Harichand, Guruchand
Now among the crowd of their followers
Your vote-begging, out-stretched arms
The sight makes me nauseate
How long would they be cheated thus.[42]

She also adds:

Stay, O Matua brothers, in the name of Thakur
Not a single vote be cast for anyone else
Go fast, rush from door to door and spread this message
We don't need plough and farmland

[40] K.T. Charal, "THE POEM OF THE DOWNTRODDEN"…, op. cit., p. 115.
[41] K.T. Charal, *Ami Keno Charal Likhi*…, op. cit., p. 136.
[42] K.T. Charal, "THE CASTE WITHOUT A KING," in: A. Biswas, S.B. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 119.

First we need King; Your clarion call would be
'Our votes, King for us.[43]

In "MIDDAY MEAL COOK," Kalyani expresses the tale of a Dalit girl who belongs to Bauri caste:

The daughter of a Bauri,
I am nothing but a mere cook
Of midday meal.[44]

The poet seems to suggest the Manubadis are "Manu's offspring," and it should be understood that Manu is a symbol of tyranny, Satan. One must remember that 25th December is celebrated as Manusmriti Dahan Divas by the Dalit people of India. This day is also celebrated as Stri Mukti Dibas. In 1927, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar with his associates had burnt the Hindu religious text *Manusmriti* which has shown women as sexual objects. On December 25, 2020 Bahujan Yuba Chatra Sangathan planned to celebrate Manusmriti Dahan Divas. However, ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad) and VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad) wanted to stop the event and demanded the intervention of local police at Naugaon. The administration declared to cancel the event, and the Section 144 was imposed in Naugaon Bazaar.

Conclusion

It is worth noting that the concept of memory plays a crucial role as a tool of resistance in both Puspa Bairagya and Kalyani Thakur Charal's narratives:

> It is difficult for Dalit women writers to make themselves heard, but they have tried to their best ability to do so. Dalits usually have to publish at their own expense. It is only when Dalit women become independent and self-reliant and learn to write and publish that we will get a glimpse of their reality.[45]

What we need to understand is that Puspa Bairagya and Kalyani Thakur Charal's narratives can be seen as therapeutic and healing narratives. The discussion may conclude with Manju Bala's poem "Barred" (translated by Laboni Chatterjee). I would like to quote some lines from the text:

Come! You people of the soil!
Break free from oppression and turmoil.
Heat your iron-resolution
In the embers of the fire
That glows fiercely in your hearts.[46]

[43] Ibidem.
[44] K.T. Charal, "MIDDAY MEAL COOK," in: A. Biswas, S.B. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 113.
[45] K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 16.
[46] M. Bala, "Barred," in: K.T. Charal, S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 126.

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SUMMARY

This paper makes an attempt to explore how the concept of memory works as a tool of resistance in the narratives of the Bengali Dalit women writers in the Partitioned Bengal. The Bengali Dalit women have been marginalized in different ways, and the history of these women has been neglected. But the *atma-katha* (life-story) of the Bengali Dalit women seeks to question the accepted official historical record of Bengal. In this paper, I propose to examine the narratives of Dr. Puspa Bairagya and Kalyani Thakur Charal which were chiefly produced in the twenty-first century Bengal and were anti-caste narratives and thereby provide an insight into the counter-memories of the Bengali Dalit women. I would like to apply the autobiographical memory theory to the narratives of these writers. My prospective paper endeavors to illuminate personal agency and healing and would hope to generate a new understanding of the texts in the Indian context.

KEYWORDS

memory, resistance, Bengali Dalit Women, healing, partitioned Bengal

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Nostalgia for a Lost Home:

Exile and Trauma in Lucette Lagnado's Memoirs

Ichrak Issaoui

Université Bordeaux Montaigne
ORCID: 0000-0002-4835-4321

Ilhem Issaoui

University of Sfax
ORCID: 0000-0003-0229-7824

Introduction

Memory is like a pile of disarranged papers when blown by the winds of trauma. To think of memory is to think of the traces one leaves; that is, to remember and become remembered. That is because memory can create home when a home is nowhere, and one is exiled. Yet again, to remember is to strive to recall truth and history as a witness. That is the role of the memoirist; to become a sort of a literary historian, lest the story should be forgotten. There is, thus, this urgent imperative or call to tell what happened and to be assured that one can be believed and listened to, that memoirists are witnesses but also the creators of witnesses, their readers.

The Jewish Egyptian author Lucette Lagnado chose to write and historicize the details of her family's exodus from Cairo to New York in her two memoirs: *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from the Old Cairo to the New World* (2008) and *The Arrogant Years: One Girl's Search for Her Lost Youth, from Cairo to Brooklyn* (2011). The former focuses on the life of her father Leon, a charming boulevardier who befriends the city's social elites and even frequents King Farouk to play poker with him. The latter revolves around the

life of her mother Edith, a brilliant, intelligent, and gorgeous woman.

Lagnado documented the injustices that her family and thousands of other Jewish families had to endure in Egypt in the mid-1950s. Back then, these Jews represented a significant part of the Egyptian community. The Jewish community in Egypt succeeded in achieving prosperity on the social and economic levels, which allowed community leaders to gain political and financial influence and to form strong connections with the Royal Palace. When the Jews in Europe suffered from various forms of persecution, including anti-Semitism, the Jews in Egypt lived in harmony with all the other ethnic groups. Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together for a long time without religious fanaticism, while every community preserved its personal, social, and religious identity.[1] In one of her interviews, Lagnado lamented a time when "80,000 Jews lived in Egypt in the '30s and '40s. When there was all this persecution going on in Europe, they were fine. They were becoming pashas, and the Jews and the Muslims and the Copts [Coptic Christians] were animated by the same value for family, for closeness."[2]

However, after the establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948 and with the Free Officers Revolution, the situation for the Jews of Egypt changed drastically. The Arabic and the Egyptian armies entered a war against the state of Israel. In a total disorder, the Egyptian government arrested hundreds of Zionist and communist Jews. Many violent demonstrations attacked Jewish neighborhoods in Cairo and Alexandria, and 15,000 to 70,000 Jews left the country or were expelled by the beginning of World War II.[3] Lagnado's family was among these thousands of others who witnessed multiple forms of oppression and ended up leaving under duress the only country they had ever known.

Lagnado's memoirs recorded all these historical events and their aftermath on her family in detail. She wrote about the abrupt rupture from the homeland, the ordeal of a Jewish family, and its downfall from heaven to poverty. All these personal vicissitudes fed her writings. This home rupture was significantly traumatizing for Lagnado as well as her family. This is especially obvious through the sense of nostalgia that prevails in her memoirs, nightmares, a sense of displacement, and the fragmentation of the family members.

Exile as a Traumatic Experience

In Lagnado's memoirs, exile becomes a traumatic event that destroys and distorts the lives of every member of her family. Depicting exile that comes as a result of the separation from the homeland, Edward Said defines it as "is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home."[4] Home rupture is not a matter of choice. It is rather an experience that is inflicted upon the individuals, and that chooses them. Said argues that the condition of exile is:

> [N]ot … a privilege, but … an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate modern life. Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it

[1] A.A. Ali, The Jews of Egypt, Barons and Wretched: Historical Study (Cairo: Etrac for Printing, Publishing & Distribution, 1997), p. 13 [our translation].
[2] S. Simon, "'The Arrogant Years': An Egyptian Family in Exile," https://choice.npr.org/index.html?origin=https://www.npr.org/transcripts/140515453 [access: 1.05.2022].
[3] A.A. Ali, op. cit., p. 219 [our translation].
[4] E.W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 173.

> happens to you. But, provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity.[5]

Therefore, exile provokes feelings of uprootedness and nonbelonging. These feelings increase, especially when the exile comes to realize that the homeland is out of reach and there is no way back home. Said calls the absence of location "a perilous territory of not-belonging" that leads to an identity crisis.[6] By the same token, Amy Kaminsky implies that exile, whether forced or voluntary, is a form of a "presence-in-absence" that is defined by "what is missing, not by what it contains."[7] Hence, this change of condition heightens feelings of emptiness and loss.

André Aciman, whose experience of exile inspired many of his writings, defines exile as a condition of loss and bewilderment. The exile, in his view, is "not just someone who has lost [her] home; it is someone who can't find another, who can't think of another. Some no longer even know what home means."[8] The exile is also very mobile as she is constantly in a search of a different home that bears some resemblance to the old one since the "new home bears no relationship to the old."[9] All exiles, in his view, tend to be searching for "… their homeland abroad, to bridge the things here to things there, to rewrite the present so as not to write off the past [and] to rescue things everywhere, as though by restoring them here [the exile] might restore them elsewhere as well."[10] Scholars such as Aciman and Said, among many others, agree on the traumatizing aspects of the home rupture. It provokes uprootedness, psychological turmoil, and emotional partition. Trauma theory as conceptualized by Cathy Caruth and Judith Lewis Herman can also illuminate the analysis of Lagnado's memoirs. Trauma, concerning exile, is interesting because it is about the "when" and the "where." It puts these notions at stake since it disrupts this when and where.

Thanks to *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* and the full-length study of trauma *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth is regarded as the founding mother of the trauma theory. The term "trauma theory" was used for the first time, after Freud, in the former book. The term "trauma" in ancient Greek refers to the wound inflicted upon the body. Caruth refers to trauma as "the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world—[that] is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that … is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known."[11] Trauma, according to Caruth, is as an "event [that] is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time."[12]

Trauma is a shocking experience that challenges our distinction not only between the past and the present, but also between the here and there. Caruth implies that trauma, at the moment of its occurrence, is registered as a non-experience, but is experienced at a dif-

[5] Ibidem, p. 184.
[6] Ibidem, p. 177.
[7] A. Kaminsky, *Reading the Body Politics: Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 30.
[8] A. Aciman (ed.), *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: The New Press, 1999), p. 21.
[9] Ibidem, p. 13.
[10] Ibidem, p. 21.
[11] C. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. Baltimore* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4.
[12] Ibidem, p. 8.

ferent time and space in the forms of "repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena."[13] These repressed memories haunt the survivor and keep her trapped in an ever-ending nostalgia. Svetlana Boym refers to nostalgia as "… the disease of an afflicted imagination, [which] incapacitated the body."[14] In her view, homesickness "exhausted the 'viral spirits,' causing nausea, loss of appetite, pathological changes in the lungs, brain inflammation, cardiac arrests, high fever, as well as marasmus and a propensity for suicide."[15] Therefore, it can be said that trauma has a disruptive and repetitive nature since it disrupts the life of the survivor and her relationship with her environment and keeps her haunted by images from the original traumatic incident.

In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman develops a theory that focuses mainly on the comprehension and treatment of trauma. Herman defines trauma as "an affliction of the powerless."[16] To understand the traumatic incidents, Herman implies that the survivor should begin with a rediscovery of the past. This rediscovery of the past starts with the construction of a narrative about the trauma incident. In her view, there are three stages in the process of trauma recovery: establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection with ordinary life.[17] However, she claims that "[l]ike any abstract concept, these stages of recovery are a convenient fiction, not to be taken too literally. They are an attempt to impose simplicity and order upon a process that is inherently turbulent and complex."[18] These three stages can be very helpful when studying trauma narratives. Herman also implies that the second stage can be overwhelming for the survivor since it requires the in-depth narration of the entire trauma story.[19] Telling the trauma story is extremely painful. It provokes intense feelings of sorrow and countless tears.

The Multiple Faces of Trauma

Trauma in the memoirs of Lagnado can be traced through nightmares. Lagnado's dreams about her cat Pouspous that she had to abandon before leaving Egypt keep haunting her the very first year in exile. She claims:

> That first year in America, I often woke up with a start after dreaming of Pouspous. Lying there on my Macy's coat I'd think about my cat in Egypt and burst out crying. Had Pouspous even survived? I'd wonder. Had she managed on her own, with none of us to look after her on Malika Nazli? I was agitated my father had to be summoned to reassure me, though I was past the age when I trusted him as completely as I had the day we left Cairo.[20]

Lagnado's dreams about her cat Pouspous return intrusively and insistently, as shown through the use of the adverb "often." The repetition of these dreams also emphasizes the haunting aspect of trauma. This justifies Caruth's claims that trauma at the moment of its

[13] Ibidem, p. 91.
[14] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 4.
[15] Ibidem, p. 4.
[16] J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 33.
[17] Ibidem, p. 110.
[18] Ibidem.
[19] Ibidem, p. 140.
[20] L. Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: My Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), p. 219.

occurrence is "not fully grasped … but return[s] later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, or other repetitive phenomena" and keeps haunting the survivor.[21] Pouspous can be regarded as Lagnado's double in the sense that they are both uprooted and lost. Pondering about the cat's situation in Lagnado's absence can also reflect her fear about her future and about what awaits her in exile. Pouspous can be seen as an enigma of Egypt and losing him can stand for the loss of the home country.

Dreams, according to Freud, are "*a (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed, repressed) wish.*"[22] In other words, dreams reflect Lagnado's desire and wish to go back to her home country and to recover what has been taken by force. Time is supposed to heal Lagnado from her wounds but it only creates a gap between her and her father since she no longer trusts him. In other words, mistrust is increased by the passing of time. This proves Herman's view that when the survivor feels her body is violated, she can no longer trust neither herself nor the others.[23] Furthermore, Lagnado's use of rhetorical questions calls attention to her psychological condition. The rhetorical questions underscore the fact that she is becoming hysterical and desperate. We also notice that Lagnado's condition signals seriousness and emergency made obvious through the use of the expression "had to be summoned" as if she were drowning and in need of help.

The comeback of Pouspous in her dreams signifies the comeback of the thought of home, in other word nostalgia. Nostalgia conveys the feeling of being exiled from home, of yearning to return to what is familiar, the homeliness of surroundings. Thus, it is about the place and the feeling resulting from displacement. The mention of "Pouspous," "Malika Nazli," and "Egypt" contributes to highlighting this sense of displacement. The return of these familiar places and Pouspous in the form of thoughts, questions, and worries rather than memories that bring joy conveys the abrupt separation between the exiled girl and her home of origin on the micro-level and of the Jewish exile experience on the macro-level. Moreover, the return of the repressed in trauma can be linked to the survivor's desire to find home where there is not any. The use of the adverb of frequency "often" reveals that the speaker is caught in a vicious circle where the startling is repeated, as if trauma as a wound were always open. But since it is an open wound, nostalgia has to do with time, the distorted version of time as an aftermath of trauma. Time, here, becomes fixed as opposed to the chronological time that brings change. There is a denial of this change in time, but also in place, as if trauma was the only defining aspect of time, be it past or present. Lagnado refuses to establish a new connection with the outer world as a result of her trauma; the past, thus, becomes the only place and time where meaning resides.

The trauma of home rupture can also be read through flashbacks. Lagnado's memoirs are swamped with flashbacks about the home country. These flashbacks often appear when Lagnado compares her miserable situation in exile to that of the bourgeois lifestyle she used to enjoy in Egypt. Being at school in Paris with her classmates who belong to the working-class triggers in Lagnado an overflow of flashbacks about her school days in Cairo. She looks back to those years with great fondness and recalls every detail about the first day at school. She says:

[21] C. Caruth, op. cit., p. 91.
[22] S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 183 [italics in the originial].
[23] J. Herman, op. cit., p. 37.

> I thought yearningly back to my gray-and-white jumper with the embroidered crest, the uniform of the Lycée Français de Bab-el-Louk. My first day at school, I'd walked round and round the courtyard with my friends, feeling terribly stylish and grown-up in my elegant cotton dress. My books were in brown leather satchel my father purchased for me and which I carried in my arms, comme les grandes filles – like the older girls.[24]

Lagnado keeps in her memory the country of her origin since she used to feel there "terribly stylish" and "elegant." In contrast, in exile, she feels "widely inferior … awkward and out of place," which makes her suffer "in silence, not daring to complain."[25] The past is also depicted through the senses, especially touch. Lagnado remembers the fabrics of her school uniform. Feelings and impressions about the fabrics are also expressed in detail as if it was not past. Hence, flashbacks have a dissociative aspect since the past and the present can be confused. We also notice a sense of loss reflected through the use of code-switching. Lagnado tends to speak French, which was her first language in Egypt, when she feels nostalgic for her home country. The use of code-switching reflects her sense of displacement and non-belonging.

In Lagnado's memoirs, the family's journey from Cairo to New York seems to be a journey of disintegration. This is especially evidenced in the following passage:

> There was no family left anymore, not really. My siblings increasingly were going off on their own. Suzette was ensconced in one of her ever-changing Queens high-rises …. My brothers were still with us, but they had their friends, their own lives really, and were rarely at home. This was all terribly painful for my mother, who felt she was watching the family disintegrate yet seemed helpless to stop it.[26]

The fact that the family started to disintegrate once in exile speaks volumes in relation to trauma and exile. The family is, metaphorically speaking, the individual's first ground of safety. This ground of safety started to dismantle the moment the family came to "settle" on the ground of non-belonging. It can be said, thus, that this ground of non-belonging was infectious. It is at this particular stage that we can especially speak of time and place that are fragmented and fragmenting. This fragmentation in time and place is expressed in the language of the narration. There is the abrupt change and shift; there is the casting of doubt, particularly conveyed through words like "not really," "but," "yet." These words, conjunctions, and adverbs establish a discrepancy between what was expected and hoped, and what was found and witnessed. There is a blatant shift from the collective to the individual specifically expressed through the discrepancy between words like "the family," "us," and "siblings," on the one hand, and "their friends" and "their lives," on the other hand. There is an emphasis on this family being torn apart particularly expressed through words like "own." Hence, the mother becomes the epitome of stillness; she is passive; there is some learned helplessness. All she does is watch her family collapsing and vanishing. The family's story becomes a microcosm of the fate of the Jewish community in general. This is especially intriguing if we relate it to the genre that Lagnado opted for: the memoir. The memoir, in this sense, wavers between the personal and the communal; it is a memoir of the individual, the individual as a representative of the community.

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[24] L. Lagnado, T*he Man in the White Sharkskin Suit…*, op. cit., p. 182.
[25] Ibidem, p. 182.
[26] L. Lagnado, *The Arrogant Years: One Girl's Search for Her Lost Youth, from Cairo to Brooklyn* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), pp. 135–136.

Delving once again into this idea of the ground as a metaphor for the homeland and the family, it becomes clear for us that there is a connection between trauma and exile. While family represented a glimmer of hope in this unknown country, the fact that the mother was watching as her only safe cocoon, the family, is being torn apart is quite evocative. She is, metaphorically speaking, the farmer whose land and crops are being uprooted by a hurricane, a traumatic event. This state of stillness that we notice in the character of the mother as the mute witness brings to our mind the idea of the *tableau vivant*, a living picture, a static scene of the person who watches but does not do anything besides. It is a recurrence of the trauma that was lived at home and outside. This learned helplessness that makes of the mother a *tableau vivant* cuts right at the core of Jewish studies since it is a leitmotif in Jewish memoirs and films about the Jewish community. One may think, for instance, of the girl with the red coat in *Schindler's List*. It is a moment of frozenness and meaninglessness in terms of time and place.

Lagnado's mother Edith, on the other hand, was obsessed with the idea of drawing the family members closer together again. We notice the excessive repetition of the sentence "Il faut reconstruire le foyer …. You must rebuild the hearth."[27] This sentence is repeated in both languages, French and English. Repeating this line denotes the fixation of the mother who seems to be "so desperate to keep [them] all together, to sort of re-attain [their] lost grandeur from Egypt."[28] The mother is "obsessed with the notion of reconstructing what [they] had left behind on Malika Nazli Street. She [longs] to pull [her] family back together again, to re-create a semblance of the home that [they] had lost, and it was as if she believed she could do it bit by bit, piece by piece, with pillowcases, towels and spoons."[29] However, "[t]he hearth had never been rebuilt. The hearth was gone," claims Lagnado.[30] This highlights the impossibility of the task of recreating home in the space of exile. The hearth is a part of home and the impossibility of building a hearth equates the impossibility of recreating home. Thus, the hearth here is a synecdoche, a part that stands for the whole that is the home.

The impact of trauma is also reflected through the family's sense of displacement. While they were in Paris still negotiating where to settle, in America or Israel, the Lagnados received some troubling news that left them perplexed:

> "Ils ont assassiné votre president!" the porter was shouting toward our window – They have killed your president! My family looked at one another, thoroughly befuddled. Had Nasser been murdered in Egypt? Had they assassinated King Farouk in his Italian exile? Or was it General de Gaulle who had been killed here in Paris? It took a few minutes before we realized that "our president" was the president of the United States. John F. Kennedy was dead.[31]

There is an emphasis on the idea of non-belongingness of the family that is expressed through language. This is especially laid bare through the use of words related to countries and nationalities, but also names of presidents: "Egypt," "King Farouk," "Italian," "General de Gaulle," "Paris," "United States," "John F. Kennedy."[32] This welter of references conveys a crisis of identity and belonging. The porter's announcement leads the family to put its iden-

[27] Ibidem, p. 146.
[28] S. Simon, op. cit.
[29] L. Lagnado, *The Arrogant Years…*, op. cit., p. 146.
[30] Ibidem, p. 305.
[31] L. Lagnado, *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit…*, op. cit., p. 199.
[32] Ibidem.

tity at stake. It is the word "our," a possessive adjective, that triggers their belonging problem. This "our" becomes meaningless because to be exiled is to suffer from the inability to find one's "own" home; it is a problem of possession and belonging. The tearing and disintegration, thus, do not happen on the family level alone, but also in terms of citizenship, that is, in terms of the national identity. The fact that the family took some time until they realized what was meant by "your president" tells of how tormented, but also socially and psychologically disintegrated and shattered they are. It is not the word "assassin" that put them in this dilemma; it is the word "our."

Conclusion

Exile is a traumatic experience that leaves the survivor trapped in nostalgia. The impact of home rupture can be seen on both the individual and the community as a whole. Through the memoir genre, Lagnado succeeded in commemorating the injustices that her family and thousands of Jews of Egypt witnessed at the beginning of the 1950s, which led to their exile. This proves Herman's view about the importance of turning trauma memories into a narrative while echoing Freud's therapeutic methods, especially his idea of the talking cure which is about the ability to share one's story. Ann Kaplan, on the other hand, suggests that trauma "can never be 'healed'" in the sense that things can never return to what they used to be before the traumatic incident.[33]

Some trauma injuries cannot be healed, but they can be worked through when they are "translated via art."[34] Dominick LaCapra similarly highlights the importance of writing when he claims: "… writing is a medium for expressing a content, and its ideal goal is to be transparent to content or an open window on the past—with figures of rhetoric serving only an instrumental role in illustrating what could be expressed without loss in literal terms."[35] This highlights the importance of writing as a means of sublimation that eventually leads to growth and the understanding of trauma. Lagnado's testimony also underscores the role of the reader, who herself becomes an eye-witness to all this suffering and a second voice to this history. The reader thus eventually becomes enlisted in the service of the memoirist's cause.

[33] A.E. Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 19.
[34] Ibidem.
[35] Ibidem, p. 3.

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SUMMARY

This paper seeks to study exile as a traumatic experience by focusing on the multiple manifestations of trauma in the memoirs of the Jewish-Egyptian writer Lucette Lagnado. Exile, in Edward Said's view, "is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (Said 2000: 173). Lagnado chose writing to voice the trauma of exile of the whole Jewish Egyptian community expelled from Egypt after the establishment of the state of Israel and the arrival of the Free Officers to power in 1952. In Lagnado's memoirs, trauma re-surfaces in different places and times, through flashbacks and nightmares. These unwanted and suppressed memories reemerge involuntarily and keep Lagnado trapped in an ever-ending nostalgia. Both Caruth's work on trauma and Herman's analysis of the three stages of trauma recovery will help us better understand the place of trauma in Lagnado's memoirs.

KEYWORDS

exile, trauma, Said, flashbacks, nightmares, memoirs, Caruth, Herman

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Melancholy in Marcel Proust

Isabel Sargento

New University of Lisbon
ORCID: 0000-0002-7342-4352

Our Relationship with Time

When we talk about time, we cannot help mentioning Chronos, the melancholic myth par excellence. As Chronos used to swallow his children as soon as he generates them[1], the past devours the present uninterruptedly. Time is therefore linked to the idea that everything that is behind is over, time is related with the end and thus, time is connected with the death of something and also with death itself. Chronos, after being defeated by his son Zeus[2], was also condemned to live in the world of the dead, to live in death, using Benjamin's words, to live in the "place of eternal mournfulness."[3]

It is our relationship with time that determines our time, being melancholy a way of relationship with time. In other words, melancholy is present in the manner how we face the passage of time. As the course of time is associated with something that has ended, it is also related with something that has been lost, with something inaccessible, with something that the melancholic is not willing to give up. To the melancholic it is urgent to find again what has been lost and its absence leads him/her to a state of absolute discouragement, boredom (*taedium vitae*), and alienation.

After a certain time, the paternity of melancholics was attributed to Saturn, the Roman mythological god equivalent to Chronos.[4] Melancholics are even called Children of Saturn. As Saturn is also a planet, we can infer, in the cosmological and astrological contexts, that

[1] Hesiod, *Theogony Works and Days Testimonia*, trans. G.W. Most (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 41.
[2] Ibidem, p. 61.
[3] W. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. J. Osborne (New York: Verso, 2003), p. 144.
[4] R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1979), p. 133.

there is a certain relationship between its movement and the performance of the melancholic personality. Thus, because Saturn is a planet with a long and slow orbit and also because of the great distance that separates it from planet Earth, it is considered a slow planet, a cold and dark planet, and a distant and lonely planet influencing the disposition for indolence, inertia, apathy, discouragement, and isolation, typical of melancholics.[5] This disposition is reflected in a move away from worldly activities and sets the melancholic in a deeply contemplative state that can, in opposite, offer him/her another face of the Saturnine experience. It can give him/her the face of extreme intelligence, of genius, or even the gift of prophecy. This ambivalence[6] can thus bring to melancholics, both obscurity or lucidity, sterility or fertility, and desolation or happiness.

The melancholic ambiguity can also be related to the Myth of Chronos in which we also find a duality due to his different destinies that reflect the issue of temporality. On the one hand, the legend tells us that Chronos was relegated to the depths of Tartarus[7] to live in the most infinite sadness, but on the other hand, his figure appears associated with the God of the Golden Age Myth reigning on the Islands of the Blessed[8] where time was experienced as an instant that does not change, temporality was simultaneous instead of successive, the moments were spatialized, and time was eternalized. The melancholic is someone who lives obsessed with the idea of this non-chronological time. The melancholic cannot accept earthly life as it is: ephemeral. Melancholics are permanently looking for a kind of non-existent paradise, as if they were looking for a fullness and for an eternal happiness. The melancholic lives an endless seek, so his/her disturbed soul's state and his/her permanent anguish and suffering that can led him/her to madness or even to suicide.[9] The saturnine lives a kind of "death in life," in the style of the mythological heroes of Aristotle's *Problem XXX,* Ajax, Hercules, and Bellerophon[10], the saturnine is a wanderer, the saturnine is always on the way.

In a passage from the chapter "Combray" of Proust's first book of *In Search of Lost Time*, we can infer that he lived this experience of melancholy when he extends to himself the feeling of anguish lived by Swan, but making it appear preceding the object of loss:

> … to him that anguish came through love, to which it is in a sense predestined, by which it will be seized upon and exploited; but when, as had befallen me, it possesses one's soul before love has yet entered into one's life, then it must drift, awaiting love's coming, vague and free, without precise attachment, at the disposal of one sentiment today, of another tomorrow, of filial piety or affection for a friend.[11]

This gives us the sign that his anguish was part of a natural state as the sensation of loss had dominated him since always and it is consistent with Giorgio Agamben's idea, transposed to Ilit Ferber's words:

[5] W. Benjamin, op. cit, p. 150.
[6] R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, op. cit., pp. 134–135.
[7] Hesiod, op. cit., pp. 61–62.
[8] Ibidem, p. 101.
[9] Aristotle, *Problems II, books XXII–XXXVIII*, trans. W.S. Hett (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1957), p. 165.
[10] Ibidem, p. 155.
[11] M. Proust, *Swann's Way, In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, T. Kilmartin (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), p. 40.

> Agamben pushes this further to claim that the melancholic actually lost what was never hers to have.[12]

Let us see next how Proust faces temporality and how we can draw a parallel between his moods and the melancholic disposition.

Melancholy in Marcel Proust

Although Proust has written *In Search of Lost Time* as a work of fiction, there are several aspects that can lead us to take it as an autobiographical work. In this sense, the feeling of loss intuited in the different trips to the past cannot be separated from the melancholic experience lived by himself. The permanent duel between the present and the past proposed by Proust through involuntary memory denotes an uneasiness in relation to life as life is, they manifest a continuous sadness as if there is a misadjustment of the author in relation to himself and in relation to the world, a misadjustment that seems to come back to his childhood and that increased with the death of his mother. It was this state of mind and the pain that led him to isolation and to be distant as suggested by several passages in his work from which I highlight the following ones:

> At Combray … my bedroom became the fixed point on which my melancholy and anxious thoughts were centred. … But my sorrows were only increased thereby.[13]

> The anaesthetic effect of habit being destroyed, I would begin to think – and to feel – such melancholy things.[14]

> … this room, from which, in the daytime, I could see as far as the keep of Roussainville-le-Pin, was for a long time my place of refuge, doubtless because it was the only room whose door I was allowed to lock, whenever my occupation was such as required an inviolable solitude: reading or day-dreaming, tears or sensual pleasure.[15]

Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Image of Proust" mentioned that Proust was created in extremely unhealthy conditions like "an unusual malady" and an "abnormal disposition."[16] This situation is reinforced by Proust's quote of his grandmother Bathilde:

> … especially this little man, who needs all the strength and will-power that he can get.[17]

The "abnormal disposition" and the lack of "strength and will-power" complement the idea that Proust lived the saturnine experience. We must not forget that the melancholic phenomenon can present either soul or organic manifestations:

[12] I. Ferber, "Melancholy Philosophy: Freud and Benjamin," *E-rea* (4.1/2006), http://journals.openedition.org/erea/413 [access: 01.03.2019], paragraph 4, note 2.
[13] M. Proust, op. cit., pp. 9–10.
[14] Ibidem, p. 11.
[15] Ibidem, p. 14.
[16] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), p. 201.
[17] M. Proust, op. cit., p. 12.

> … they incline towards melancholic diseases, different people in different parts of the body; with some the symptoms are epileptic, with others apoplectic, others again are given to deep despondency or to fear, others are over-confident, as was the case with Archelaus, king of Macedonia.[18]

> Marcel Proust died of the same inexperience which permitted him to write his works. He died of ignorance of the world and because he did not know how to change the conditions of his life which had begun to crush him. He died because he did not know how to make a fire or open a window.[19]

> And, to be sure, of his psychogenic asthma.[20]

If we establish a dual relationship between the referred misadjustment (fragility and discouragement) and the exceptionality (genius) that makes his work unique, we find again elements that allow us to connect him to melancholy. As already mentioned, melancholy has an ambiguous nature, like a double-edged sword so, if we find in Proust a painful experience of suffering with existence and of alienation from the world, on the other hand, we find also in him a particular fertility that brought him the poetic creation.

In this work, Proust did not write a temporal narrative, but rather the articulation of real time with the past, awakened from the unconscious through intuitions. Let us see how he described the moment when a softened piece of madeleine came into contact with his palate and made him to be taken by an unexpected joy that rescued him, as if by magic, from the lethargy that accompanied him and overcome all his sorrows:

> No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory – this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it *was* me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal.[21]

The description of this sensation is one of the passages in the chapter that gives us the visualization of his constant search for something able of quieting his disquiet to the point of making him stop "feeling mortal." The joy that invaded him was so powerful that we can imagine that for an instant Proust felt in Paradise, that he was a Chronos in the Golden Age. It was the search for these perceptions that drove him, and it was his ability to capture emotions in objects, with which he came across one day, that Benjamin called the "experience of the aura"[22] and that enabled him to endlessly repeat the illusory state of happiness that sounds as a Proust's shout. Quoting Benjamin, it is the "elegiac idea of happiness."[23] Proust, dominated by the obsessive longing for happiness, resorted exhaustively to remembrance in order to mitigate the sadness and grief, caused by the arduous understanding of an end feeling which regulated his inner life. He proceeded thus a frenetic search for images that he held in

[18] Aristotle, op. cit., p. 165.
[19] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit. p. 213.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] M. Proust, op. cit., pp. 60–61.
[22] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit., p. 188.
[23] Ibidem, p. 204.

his heart and that were images he kept from lost times. This search denotes his inability to accept and to recognize their absence and to be conformed with his loss and bears witness to his melancholic mood. It is as if Proust, by interweaving his time with the memories that come to him through his involuntary memory, was looking for an antidote to ageing.

Following this madeleine's experience, he made several efforts repeating the act to make that sensation reappear attempting to understand its cause:

> I want to try to make it reappear. I retrace my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I rediscover the same state, illuminated by no fresh light. I ask my mind to make one further effort, to bring back once more the fleeting sensation.[24]

But these efforts were done under the domain of intelligence and the sensation did not reappear. Only after disconnecting from this conscious struggle for understanding it and after returning to his daily restlessness, does his unconscious, suddenly, brought it again to his memory and he realized that the taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which his aunt used on Sunday mornings at Combray to give him dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane.

In this kind of experiences, of being surprised by unexpected sensations, associated with brief moments from the present that stimulate involuntary memory which immediately responds triggering intuitions, one can be taken, in a pleasant way, to situations lived in distant times. The feeling of loss can then be deceived momentarily, while we are led, as if in delirium, to the past. Every instant that arises from the unconscious as a memory is an ended moment, so its invocation is an attempt to achieve a mourning not fully realized and even that may never be completed. According to the following Benjamin's description the brief joy that the memory brings, masks the suffering caused by deprivation:

> Mourning is the state of mind in which feeling revives the empty world in the form of a mask, and derives an enigmatic satisfaction in contemplating it.[25]

The opposite can also happen in the case the conscience deceives us masking the loss putting in its place an apparent "happiness." That allows us to endure the loss by deluding us in such a way that we can live this way for a long period of time and if the chance is not given, may even last a lifetime. When chance happens, the apparent joy, the "keep smiling" imposed by the conscience, is drastically disturbed by the unconscious, bringing us the memory of the lost object and making us revive the perception of impossibility. It is how we relate to these sensations that we find our response to the events that were the sources of our sorrows and of our perennial pains. It is in this relationship that we find our greater or lesser degree of melancholy.

Proust's melancholic disposition, connected to the lost object, expands the feeling of impossibility with which he cannot live. In his next words, the projection of this incapacity is evident in the word "never":

[24] M. Proust, op. cit., pp. 61–62.
[25] W. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*…, op. cit., p. 139.

> Never again will such moments be possible for me. But of late I have been increasingly able to catch, if I listen attentively, the sound of the sobs which I had the strength to control in my father's presence, and which broke out only when I found myself alone with Mamma. In reality their echo has never ceased.[26]

The permanent feeling of impossibility, to satisfy his desire to go back in time, was the generator of the anguish and melancholic sorrow that accompanied him since ever. The aforementioned projection that the word "never" suggests, together with the final part of the last sentence of the quote, may induce us to read a new projection, as if the words "never ceased" indicate "they will never cease" making room for melancholic hopelessness and suggesting, once again, a time articulation. This kind of allusions to the infeasibility of a return are several throughout the entire chapter and show Proust's obsession with images from the past:

> I knew that such a night could not be repeated …. Tomorrow night my anguish would return and Mamma would not stay by my side.[27]

According to Benjamin:

> The eternity which Proust opens to view is convoluted time, not boundless time.[28]

Remembrance and Forgetfulness

During the night, as in a daydream, just as the spider skillfully builds its web, Proust, no less skillfully, wove a web of memories from his past life that flooded him involuntarily. These memories acted as his weapon in the fight against the eternal sorrow and malaise that dominated his existence. On the one hand, there was the plot of memories of what was unconsciously desired and that filled him with a certain happiness and on the other hand, there was the undoing of the network brought by the daybreak that faded the memories awakening again the discouragement, the suffering, and the dismay. As Benjamin questioned, would not Proust be closer to forgetfulness than to reminiscence, opposite to Penelope?

> For here the day unravels what the night was woven.[29]

Through everyday life and conscious remembrance, we are led to dissipate the past realities that are turned into weak vestiges of what has been experienced leading us to oblivion. According to Freud's student Theodor Reik, remembrance (*Gedächtnis*) is as Proust's involuntary memory and keeps the memories, while memory (*Erinnerung*), the voluntary memory in Proust, is destructive. This thought is based on Freud's hypotheses:

> … becoming conscious and leaving behind a memory-trace are processes incompatible with each other within one and the same system.[30]

> On the basis of impressions derived from our psycho-analytic experience, we assume that all excitatory processes that occur in the other systems leave permanent

[26] M. Proust, op. cit., p. 49.
[27] M. Proust, op. cit., p. 58.
[28] Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit., p. 211.
[29] Ibidem, p. 202.
[30] S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), p. 19.

> traces behind in them which form the foundation of memory. Such memory-traces, then, have nothing to do with the fact of becoming conscious; indeed they are often most powerful and most enduring when the process which left them behind was one which never entered consciousness.[31]

That is also consistent with Proust's idea that only what does not have the character of "isolated experience" (*Erlebnis*) but of "experience" (*Erfahrung*) can be a component of involuntary memory. For Freud, the conscience serves also as protection against stimuli in the reception of shocks assimilating them as "isolated experiences" and making them sterile for creative exercise. The shock only becomes part of the "experience" from the moment it enters the domain of the unconscious as it is the case of the fright, then becoming null the resistance to it. So, in his psychoanalytic theory, Freud launches outside the conscious domain attempting to get to the heart of the traumatic shock.

Proust was an absolute reader of Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*, having incorporated various aspects of the experience contained in this work into his own experience. According to Benjamin, Baudelaire included the duel in his poetry as an image of shock experience, this acting as his shout.[32] In *The Flowers of Evil*, fencing was Baudelaire's image with which he parried the blows (shocks):

> I practise my quaint swordsmanship alone,
> Stumbling on words as over paving stones,
> Sniffing in corners all the risks of rhyme,
> To find a verse I'd dreamt of a long time.[33]

It was through the aforementioned weaving of memories that Proust's pen trimmed them, constituting this weave his own creative process. The combat between the present and the past that unfolded between the wakefulness state and the moments between sleep and awakening or between falling asleep and sleep was Proust's "fencing":

> When a man is asleep, he has in a circle round him the chain of the hours, the sequence of the years, the order of the heavenly bodies. Instinctively he consults them when he awakes, and in an instant reads off his own position on the earth's surface and the time that has elapsed during his slumbers; but this ordered procession is apt to grow confused, and to break its ranks.[34]

To the already referred idea that reflection offers us a shock absorber, we can associate the idea that intention mitigates sadness and mourning, as mentioned by Ferber[35] through the following Benjamin's quote about Goethe's considerations on intention and its relation to sadness:

> … a sadness that would be boundless, were it not for the presence of that intentionality which Goethe deems an essential component of every work of art, and which manifests itself with an assertiveness that fends off mourning. A mourning-game [*Trauer-Spiel*], in short.[36]

[31] Ibidem, pp. 18–19.
[32] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit., p. 164.
[33] C. Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. J. McGowan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 169.
[34] M. Proust, op. cit., pp. 3–4.
[35] I. Ferber, op. cit., paragraph 8.
[36] W. Benjamin, *Selected Writings, 1: 1913–1926*, eds. M. Bullock, M.W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2002), p. 373.

In Proust, shock can be found when he aestheticizes his mother's absence through her presence which foreshadows it:

> But this good night lasted for so short a time, she went down again so soon, that the moment in which I heard her climb the stairs, and then caught the sound of her garden dress of blue muslin, from which hung little tassels of plaited straw, rustling along the double-doored corridor, was for me a moment of the utmost pain; for it heralded the moment which was to follow it, when she would have left me and gone downstairs again.[37]

The shock lies in the painful anticipation of the fatality that will follow. It is as if it multiplies the nostalgia for what will happen. The ecstasy of the moment is contained in the last sentence of the quote and is reinforced by the following sentence in which Proust shows the desire to delay the inevitable evil:

> I reached the point of hoping that this good night which I loved so much would come as late as possible.[38]

Proust's premature nostalgia, due to being emotionally invaded by shock of absence feeling, related with the presence that has not yet occurred, resembles to the nostalgic feeling contained in the melancholic disposition which the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, through his heteronym Bernardo Soares, has rightly revealed in *The Book of Disquiet*:

> Ah, there is no more painful longing than the longing for things that never were![39]

This is the way the melancholic lives longing, making present the absence of what he most desires and which for him, being unattainable, will definitely be absent, although he embraces its reach as his task. Proust had an urgent need to immortalize the longing with which he permanently lived, and he did it through writing.

Bergson's idea "the actualization of the *Durée*" mentioned by Benjamin[40] was the instrument to which Proust resorted in his obsessive way of relating to time. Proust's aim was to recover the duration of time and it is mostly, through the use of sensory impressions that the images reach him through "correspondences," partly assimilated from the aforementioned readings of *The Flowers of Evil*. Time was retained in flavours, aromas, and touches and it was through synesthesias that the experience took place. Let us see how the scent transcribed in the following lines retained his soul pains giving them primacy and how Proust sustained the idea that there was no possibility of the intelligence be able to counteract it:

> That hateful staircase, up which I always went so sadly, gave out a smell of varnish which had, as it were, absorbed and crystallized the special quality of sorrow that I felt each evening, and made it perhaps even crueller to my sensibility because, when it assumed this olfactory guise, my intellect was powerless to resist it.[41]

Proust exercised the remembrance throughout his life, through the encounter with images retained in his unconscious that appeared to him in a casual way, not being subordi-

[37] M. Proust, op. cit., p.15.
[38] Ibidem.
[39] F. Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. M.J. Costa (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2017), p. 83.
[40] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit., p. 180.
[41] M. Proust, op. cit., p. 36.

nated to the "isolated experience." In his attempts to recall the past voluntarily, Proust made it very clear that any effort in this direction was fruitless. Results would only be achieved in the eventuality of an encounter with some material object to bring the necessary sensation for that purpose:

> And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die.[42]

While in the case of voluntary memory, remembrance is under the domain of the intelligible depending on our conscience, in the case of involuntary memory, it is the remembrance itself that dictates the rules and not us being, in that case, under the umbrella of the sensitive world.

Freud versus Benjamin and the Phenomenon of Melancholy

We have been referring to melancholy as a phenomenon in relation to which there is a natural predisposition of certain subjects, or even of all subjects, although with a degree variation from some to others approaching to Aristotle's view exposed in *Problem XXX*.[43] Let us now make an approach from Freud's perspective.

Diverging from Benjamin's vision about melancholy, Freud made a distinction between melancholy and mourning. In both cases we face a reaction regarding loss, although Freud treats melancholy as a pathology as he explains in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia." In the inability to accept the loss of the loved object or the loss of the abstraction that filled its place, melancholy and mourning go hand in hand. However, they diverge in how the loss is recognized and assimilated. According to Freud, in melancholy, the subject loses self-regard and experiences a feeling of immense guilt that takes him to permanent dysphoria not being a temporary state as in the case of mourning. While in mourning the loss is located in the *Cs.* (conscious) domain, with a clear notion of the lost object, in the case of melancholy, the loss is completely removed from consciousness becoming part of the *Ucs.* (unconscious) acquiring a more chimeric nature. In this case, the object is, most of the time, undefined and inexplicable, even for the melancholic himself/herself. When part of the work of mourning (*Trauerarbeit*), over the course of a slow and progressive process, the ego manages to free the libido of the loved object until the subject feels free to love another object. In the melancholic, the libidinal energy is moved from the loved object to the ego, thus keeping the love for the beloved object alive, not allowing its extinction, as it is referred by Freud in the following sentence:

> So by taking flight into the ego love escapes extinction.[44]

Thus, it can be explained that the profound discouragement, the lack of interest in

[42] Ibidem, p. 60.
[43] Aristotle, op. cit., pp. 154–181.
[44] S. Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in: T*he Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: 1914–1916*, trans. J. Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), p. 257.

the world, the inability to love and the inertia, when part of the work of mourning, end up disappearing. On the contrary, in the case of melancholy, one come across a "destructive loyalty"[45] from the subject in relation to the lost object being it internalized into his/her ego[46] not allowing him/her to be able to distinguish between the lost object in his/her ego and the ego itself. The ego identifies itself with the lost object.

> In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.[47]

This situation is, however, ambiguous, since it is through the destruction of the loved object that the melancholic will ensure its presence creating for this purpose, images, illusions, dreams, and ghosts of the loved object, seeking in them his/her way of relating to it and thus maintaining a fidelity to it. Philosophy diverges from Freudian perspective of considering the melancholic disposition as a disease. To philosophy, the capacity of the melancholic to assimilate the loved object through the creation of diverse images of it is a way to the artistic creation. As in the case of Chronos, it is the destruction that guarantees the creation. In this way, the melancholic not only ensures the survival of the loved object, but also guarantees its own survival.

Returning to the way how the conscious and the unconscious behave concerning the stimuli, we can find in Proust's words something that fits into the Freudian melancholic framework, since they denote the existence of an involuntary evil installed in his unconscious and over which he had no power of action:

> … my unhappiness was regarded no longer as a punishable offence but as an involuntary ailment which had been officially recognized, a nervous condition for which I was in no way responsible.[48]

To calm his uneasy spirit, Proust obstinately searched for the images that his unconscious stored resembling that, in Freudian context, to a kind of self-therapy, to a kind of self-psychoanalysis with which he tried to fight against the nostalgia in which he was submerged. However, outside of this context, what this state brought him was creation.

Walter Benjamin did not make a distinction between mourning and melancholy. According to Ferber, Benjamin sometimes used the terms "mourning" and "melancholy" without distinguishing them[49] ending up referring to something that lies between both Freudian distinctions with "loss" as the common denominator. In Benjamin's book *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, he sustained the idea that loss is the condition for the possibility of tragedy and that mourning game (*Trauerspiel*) is contained in the very essence of mourning and melancholy. For him, mourning game is the result of modernity. With Lutheranism and the Protestant Reformation, salvation through "good works" loses relevance in relation to salvation through faith[50] and without "good works" any chance of redemption is excluded. Life becomes then meaningless and modern man remains immersed in an endless mourning.

The melancholic falls into a state of deep meditation plunging into the bodies of the

[45] I. Ferber, op. cit., paragraph 11.
[46] Ibidem, paragraph 1.
[47] S. Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" …, op. cit, p. 246.
[48] M. Proust, op. cit., p. 51.
[49] I. Ferber, op. cit., paragraph 3.
[50] W. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*…, op. cit., p. 138

objects in order to save them[51] as foreshadowed in Albert Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I* from 1514. For Benjamin, the work of mourning does not promote the object's absence to reach its extinction as proposed by Freud, but it promotes its actualization by placing it only in a resting state. In this context, the time in mourning game is a non-diegetic time coming as a single instant. Time is spatialized becoming non-teleological.

In Proust's work, we witness a fidelity to the ruins of his lost object being the loss at the heart of his mourning. It was not his intent to build a narrative offering us neither figurative literature nor abstract literature. Proust, through articulated temporality, made his past continuously present. He saved himself from nostalgia by saving his beloved object.

Conclusion

In Search of Lost Time is a figural work whose pages are full of sensations obtained with the use of involuntary memory and reveal a plot of memories as Proust recorded them and not how he lived them.[52] This is how he tirelessly combated his melancholic hopelessness by making the sensation of the present and the sensation of the past rhythmically embrace each other, making the image (figure) appear which, if it was not enough to satisfy his hunger for happiness, was at least enough to ensure his survival.

Melancholy made Proust an eternal Bellerophon, and his writing was like the wandering of the mythological hero of *The Iliad*:

> But then Bellerophon angered all the Gods.
> He wandered out alone on the Aleian plain –
> depressed in spirit, roaming there and shunning all.[53]

Not belonging to the world of the gods (past), he also did not adjust to the earthly world (present) and so he lived in permanent solitude. His obsession was so intense that, in the last years of his life, so as not to let any memory escape, he reserved the night for the writing of the sensations that he sought more and more frantically and obstinately.[54] Let us end with two quotes from George Girard's interview with Proust's editor Gallimard, published in *Bulletin de la Maison du Livre* and found in a note by the translator of Portuguese edition of Benjamin's work, João Barrento. They attest to Proust's endless search:

> Proust's proofs? But he never corrected them! Proust never amended a typographical error. For him, the proofs served not to correct the text, but to add text. As long as there were proofs, he added new sentences.[55]

> He once told me that, if it was possible, he would have liked to see his entire work published in a single volume in two columns and without a single paragraph.[56]

[51] Ibidem, p. 157.
[52] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit., p. 202.
[53] Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. I. Johnston (Virginia: Richer Resources Publications, 2007), p. 130.
[54] W. Benjamin, *Illuminations…*, op. cit., p. 202.
[55] W. Benjamin, *Ensaios sobre Literatura*, trans. J. Barrento (Porto: Porto Editora, 2016), p. 313. [My translation.]
[56] Ibidem, p. 314. [My translation.]

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this article is to show how Marcel Proust faces temporality and how we can establish a parallel between his moods and the melancholic state of mind. A brief reflection is made on our relationship with time and about melancholy as consequence of our awareness of the passage of time. Focusing on the study of the first chapter of *Swann's Way*, the first volume of Proust's work *In Search of Lost Time*, it is presented as part of Proust's melancholic experience, the fact that he articulated different times with the recourse of involuntary memory, one of the main means used by him in the writing of this work. The question of intuitions as thrusters of this same involuntary memory is addressed and as Proust, neither offering us a figurative literature, nor an abstract literature, used this formula in the struggle against his melancholic hopelessness. It is specified how Proust made the image (figure) to appear alternating the sensation of present with the sensation of past. Some considerations are made about mourning from two different standpoints, firstly from Walter Benjamin's point of view and his philosophical perspective on the phenomenon of melancholy, then from the approach of Sigmund Freud, to whom melancholy is a pathology within the scope of psychiatry, opposed to mourning. The "loss" prevails throughout this reflection as a condition for the melancholic disposition.

KEYWORDS

melancholy, time, unconscious, involuntary memory, loss, mourning

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Longing in the Past, Belonging in the Future:

An Autoethnographic Fiction

Vishwaveda Joshi

York University
ORCID: 0000-0003-1133-7699

Ira Famarin

York University
ORCID: 0000-0002-7370-3730

Background

Through this paper, we aim to present an experimental and arts-based approach to analyzing and understanding memories and themes of nostalgia, belongingness, and longing in the present day. We wrote an autoethnographic fiction[1] to explore questions such as: what is it like to long and belong, what is it like to long for a future that is embedded in the past, what is it like to futurize/co-futurize memories?

As immigrants to Toronto, coming from nations that were once colonized, and still remain in the peripheries of colonization, we ponder about our bodies occupying the third space that we are living in, the feelings of nostalgia and belonging in our fiction. We write about our belongingness to our roots and the trajectories of our beings and think what

[1] A. Bochner, C. Ellis, *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories* (New York: Routledge, 2016); C. Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography (Edition 13)* (AltaMira Press, 2004).

decolonizing the concept of memories might evoke. We draw from Erin Manning's[2] idea of moving towards a body-becoming to propose a collaborative autoethnographic fiction writing that implicates our memories and bodies with our surroundings and other bodies, human, beyond human, and material, as instruments of research. We hope that writing a fiction in conversation with one another and in synchronicity of each other's experiences will allow us to deconstruct and problematize our understanding of memories, the frictions between avant-garde and nostalgia, and interspersing the collaging practice will allow us to build our stories and explore belongingness and nostalgia, longing for something indefinite and unwanted memories.

Memories are understood here as complex images that allow us to reflect upon both the past and a desired future. We suggest that this desire for a future that is different from the past is manifested as longing about something – a person, love, spirituality, or a decolonial future. We both write about "involuntary autobiographical memories"[3] that came to mind at some point in our lives without any preceding attempt of remembering them and use those memories to create memories of a future that is different from our past. When conceiving this project, we realized that these memories come to us spontaneously and signal towards a knowing that is yet to come, towards a bodily knowing, not just knowledge in the sense of the mind.

Through this reality-based fiction, we attempt to put forward an understanding of memories as events in the making, not something that has already happened and ended in the past. Thus, memories become articulations in motion, both articulated by the mind and the body, waiting to be made tangible by words, images, narratives, or by feelings of grief, trauma, happiness, nostalgia, and longing (when they are made tangible by the body). We write our memories as thoughts waiting to be actualized.

This disorganized, ruminative narrative is an attempt to represent the spontaneity and incipience of memories. Incipience can be defined as something that is yet to be, so for our paper, we write about memories of the future as memories not yet or memories yet to belong—incipient memories. Our stories are situated in the space between reality and fiction, past and an imagined future. The overwhelming absurdities of a desire that manifests itself in the form of a longing for a decolonial future irrupts into the narrative continually.

So, what to make of this trip through random memories? Are they just a series of memories and experiences pushing to be articulated by our minds and bodies brought about by a song that floats through our consciousness? How do these memories serve the purpose of articulating other memories that are yet to be articulated as memories, of experiences that do not exist yet? How does writing our way through these random memories build its way into connective bridges between nostalgia of the past and the longing for a future that does not emerge from the same past that we are nostalgic about? Can writing about these memories reduce the gaps between one another, between past, present, and a future yet to come, a future that might not come, between what was then and what comes next, between self and world? Can this form of ruminative, disorganized writing allow us to simultaneously exist in the past, present and future?

[2] E. Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012).
[3] A.S. Rasmussen, D. Berntsen, "The Possible Functions of Involuntary Autobiographical Memories," *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 23 (2009), p. 1137.

We chose the autoethnographic form of self-introspection to think of ways by which we can understand how our bodies physically interact with memories, time and space, and the ways in which we exist in our present inclusive of the past and the future. We chose this form to let our bodies tell their stories of desires, grief, trauma through the memories that they are interacting with. We do not have answers to all the questions we have posed and we do not wish to answer the questions in full with this singular piece of disorganized writing. We simply want to raise further questions about the rigidity and linearity of our conceptions of memories, of remembering and of longing, and we wish to futurize these conceptions in order to imagine ourselves in (im)possible futures, with different pasts altogether. We chose not to give detailed backgrounds about our stories as we want the readers and audience to make their meanings and connections with the underlying narratives and themes in the text. We want our bodies, their experiences, and connections with one another to communicate with the bodies of the readers.

Processually, we decided to create this piece by taking our understanding of self as relational to one another and to our past. The visuals of letters of the past or scarves from back home along with the lyrical imagery of memories as fluttering, felt thoughts allow us to weave our stories in relation to one another and our bodies, both being connected by the experience of living in the peripheries of colonization. We wrote parts with our real memories individually and came together to write the fictional parts, such that our realities and relationalities were co-authored in a co-autoethnographic form.

Narrative 1

I remember watching the snowfall from my balcony. It was December, the kind of days when the wind cuts like knives and breathing feels like it is ten times harder than usual. Every winter in Toronto feels like it's my first time experiencing it. I could never get used to the biting harsh winter here in the northwest. I looked at my fluffy indoor shoes and all I could think about was the warm sands and scorching weather of my tropical home (a thousand miles from here). We have always talked about what it would be like if we visited each other's hometown. You often talked about the colours of Ahmedabad. I could picture it as shades of turquoise, fuchsia and olive green—a stark contrast from the whiteness of the snowfall. I live vicariously through your stories. From your stories, I think about you. I think about how we have come from different places and spaces, yet somehow have found each other in the same place. I think about how you share music from home and how I could imagine myself being in your hometown. I am reminded of the time when you let me listen to your favourite song, "Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye, rangon mein mujhse kuch kehti jaaye…"

When I first heard the song, it reminded me of being free, of floating, of fluidity. I think about how your stories and sounds of home transcend and permeate through me. I tried to figure out what the song was telling me. What does it mean for memories to reside within us? "Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye…"

I ponder about memories that fully ebb and flow within me. Then, I ponder about longing… longing for something vague and indefinite. I ponder about my own physical and mental displacement in another country that I do not call home. I ponder about belonging and getting frustrated because I am not sure if I could ever belong. I ponder about home, about Toronto and about how different it would be if I wouldn't have moved across oceans. I ponder about my own skin and how I have grown to embrace it even after years of not accepting it since I got so used to being told "You're so dark-skinned for a Filipinx!" I ponder

about how despite everything that confuses and irates me, there is you that I find refuge in. There is you that reminds me of safety. Ever since I met you, you taught me how to be, how to be with myself, my memories, my nostalgia, my desires. There is you that reminds me of memories of hope, light, and the future. Most importantly, there is you who taught me how to listen, to listen to the world that binds and contradicts, to listen to the sounds of the everyday that reminds me that memories are very much alive within me.

I continue to marvel at the forming icicles in my balcony roof, and I am taken to moments from my past. Do you believe in belonging in moments? I will try my best to explain but I experienced it so many times, over and over again. It goes all the way back since I was 11 years old.

I grew up in this place called 'Golden City' in Cavite, Philippines. Golden City is a subdivision with row houses so close to one another you could hear laughter and conversations between the walls of the tiny houses. My friends and I would usually play outside around 4 p.m. We will play karpintero, tumbang preso and maiba-taya. Anong nilaro mo nung bata ka pa? What were the games you played when you were young? Saturday afternoons often looked like this: my friends and I would usually meet outside my house. Someone would suggest what games that we would play and all of us would scurry to find the instruments to play or make the game. One time we decided to make a kite. We all sourced out for bamboo strings and plastics around the corner of the street. We also improvised rubber strings to glue everything together. I remember running around, my eardrums ringing from too much giggling and sitting in the streets of Golden City. I remember the colours of the houses, the warm weather of Cavite, and the sound of tricycles passing by.

Ten years later, I have moved to two different countries, oceans away from the humble street of Golden City. Yet, whenever I visit that particular street where I grew up in, I would relive and experience those Saturday afternoons of my childhood. I remember meeting my childhood friend, Paolo, in the same street and I feel exactly the same 10 years ago – except that our bodies have changed so much. Paolo's feet are now size 11 and he's 5'11. We used to be the same height. I took a long inhale to feel the joy and thrill of those moments 10 years ago. That tug in my heart when I stood at the exact same street it's when I knew I belonged in that moment.

"Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye, rangon mein mujhse kuch kehti jaaye…" The song makes me nostalgic of the past, the innocence of childhood and the warm weather of Cavite. I sway and hum in reverie. I close my eyes and move through the room. I follow where my body takes me. There's something about dancing with your eyes closed. I feel invincible. I feel that I could face anything, be anything…

I almost tripped over a pile of letters that I left on the floor. I was cleaning my room and found a box of memorabilia that I brought from home. The box contained letters from my friends during my birthdays, friendship-versary, happy moments, farewell party… I forgot that I took them all the way here. I am a very sentimental person, I keep everything safe just so that I could relive those moments over and over again. I caressed and smelled every letter… I wonder if any of my friends remember the words that they wrote on the card?

I looked at the card and just saw empty words and promises. I am suddenly reminded of the words that I get bombarded with every day. I am reminded of the headlines that say "Lawmakers Vote to Shut Down Philippines' Largest TV Network" or "In a Manila Slum, Coronavirus Lockdown hits hard"… it can go on and on. I am reminded of words that continue to appease my countrymen just so that the people in power continue to take control. I am reminded of the empty words and lip service of the Philippine government even before

the pandemic started. I am reminded of how until this very day, many Filipinx are held hostage under a hostile and misogynistic leadership. Many people said that his leadership has nullified all the progress in the past. Yet, one has to ask: has there been even any progress at all? Has there been any progress even after 300 years of colonisation by the Spaniards we continue to be manipulated by our own unscrupulous government? Has there been any progress when poverty continues to plug the slums of Manila? Has there been any progress when many Filipinx continue to pursue going abroad just so that they could achieve a comfortable living wage? Has there been any progress when my fellow countrymen continue to glorify whiteness than our naturally dark-skin tone? I feel defeated and overwhelmed thinking about this. I feel helpless because I am a thousand miles away from home, yet I carry these stories and questions within me every day. There is no escape in this reality that we are living in. I am afraid of how long it will take to undo the trauma.

"Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye, rangon mein mujhse kuch kehti jaaye..." I am reminded of memories that I want to forget, memories that I wish never existed.

These moments, in-betweenness, the unquantifiable within. I find it hard to articulate them. Words don't come easily to me. But I've always felt them. We have not really had any conversation about belonging in moments, but you always talk about dwelling in, attuning to your interiority, emotions, and senses.

It usually seizes you in an immaterial way. You said. What did you mean by that? I have a lot of questions. I wish you were beside me right now.

I remember us dancing in the woods. I remember the feeling of liberation, feeling like structures do not exist, that I am free to move and be with the world. As we let our bodies collide, I remember you teaching me to break through it all. You taught me how to listen to the learnings that arise when one attunes and responds to their interiority. Maybe this is the way out of my frustration and anger. Maybe this is the way to process the stories that linger in my memory. I remembered you when doing a dance exercise last year. We were given the theme of innocence. I listened, moved, and ebbed through the rhythm as my mind and body wandered through the memories of Golden City once again. This time, I revisited the moment in a different space, yet I was able to reconnect myself to the sounds and colours of the street. I traced the concrete and touched the walls of the tiny row houses as I implicated my body in the exercise. Remember when we danced together for the very first time? It was a cathartic moment for me. The vacillating, momentary motions, emotions – you told me that it's within my body. Maybe that was within me when I visited Golden City. Maybe I was carrying those moments, emotions, feelings when I was reliving that moment of my childhood. Does belonging in the moment then mean belonging in your body?

All I can say is, there is a longing within me of the past, of the memories of the time that has passed. Sometimes, I wonder if I could become the past?

As I dance to your body's presence, your presence, I still have a lot of questions, but you are now beside me.

Narrative 2

I am afraid you might find me in a complicated dance. In a rumination that is as disorganized as my thoughts are. I am afraid you might find me overwhelmed on a moonlit night on a sultry Saturday in December. Not the humid kind, but sultry in the sense of provoking something, making something sensible. It is also a silent night. So silent that I can hear the

clock strike 2:30 a.m. I am awake by habit. Out of habit too, I go about thinking, listening to my body experience the silent moonlit night. I look out of the French windows in my new apartment and my eyes settle on a bare tree – it's leafless branches covered in snow. I am drawn to this tree. I know not why and I know not how. I just know that I am drawn to the bare tree that I can see from my apartment window. I decided to walk to the tree and be in its presence. I touch it's coarse bark, cold trunk, and the flimsy leafless branches, hugging it tightly. And as I am in the company of the tree, I realize that I have longed for this night, this moonlit, silent night in particular for a very long time. This is the kind of night that brings about answers, realizations, recognitions, and questions, even. This is the kind of night where things fall into place. We say, "sukoon mehsoos hota hai" in Hindi. This is the kind of night when one feels at peace, feels the sukoon. This is the kind of night that seems to resolve and break through. I think it breaks through the ordinary flow of everyday life. It disrupts, yet it brings peace. And even though this is the kind of night I was longing for, I cannot quite grasp it. The darkness, the sensuality, the quietude, and the bare tree pull me towards something… a different kind of longing, I think. The darkness, the sensuality, the quietude, and the bare tree pull me towards something… that bursts into my consciousness and grips my awareness. I am fully engulfed by this something, something unknown, yet I cannot grasp it.

I took a photo of the night, of the bare leafless tree, to remember what I felt in those moments and what I was about to feel in the moments that followed, as I walked back to my apartment. The night, on this sultry Saturday, signals to me as if it wants me to know something.

I am now back at my apartment. It is 3 a.m., the night much the same, moonlit, quiet, and dark. Except now, the sound of the kettle and my reflective thoughts about what I long for when my longing for a night like this one is over irrupt the quiet.

As I go about thinking—listening to my body experience the silent moonlit night, the tree, and its texture that is now within me—I am reminded of one of my favourite songs. "Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye, rangon mein mujhse kuch kehti jaaye," slips into my consciousness. The song that I have mentioned to you, the song you remember, the one that you mention too.

This is a song that inspires, grounds, and resounds me. I have listened to and lived with this song for 11 years now. I have grown with the song, and sometimes beyond it, but I always find myself coming back to it. As I feel the song and make meaning of the song again, "Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye," the memories flutter around like butterflies… I ask myself what memories are about to come to me or if I am going to delve into the memories of the song itself. Memories that have pushed me to listen to the song, both happy and agonizing, memories of my body moving in happiness and agony, memories that reside in my body… all of it! And in that moment, as the thought finishes, my life runs to me, experiences, grievances, regrets, happy moments of the last 24 years run through me as I move to Faisal Kapadia's deep, calming voice. Memories of what might be, the future that is shaped from a past and a present that are a fantasy, not the past and the present that constitute the realities of my everyday life, run through me. The presence of the bare tree within me, somehow drawing my attention to the idea of futurization of memories. I pause the beautiful, reflective voice of Faisal Kapadia. I pause to think and understand what my brain and my body are pointing to. Can one have memories of the future? Are they telling me to conceive memories of a future that may exist? How will I know what that will look like? How can I conceive something that hasn't come yet, that hasn't happened yet, something that is still unknown and can never be known in its futuristic sense? Something that is unknowable.

As I go about thinking – listening to my body experience this powerful emergence of thoughts about the future, the memories of a future that is yet to come, the silent moonlit night, the tree and its texture that is now within me – I am reminded of one of my favourite songs. "Titliyan yaadon ki udti jaaye, rangon mein mujhse kuch kehti jaaye," slips into my consciousness. The song that I have mentioned to you, the song you remember, the one that you mention too.

This is a song that inspires, grounds, and resounds me. I have listened to and lived with this song for 11 years now. I have grown with the song, and sometimes beyond it, but I always find myself coming back to it. And in that moment, I am left with a longing for something familiar, something tangible, something other than Faisal Kapadia's voice. I pull out my mother's dupatta from a pile of "things from back home." The dupatta still smells like her, even though she hasn't worn it in 6 years. It feels like her and I can see her twirling in the beautiful pastel green scarf pulled around her. I smell it, feel it, and wrap it around my neck. A lot of people have told me that I look like her. I run to the mirror to look for her beauty, her wisdom, her sense of care. I want to look like her. You see, I want to look familiar. I want to look like her. Thinking about all the times that she was just at a "ma come here" distance, I long for her presence. Somehow through her, I long for your presence.

I remember the time I first met you. I saw you and looked at the beauty in your eyes, the shine of your hair, the pain, the conflict, the unending longing for something. I looked at all of it in one glance. And, I was drawn to you, or maybe it was the longing for something within you that I was drawn to. Seeing you for the first time a few years ago erupted memories within me. Memories that keep me up, memories that are actually not mine, memories that I have only made through the lived experiences of my ancestors and my parents. Memories that I wish did not exist. I am reminded of my grief, of my pain, of my trauma. I am reminded once again what it feels when your gut wrenches upon thinking a thought. How goosebumps arise, how affects within us happen, but we don't realize and recognize them, affects that shape and un-shape us. I am reminded of the time when I moved to Toronto, when English was going to become the language I spoke every day. The time that I realized that I have a good grasp of the English language because my nation was once colonized and till date suffers from the ongoing effects of colonization. You made me think and feel all of this without even saying a "hello." Remembering you remind me of all my grief, my trauma, pain, is making me move, both outside, that you can see, and inside, that you cannot, that you will never see. I remember how my heart pounded in that moment, how I felt unbearably sad because of the tension that resides in my body. The tension of being a colonized body, a body that never was really colonized, but was born from a colonized womb. A body that will always remember the way the womb opened my heart to my mother, father and through their experiences and stories to the lives of the millions of Indians and Pakistanis that were also colonized. You remind me of the tension of being colonized and not at the same time. What do I do with this grief? Do I just remain happy with the fact that I was born long after the British left? Or do I recall the constantly residual idea that my body could have been more useful like that of my grandfather and grandmother if I was born with them?

I chose instead to focus on and admire your beauty, your body that seems so calm, free from these tensions. I long—in the moment, for your body. I came to say "hello" to you. I find your chipper voice and happy tone very eerie. Sometimes, you come to me as a violent memory. This moonlit Saturday night was one of those times. Your memory and the memories in me you brought back were violent, were causing turmoil, were making me weep and move ferociously, but yet there was a sense of euphoria. I think the euphoria is that of being

able to meet you, to love you, to be loved by you, and to never be abandoned. The euphoria is that of longing for something through you. The euphoria cuts the violent presence of our first meeting. I pause, I let the euphoria lurk around. I move in euphoria, my body sways, my lips smirk. I feel your body near mine, I feel your touch, your breath, the heat of it, I feel the softness of your lips and the coarseness of your hands, I feel the sound of your heart beating, your desire to protect me, your desire to learn from me and your desire to give me something. I feel, once again, the connection we share, and the connection we so immediately created after once sharing what movement and memories meant to us. When we became each other. You spoke my language, not the English language, but the language of my heart, of my soul. Tumne meri zaban boli, angrezi nahin, mere dil aur junoon ki zaban. I remember that day because we spoke each other's language, until we didn't have to speak anymore. I felt like I had transcended my colonial body, and that is when I started longing. Longing for a future that would never exist with our past, my past.

I remember that day, it was 2019, it was December 26th. It was 2 p.m., we were in a cafe, drinking coffee, sharing a butter croissant with some pistachio toppings. I remember the gloom of December in 2019, but that gloom was so much better than the gloom that surrounds us now. Where I can't sit with you, where I can't move with you, where I can't feel your laughter and your touch. I feel alone today. Alone in my mind, in my memories, and in my colonization. I do not want to be together in colonization, but yet I am with so many others who are colonized or whose mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers were once colonized. This loneliness in togetherness is scathing. The togetherness is scathing, because all it means is that millions of lives have been brutalized by the hunger of power and the ideation to conquer. I sway in desperation, in anguish. I sway in sadness to "Titliyaan yaadon ki…" to the song that grounds me. I sway in love. In the love that I have for you, that you have for me. I sway in desperation as I ask, akhir is dard ki dawa kya hai? What is the remedy to this pain? And as I get eaten in the pain, in the anguish in the terror and the trauma of the Partition of 1947, the memories of a future emerging from a colonization-less, partitionless past exist as a desire in my body.

It is now almost 4 a.m. and Faisal Kapadia's calming voice is still around. A different song is playing. I am now tired and decided to sit. Still thinking, feeling, forming incipient desires of a future that remedies the pains of our past. I am reminded of February 28, 2020. When we sat together in our tiny office space, and I asked you: what is it that you long for? You said unconditional love, belonging, and the desire to become with something. Then you said: ikaw ba? I could not muster up an answer, but I said: I long for a future of love, acceptance, blessings and solidarity. Then, I said, what I really long for… A future where India and Pakistan are not at a propagandist war. A future where my body does not know the grief and the trauma of the Partition of 1947. And then, as you looked at me with patience and empathy, I felt my body travel from immediacy to reflection.

I realize that colonization is painful. But my realization of colonization happens through the Partition of India and Pakistan, the separation, the violence, the rape, the deaths, the destruction, and most importantly the uprooting. And that is exhausting. I have never been to Pakistan but I listen to Pakistani music, I eat Pakistani food, I wear Pakistani clothing, I speak, understand, and write their language. Sometimes I am more connected with Urdu than I am to Hindi. I feel that part of me has been uprooted from belonging to Pakistan, from calling it my own nation. I have an ambiguous relationship with this void of not belonging, this wanting to belong, and the uncertainty that follows the longing to belong. It is a twitch in the gut that stays with me, always. When I moved to Toronto in 2014 and started speaking

English every day, I thought I would belong here. 6 years have passed, I still speak English every day, but now, I also speak Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, and Marwadi every day. I don't want to belong here. I feel like belonging here means to accept my colonization, and not resent it. Belonging here would be not respecting the womb that birthed me. That bravely resented and fought colonization to birth me in a free India. The partition, the memories of it that I have heard, seen, imbibed are very familiar, known and unknown at the same time.

Desires of a better past, grasp me, my thoughts, my soul. Talking to you about them makes me want to crumble into something else than myself. It makes me want to exist differently. Working through my desire to have a partitionless past also means working through the discomfort of knowing that such a desire leads to erasures. Erasures of histories, other desires that are not the same as mine. How do I desire undesiring such desires then? How do I come together with the tension that stems from wanting to belong and wanting to be born out of a womb that will never be colonized? Not in a temporal sense of history, but in a way that being born from the womb of a woman of colour that never had to worry about power, privilege, and colonization? My remembrance of you as the sun sets and creates a crimson across the sky brings me to an intimate knowing of unknowing. That experience, traumas no matter how big or small, once known can never be unknown. How do we desire unknownness without erasing someone else's past? What would it mean to be in a future that does not know partition? A future that has no memories of the past? I tried for hours to conceive one. I could not. That's why I still long for it and I long for you, as I continue to sway to Faisal Kapadia's emphatic, powerful, and deep voice.

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SUMMARY

In this autoethnographic writing, we explore the concepts of longing and belonging through a collaborative writing process that is fictional at times and autoethnographic at times. We present an experimental and arts-based approach to analyzing and understanding memories, and themes of nostalgia, belongingness, and longing in the present day. Through our autoethnographic fiction (Bochner and Ellis 2016; Ellis 2004) we explore questions such as: what is it like to long and belong, what is it like to long for a future that is embedded in the past, what is it like to futurize/co-futurize memories, and what if the past is the pre-present? As immigrants to Toronto, coming from nations that were once colonized, and still remain in the peripheries of colonization, we ponder about our bodies occupying the third space that we are living in, the feelings of nostalgia and belonging in our fiction. We write about our belongingness to our roots and the trajectories of our beings and think what decolonizing the the concept of memories might evoke. Methodologically, we draw from Erin Manning's (2016) idea of going against method to propose a collaborative autoethnographic fiction writing and collaging practice that implicates our memories and bodies with our surroundings and other bodies, human, beyond human, and material, as instruments of research. We suggest that the decolonization and dehistoricization of memories and our conceptions of longing, belonging, and creating futures embedded in the past can happen by futurizing our notions of memories. We hope that writing a fiction in conversation with one another and in synchronicity of each other's experiences will allow us to deconstruct and problematize our understanding of memories, the frictions between avant-garde and nostalgia and interspersing the collaging practice will allow us to build our stories and explore belongingness and nostalgia, longing for something indefinite and unwanted memories.

KEYWORDS

longing, belonging, colonization, partition, autoethnography

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Persisting Abscences:
The Socio-political Dynamics of a Desaparecido in Post-dictatorial Brazil

Luis Eduardo Quintão Guerra

University of Technology Sydney
ORCID: 0000-0002-0681-5038

Introduction

The state terrorism that took place under the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985) generated deep traumas in the country. In its attempt to eliminate political opposers while maintaining social legitimacy, the Brazilian State persecuted, kidnapped, tortured, and murdered those considered subversives while concealed their bodies and denied information on their whereabouts. This *modus operandi* scaled up after the inauguration of Institutional Act Number 5 (AI-5), in 1968, a governmental decree that institutionalized violent forms of repression and engendered another struggle – the families' crusades to unearth clues about their loved ones' "disappearances."

From a sociological perspective, these State-sponsored absences, however, could only be processed by relatives according to the given social and political circumstances. With this in mind, this research adopted a qualitative methodology capable of establishing dialogues between the socio-political dynamics and the multiple levels of memory activated by them in the process of addressing the disappearances occurred during the dictatorship. To this end, bibliographic research on Brazilian political history and memory studies will be combined with an analysis of the data found in official documents and complemented with oral testimonies collected through interviews, books, and videos. The correspondence between these materials will enable a dynamic and processual investigation of the social and political aspects involved in the construction of memory.

To examine how dictatorial victims' absences were processed within institutional, collective, and individual levels during the Brazilian transition to democracy, it seems suitable

to discern, drawing from Jan Assmann[1], the three levels of memory: individual memory, social memory, and cultural memory – each corresponding to a temporal dimension and to the construction of a certain type of identity. According to Assmann, the individual memory refers to a personal neuro-mental system within a subjective time and the construction of an individual identity. The social memory, identified with Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, refers to our social self which depends on interaction and communication, generating what he calls a communicative memory. Cultural memory, on its turn, is more institutionalized and depends on a "body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image."[2]

In this sense, the official documents produced and circulated by the Brazilian State regarding its dictatorial past, will be related to the cultural memory level. On the other hand, relatives' testimonies, collected mainly through oral transmission, will be related to communicative memory. But these levels are not fixed or enclosed within themselves. It is precisely this active role of memory and the dialectic tensions between its different levels, that will be explored in accordance to victims' relatives' efforts to organize their individual experiences and elaborate their meanings within broader social and cultural frameworks.

1. The First Days of Absence: From State-Sponsored Disappearance to State-Sponsored Doubt

On February 23, 1974, at the age of 26, Fernando Augusto de Santa Cruz Oliveira was kidnapped by the military regime in Rio de Janeiro along with his friend Eduardo Collier. Fernando was a civil servant with a stable job and fixed residence in São Paulo, where he lived with his wife and his two-year son Felipe. Despite his participation in the revolutionary organization APML (Ação Popular Marxista-Leninista), created by catholic students to resist the dictatorship, Fernando was not being accused of any crimes or being wanted by the regime at any stage. Notwithstanding his legality, during a carnival holiday, after leaving his brother's house at about 4 p.m. to meet with Eduardo Collier, Fernando was abducted never to be seen again.

This date marks the beginning of the story of Fernando's absence under the status of *desaparecido político* (political disappeared). Such condition of absence, generated by a sudden disappearance and followed by scarcity of information within the context of a state of exception, is particularly painful as it is constantly present. For, if the physical appearance of the body allows the present to re-visit the past, its unexplained absence continually interrupts the present to point traces of an unsolved past.

The initial impact of a *desaparecido* to Brazilian families will be addressed here in accordance to Fernando's family's search procedures. According to them, these searches usually consisted in "endless journeys, information that frequently fell into the fallacy's' swamps, painful hours of apprehension in the halls and antechambers of torture and death."[3] After

[1] J. Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in: *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Hand-Book* (Berlin; Nova York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 109–118.
[J.] Assmann, J. Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), pp. 12–133.
[2] J. Assmann, J. Czaplicka, op. cit., p. 132.
[3] C. de Assis, *Onde está o meu filho? História de um desaparecido político* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985), p. 19.

Fernando's disappearance, his family proceeded to this sort of "pilgrimage" so common to victims' relatives within Brazilian (and Latin American) dictatorships. Following the few clues they had, they roamed through different military headquarters only to be mocked or threatened, being left with misleading information that would extend their suffering. This was a highly unsafe search considering that the relatives' request commonly defied the official versions, and therefore their legitimacy. Nonetheless, the imminent risk of being framed as subversives and having the same fate of their relatives was not enough to stop them.

The relatives' search would also take the shape of letters and telegrams written to President-dictators themselves and/or to different members of his government—and even to their wives; to several politicians, lawyers, and members of the church; and to international institutions, media vehicles, and human rights NGOs such as the Amensty International. Fernando's mother Mrs. Elzita wrote to all of the cited above plus other figures and institutions such as the U.S. senator Edward Kennedy and the International War Crimes Russel Tribunal – which vainly demanded the Brazilian regime to provide clarification on Fernando's disappearance. Between condolences, silences, enraged replies, and even threats, concrete and reliable evidences were rare.

On a letter to Marshall Juarez Távora three months after Fernando's disappearance, Mrs. Elzita appeals to his influence as a military to intercede on her son's case. By invoking his fights for justice in the past, for which he was famous in the North and Northeast, and by highlighting that himself was a father, Mrs. Elzita tried to convince the military to help obtaining information about Fernando's life. The emotionally-charged letter reflected the impact of Fernando's recent disappearance on Mrs. Elzita and her hopes that he would still be alive – especially if compared to her posterior letters.

> It's been three months, we don't know what accusations are held against Fernando. I plead your highness with the warmth of a *pernambucana* [a woman who is born in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco] mother, suffering the anguish and affliction of a son's absence, of the uncertainty of his destiny …. What should I say to my grandson [Fernando's son] when he becomes older and inquire me about his father's whereabouts …? Should I say he was executed without a trial? Without a defence? On the sly, for a crime he hasn't committed?[4]

Távora wrote back three days later assuring his commitment to forward her letter to Chief of the State General Golbery do Couto e Silva. After four months with no answer, in October 1974, Mrs. Elzita writes again to Távora complimenting his efforts to pass on her letter but considering that eight months have passed and now she just wants to know if he is alive or not, acknowledging she was starting to think that the worst has happened. In December of that year Távora would write back quoting the information he managed to collect with military agents according to whom Elzita's allegations were untruthful and there was nothing left he could do "given the current circumstances."[5]

While Mrs. Elzita's and her family's search managed to mobilize some politicians and military figures, it also managed to displease others. In the end, no official response was provided by the government. Only one year later, responding to relatives' pressure, president Geisel's military government would comment on the case through its Minister of Justice Armando Falcão. The minister's official note denied Fernando's kidnapping and prison, limiting

[4] Ibidem, p. 136.
[5] Ibidem, p. 144.

itself to declare that:

> Fernando Augusto de Santa Cruz Oliveira, son of Lincoln de Santa Cruz Oliveira and Elzita Santa Cruz Oliveira. Militant of the subversive-terrorist organization *Ação Popular Marxista Leninista – APML.* He is wanted by the security organs and is now found to be on the run.[6]

In response to the official statement expressed by Falcão, Mrs. Elzita wrote him a public letter challenging his version. In all its formality the letter stated that his allegations that Fernando would be a terrorist on the run were paradoxal since Fernando had a fixed job and residence where he could be found at any time. After challenging his arguments, the letter ended by saying:

> What type of 'run' would this be, that transforms a respectful, loving and dignified son into a cruel and unhuman being, that would despise his old mother's pain, his young wife's affliction, and his very loved son's affection? … I cannot accept pure and simply Your Excellency's arguments … and expect clarifications about what really happened to my son.[7]

Mrs. Elzita's letter this time was more assertive in challenging the official version, but the earlier fear about Fernando's destiny seems to have been replaced by the uncertainty caused by the regime's obscure and misleading information. About ten years later, Mrs. Elzita commented on that official statement provided by Minister Falcão. According to her it showed "a lack of respect with other peoples' feelings."[8] Moreover, it demonstrated the government's unwillingness regarding the families' requests for answers that would at least put them out of that uncertainty. As said by Mrs. Elzita, the worst thing in all this process was the doubt, the lack of a conviction that, as bad as it can be, it's always better than the doubt.

This State-sponsored doubt came as a consequence of the way the State addressed the absences it produced. It can also be understood as part of the regime's strategy to perpetuate torture, disseminate fear and induce silence. The effects of this traumatic circumstance can be identified in the melancholic way relatives coped with it – in the difficulty of writing or talking about it, in the refusal to change their phone numbers or to alter the victim's room – which will be addressed later in this text.

On the other hand, this condition of constant doubt shared by many victims' relatives also led them to correspond between themselves, and with human rights' institutions and social movements, creating a web of solidarity that strengthened their claims for truth and justice. As demonstrated by political scientist Carlos Artur Gallo[9], the relatives' claims would gain visibility, inside and outside the country, during the transitional period from authoritarianism to democracy.

[6] Ibidem, p. 34.
[7] Ibidem, p. 35.
[8] Ibidem, p. 90.
[9] C.A. Gallo, "Do luto à luta: um estudo sobre a Comissão de Familiares de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos no Brasil. Anos Noventa," *Revista do Programa de Pós-graduação em História da UFRGS19*, 35 (2012), pp. 329–361.

2. Disputing an Absence: Relatives' Political and Cultural Efforts for Truth and Justice

In 1974 began the *regime of transformation* that would promote a slow and gradual shift from authoritarianism to democracy preserving military sectors from being held accountable for their gross human rights violations. During that time social movements intensified their claims for unconditional amnesty to all those accused of political crimes against the dictatorial State. Movements such as the Women's Movement for Amnesty (*Movimento Feminino Pela Anistia – MFPA*) and the Brazilian Committee for Amnesty (*CBA*, created in 1978 by lawyers, families, and friends of political prisoners) were originated in this context. Victims' relatives created the Families' Commission of the Political Dead and Disappeared (*Comissão de Familiares de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos – CFMDP*) demanding: 1) the truth about deaths and disappearances; 2) the localization of mortal remains; 3) punishment for all those responsible.[10]

In this context, members of the CBA took an open letter to the National Congress with reports on the torture and murders promoted by the military State, demanding the installation of a human rights' parliamentary committee of inquiry. The letter was received by members of the MDB (*Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*, the only opposition party allowed by the regime's bipartisan system), and on March 10, 1979, during the MDB party convention, family members presented their testimonies. In that occasion, Rosalina Santa Cruz, Fernando's sister, gave her testimony:

> Enough with the conciliations in the name of an "alliance for peace" that, deep down, justifies the connivance with the military in their desire to remain in power and to conduct the irreversible process of the country's democratization. What the military intend with their "alliance for peace" is to grant amnesty for themselves and to remain in power. … [T]he fight for the elucidation and total clarifying of such crimes cannot be in the hands of former prisoners and relatives. It is necessary that the whole civil society take on this historical duty. … It is not vindictiveness. It is simply a desire for justice. …[11]

The MDB politicians voted and by 69 against 57 they decided to support the investigations on human rights violation. Even though they knew it would be difficult to judge the torturers, it would be a possibility to register the human rights' violation committed during the regime. The proposal was defeated by the government party ARENA and officially dismissed, but it can be seen as a result of the relatives' organization towards institutional instances to demand their right to elucidate the truth about the disappeared and to hold those responsible to account.

Reacting to social claims and the escalation of national and international human rights' abuse denounces, in June 1979, president-dictator Figueiredo sent his amnesty project to the Congress and, on August 22, 1979, after an agitated Congress voting section, the Law 6.683, known as the Amnesty Law (*Lei de Anistia*), was approved with 206 against 201 votes. Intended to provide national reconciliation, the law granted forgiveness to those accused of practicing political crimes. While it benefited some of the regime's political opposers who have

[10] J. Teles "Melancolía y luto en los relatos de la dictadura brasileña," *Tla-Melaua, Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 8 (36) (2014), pp. 80–102.
[11] C. de Assis, op. cit., p. 55.

been in prison, in exile, lost their public positions or had their political rights suspended, it also favoured immunity to state security agents accused of kidnaps, torture, and murder.

The Amnesty Law's impact over the construction of a cultural memory can be assessed by its ability to stimulate oblivion. For the establishment of a reciprocal amnesty consisted in forgetting the crimes by equalling them. In this sense, what could have been an opportunity to provide means for individual and collective reckoning with the past functioned as a restriction to it by legalizing protection of repressive institutions and impunity to military involved in crimes against humanity.

As for the disappeared, the law stated that relatives could request a declaration of absence for those who were involved in political activities and are now found to be disappeared for more than one year. Followed by a public hearing to analyse the request, relatives could be granted a certificate of "presumed death." Thus, the Amnesty Law did not meet relatives' demands since it did not seek to provide information on or justice for the victims of State violence. It only granted the legal possibility of turning their absences into "presumed death."

While many Brazilians celebrated freedom and the return of those in exile, victims' relatives' democratic expectations competed with a sense of disappointment. This can be evidenced in Mrs. Elzita's testimony when she stated that the movement for amnesty "… was very important, there were so many people outside the country, so many people arrested, and liberty is always a wonderful thing for everyone. [But] I wasn't waiting for Fernando to come back because I knew he wasn't arrested in any place."[12]

The project of a conservative and conciliatory democratization enabled popular participation at a public level at the same time it invested in oblivion policies. The construction of memory became a territory of narrative disputes on how to address the recent dictatorial past. Countering official efforts towards impunity and forgetting, organized victims' relatives, with the support of religious groups and human rights associations, promoted their narratives for memory, truth, and justice through conferences, talks and publications. These initiatives are represented here by the books *Brazil: Never More* (*Brasil: Nunca Mais*) and *Who Killed My Son?* (*Quem Matou Meu Filho?*), both published in 1985.

The book *Brasil: Nunca Mais (Brazil: Never Again,* published in English as *Torture in Brazil)* was the result of a project that began in 1979 at the dawn of the democratic period combining efforts between members of the catholic church and lawyers. Coordinated by Presbyterian minister Jamie Wright and Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns, the book draws on official military records collected since 1979 to report on the atrocities committed by the regime. Besides detailing the different forms of violence employed by the State it also provided irrefutable proof that these were part of the regime's strategy and not the result of "occasional excess" as claimed by the military sector. Despite the new government's refusal to acknowledge the book's existence it became an immediate best-seller helping to denounce State violence and contributing to the embracing of global human rights discourse by the Brazilian elite.[13]

The term *desaparecidos* appears in the text between quotation marks indicating its figurative meaning to address victims' bodies that were in fact concealed by the State. About this practice the book sees it as a continued form of torture towards the victims' relatives: "the perpetuation of suffering by the uncertainty about the destiny of a loved one, is a practice of

[12] Ibidem, p. 92.
[13] R. Atencio, *Memory's Turn: Reckoning with Dictatorship in Brazil* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), p. 14.

torture much crueller than the most creative human device for tormenting."[14] After relying on real examples, the book draws on religious approach to describe the drama of *desaparecidos'* relatives. By combining biblical passages with classic literature and official war conventions the text highlights the importance of respecting the dead and their relatives' right for a burial. The book's final pages are dedicated to a list with the names of the 125 disappeared since 1964 (the ones known at that time), where the name of Fernando Santa Cruz appears as the 38th.

In that same year of 1985 was published the book *Onde Está o Meu Filho? História de Um Desaparecido Político* (Where Is My Son? History of a Political Disappeared), organized by five authors in a concerted effort with Fernando Santa Cruz's friends and relatives. The book is divided in three parts corresponding to: 1) the regime's repression; 2) the subsequent impunity; 3) the relatives' pain. The first and second parts report on Fernando's disappearance and relatives' struggle while describing the dictatorship's history and methods in the background. The third and longest part is dedicated to interviews with his friends and family describing their process of coping with Fernando's disappearance. The feelings of revolt and sadness that permeate these pages are reinforced during Mrs. Elzita's interview transcribed in the subchapter "Where is my son?" that gives the book its title.

Similar to the project *Brasil: Nunca Mais*, the book *Onde Está o Meu Filho?* was at the same time a denounce and a homage. A way for the families of the disappeared to share their stories and denounce the dictatorial State violence in the context of an amnesiac democratization process. Or, as the book describes in its preface, a manner to "interrupt the gala parties of the New Republic … to call for justice."[15]

By narrating Fernando's disappearance and his family's drama alongside Brazilian recent political history, the book provided a singular account of the dictatorial past. The painful experiences shared by relatives on the level of a social memory were (re)organized alongside institutional actions. Through this process it was possible to elaborate a unified discourse about national past and validate their claims for justice.

3. Coping with Absence: Between Mourning and Melancholy

Following the persistence of families and international pressure the Brazilian State would, ten years later, in 1995, approve the Law 9.140, also known as the Law of the Dead and Disappeared. Through this Law, the State recognized its responsibility over the 136 deaths of those "who participated … in political activities … and that for this reason have been detained by public agents and have disappeared since then."[16] In addition, it acknowledged relatives' right to receive death certificates and financial reparation, establishing the Special Commission of the Dead and Disappeared (CEMDP) to do so. Annexed to the Law are also the names of 136 disappeared in which the 41st reads: "Fernando Augusto Santa Cruz Oliveira, Brazilian, married, born in 20th of February of 1948 in Recife-PE, son of Lincoln de Santa Cruz Oliveira and Elzita Santos de Santa Cruz Oliveira (1974)."[17]

Besides the financial redressing, the Law 9.140 was very much limited since it did not

[14] Arquidiocese de São Paulo, *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986), p. 628.
[15] C. de Assis, op. cit.
[16] Brasil, *Law 9.140*, http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Leis/L9140compilada.htm [access 1.05.2022].
[17] Ibidem, appendix.

oblige the State to investigate and proceed to recover these mortal remains. If the 1979 Amnesty Law, approved during the dictatorial State, paved the way for the institution of oblivion policies, the Law 9.140 of 1995 legitimized this process within democracy by providing the partial right for truth but with no justice. Thus, the construction of Brazilian "official memory" according to these two legislations relied in large part on a problematic reconciliatory logic according to which post-dictatorial democracies need to "turn the page" in order to flourish. But *desaparecidos*' relatives could not simply "turn the page."

This project of reconciliation through forgetting also affected the way relatives processed the absences of their *desaparecidos* by hindering their urge to proper mourning. Victims' absences were, in this sense, turned into a living and present matter to their relatives. This can be evidenced in testimonies describing the way these absences were experienced. In this respect, Mrs. Elzita's statement is relevant when she says that "… until these days, when it's Christmas, I hear his voice calling me … when these parties come, when everyone gathers together, and that one is missing…. There's always that one missing."[18]

Mrs. Elzita's statements find a parallel in other mothers' testimonies, as demonstrated by historian Janaína Teles.[19] Drawing upon her interviews with *desaparecidos'* relatives Teles distinguishes an ideal type of loss from a real type of loss, and relates the former to melancholy and the latter to mourning.[20] Thus, in cases such as Elzita's (and her family), where the event of a loved one's death bears no material evidence, it is common to observe an inability to process the loss properly which leaves these relatives in a state between melancholy and mourning. In this sense, an important step towards mourning would consist in relatives' contact with the victim's body and the fulfillment of the right to a funeral. This right, denied by the Brazilian state—and by many Latin American countries who experienced dictatorships in the mid-twentieth century—represents an essential ritual within Brazilian large Catholic population.

The material absence of the body leads relatives to a dilemma since mourning, which should be reached through testimony, has to deal with "the permanent difficulty of establishing correspondences between experience and narrative."[21] In the Brazilian context, the task of mourning becomes even more difficult considering the political obstacles between the traumatic event and its accounting. To the absence of the body is added the absence of information and active platforms to elaborate narratives, which restrain the access to proper mourning.

4. Conciliating with Absence: The Brazilian's Brief Memory's Turn

Following the turn of the millennium, it is initiated a gradual but significant invigoration of the culture of memory and human rights in Brazil. From this period on, as observed by Rebecca Atencio in her book *Memory's Turn: reckoning with dictatorship in Brazil* (2014), the country slowly started to make its turn to memory by "abandoning its previous discourse of reconciliation by institutionalized forgetting in favor of a new one based on reconciliation by

[18] C. de Assis, op. cit., pp. 85–89.
[19] J. Teles, op. cit.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] Ibidem, p. 93.

institutionalized memory."[22] The initiatives promoted during this period would work toward assisting relatives and society as a whole in reckoning with the dictatorial past.

Regarding these reconciliatory policies it is possible to point out—not without criticisms—some governmental initiatives that promoted a more favourable scenario to the struggle for memory, truth, and justice. For example, in 2001 the Amnesty Commissions were created to facilitate and intensify the financial redressing to victims of the dictatorial regime, and in 2005 a series of new programs were developed by human rights minister Paulo Vannuchi, a former political prisoner and torture victim. To observe the interlinkages between institutional mechanisms and relatives' ways of coping with victims' absence, two government initiatives will be considered: the publication of the CEMDP's final report *Right to Memory and Truth* (*Direito à Memória e à Verdade*) in 2007 and the National Truth Commission final report published in 2014.

The book *Right to Truth and Memory* (*Direito à Verdade e* à *Memória*) was published in 2007 as the final report on the CEMDP's findings. Within its five hundred pages it aims to make public the Commission's findings, officialise a final narrative about the period, and overcome the regime's inherited interpretations. Or, as the book states in the introduction:

> It could not remain existing colliding versions … about runaways, hitting and runs, and suicides disseminated during those dark times by security organs …. This report-book registers for history the redemption of this memory. Only deeply knowing the dungeons and atrocities of that regretful period of our republican life, the country will learn how to build efficient devices to assure that similar human rights' violations will never happen again.[23]

After a historic contextualization of the regime and its methods against all forms of resistance, the book proceeds to relate the stories of the *desaparecidos*, who are addressed often by the term "political opposers." Fernando's disappearance and his family's struggle are narrated in the book, alongside other 355 cases of death and disappearance. Combining information collected through official documents and personal testimonies, the version of Fernando's state-sponsored death is supported in the book. Citing another institutional publication, the section on Fernando's case briefly suggests the intergenerational effects of State violence when reproducing his son's declaration as a kid: "The soldier killed my dad, I just don't know why. Mom says I'll understand when I grow up. But when I grow up, I'm going to the barracks to find out where they hid my dad."[24]

During the book's release ceremony at the Presidential Palace, president Lula highlighted the government's responsibility towards the relatives' struggle for their right to a proper burial. Mrs. Elzita, also present at the ceremony, emotionally addressing Lula and his ministers, urged the government to promote further investigations on Fernando's mortal remains: "I trust that you will give us a prompt response because I am in an advanced age and I don't think I will have more courage to take this battle until the end." Following a generalized commotion, Lula stood up and comforted Mrs. Elzita.

Five years later the first National Truth Commission (CNV) was inaugurated aiming to "examine and elucidate gross human rights violations … in order to consolidate the right for

[22] R. Atencio, op. cit., p. 17.
[23] Brasil, *Direito à verdade e à memória: Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos* (Brasília: Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos, 2007), p. 18.
[24] Ibidem, p. 373.

memory and historical truth, and to promote the national reconciliation."[25] Despite its numerous contradictions and limitations, the Commission corresponded to a relevant initiative towards a public reckoning with the dictatorial past – even though without justice. Assisted by local sub-commissions, members travelled the country collecting testimonies and publicizing their findings in an attempt to engage society in the Commission's work.

In 2013 a public hearing on Fernando Santa Cruz's case was promoted by the sub-commission of the city of São Paulo with the presence of Fernando's brother and sister Marcelo Santa Cruz and Rosalina Santa Cruz. The hearing, which is available online at the official government website, began with Rosalina mentioning Mrs. Elzita who has been actively fighting for memory, truth, and justice, despite her 99 years old, but could not be present due to recent health problems. Rosalina also criticized the Commission's limitations and the lack of a national emphatic campaign on its works. Following her statements, the hearing proceeded and all information collected on Fernando's disappearance was discussed by lawyers, historians, relatives, and politicians.

The CNV's work was synthesized in a final report published in 2014. Consisting in three volumes, the report provides an official historical account of the period from 1946–1988, which includes the Brazilian dictatorship. The name Fernando Santa Cruz appears three times in the first volume: in a brief description of his story, and in the list of the dead and disappeared annexed to it. His name also appears in the transcription of a public hearing with Cláudio Guerra, a Chief Police Officer during the dictatorship, in which he relates that Fernando, as many others, was murdered and his body incinerated.

In the third volume, which reports on each case of dead and disappeared according to information collected so far, Fernando's case is related with details. The individual report is divided into: (1) Biography; (2) Review of the case before the CNV; (3) Circumstances of disappearance and death; (4) Place of disappearance and death; (5) Identification of the authors (from the president-dictator Médici, to the Army's Minister and their direct subordinates). The report ends with a brief conclusion and recommendation:

> … Fernando Augusto de Santa Cruz Oliveira was arrested and murdered by agents of the Brazilian State and remains disappeared …. It is recommended the correction of the death certificate … and the continuity of investigations about the circumstances of his disappearance, to locate and identify his mortal remains, as well as to identify and hold responsible other involved agents.[26]

The CNV work and its final report therefore represented an attempt to elaborate an official version of the atrocities committed by State agents during the Brazilian dictatorial past. For the relatives, it constituted an opportunity to register their traumatic experiences and to conciliate them within an official discourse. Their memories, shared at a social and familiar level, could now find correspondence at a cultural level represented by the official report.

On the other hand, the CNV's work can also be considered "too little, too late" as suggested by historian Nina Schneider, for example. By emphasizing truth over justice, the Brazilian National Truth Commission did not encourage the promotion of any sort of trials following the human rights' violations openly reported by military during public hearings.

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[25] Brasil, *Law 12.528*, http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2011/lei/l12528.htm [access: 1.05.2022].

[26] Brasil, *Relatórios da Comissão Nacional da Verdade* (Brasília: CNV, 2014), vol. 3, p. 1607.

This approach seems to have undermined the possibility of an effective reckoning with the past at a national level. As a consequence, challenging versions could still find place within military sectors and conservative politicians, and they would escalate following a scenario of growing ideological polarization.

After the 2014 elections inside a context of left-wing vs right-wing political disputes, questioning the CNV's credibility and relativizing past human rights violation became an ideological practice. In 2016, during the impeachment process, right-wing politician Jair Bolsonaro used the moment of his voting to celebrate the memory of the torturer Brilhante Ustra, the only Brazilian military ever condemned, who was responsible for President Dilma Rousseff's torture during the dictatorship. Two years later, Jair Bolsonaro would be elected president.

In 2019, following criticisms against the Brazilian Bar Association headed by Felipe Santa Cruz, Fernando's son, Jair Bolsonaro said that one day he would tell Felipe how his father died, but he would not like the truth. Following intense social and institutional reactions Bolsonaro said that Fernando was killed by leftist groups. In reply, Felipe Santa Cruz wrote a public letter highlighting the president's cruelty towards a family pain, and requesting him to disclose all information he claimed to have.

The events presented above, unfolded following the period defined here as the memory's turn, demonstrate how the process of reconciliation by institutionalized memory interacted with the relatives' struggle for truth, memory, and justice. By observing the ways Fernando's absence was accounted by official mechanisms and by relatives during this period it is possible to affirm that it represented a moment of official reckoning with the past where relatives' experience could be conciliated with the national memory. However, these events also suggest that the elaboration of an official account of the past through official reports does not guarantee its stability within the national memory. Perhaps, sociologist Elizabeth Jelin is right when she quotes Yosef Yerushalmi to question: "Is it possible that the antonym of 'forgetting' is not 'remembering,' but justice?"[27]

Conclusion

By tracking the way Fernando's disappearance was addressed by the State and by relatives in different moments throughout the Brazilian transition until the present days, this paper aimed to analyse the social and political interlinkages regarding the various levels involved in mnemonic constructions.

Corresponding to the period in which State violence was denied by all government institutions, the years following the victim's disappearance were marked by the relatives' desperate search. Affliction, long waits, and uncertainty paralleled with correspondences with members of the military regime and national and international relevant figures. The lack of an official response held Fernando's relatives in a state of doubt that would eventually lead into social organizations pressuring the government for amnesty and investigations on human rights violations.

The relatives' organization and national and international denounces of human rights violations created a scenario for the democratic transition. The first civilian president to come

[27] E. Jelin, *Los Trabajos de la Memoria* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, IEP, 2012), p. 161.

to power after the regime marked the beginning of a new era. This era was characterized by a combination of the expansion of popular participation on political debates and the reconciliation through institutionalized forgetting. Within my investigation, this is represented institutionally by the 1979 Amnesty Law granting impunity to both victims and perpetrators, and socially by the 1985 publication of two books denouncing the State terrorism.

The third moment corresponded to the first time the government acknowledged its role in the disappearances and granted financial redressing to victims and their relatives through the Law 9.140 of 1995. Providing a partial truth but with no justice contributed to holding relatives in a state between mourning and melancholy. This is affirmed here with the support of historian Janaína Teles' researches, and exemplified through Fernando's mother interviews and testimonies.

The fourth moment corresponds to what Rebecca Atencio conceives as the Brazilian memory's turn that began with the twenty-first century arrival and culminated in the installation of the first National Truth Commission. At this point, the government started investing in reconciliation through institutionalized memory, when it was possible to observe a series of initiatives aiming to investigate and report on the cases of the *desaparecidos*. Here, the relationship between government, victims, and their relatives became much more active, which contributed to the production of more spaces for trauma elaboration.

This investigation leads to concluding that post-dictatorial mnemonic conflicts correspond to all victims' efforts to process their traumatic experiences within the political circumstances of a specific moment. In this sense, the collectivization of their struggle through organized groups and the production of cultural means (such as the book published by Fernando's relatives) appear to have a singular relevance. By exploring such strategies, they attempt to situate their individual experience within a broad official history.

The Brazilian case demonstrates that the mnemonic narratives shared at the social level with such persistence might reach the status of official memory. And the *desaparecido* that once was a "subversive on the run" to the State can be officially recognized as a victim "murdered by agents of the Brazilian State" 40 years later. However, memory policies and official symbolic reparations without justice might leave space for contradicting versions—even when these lack any sort of credibility.

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SUMMARY

The construction of memories following the last Brazilian dictatorship is as plural as the number of social actors implicated and as fluid as political circumstances can be. From investments on institutionalized forgetting to the creation of policies of memory, governmental initiatives affected the way society processed the acts of terror perpetrated by the military regime (1964–1985). The development of such initiatives, however, cannot be understood without accounting for the persistent struggle of victims' relatives and human rights' advocates. This paper aims to reflect on the Brazilian post-dictatorial mnemonic conflicts by observing how different levels of memory interacted with the political sphere in the process of coping with political disappearance. Drawing on relatives' testimonies regarding the disappearance of Fernando Santa Cruz and the institutional mechanisms developed by different governments, this text intends to demonstrate how State-sponsored absences during the dictatorship are constantly being (re)constructed according to social and political circumstances of the present.

KEYWORDS

desaparecidos, political disappeared, cultural memory, Brazilian dictatorship

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Whatever is Inside is Outside:

Do Nostalgic Memories Exist in Parallel Universes?

Samhita K

Jain University (India)
ORCID: 0000-0001-6488-9011

Introduction

The concept of time in the universe we inhabit follows linearity, and hence it may be represented by a rightward pointing arrow, indicating that the future is towards the right and that the past is towards the left. Thus, it follows that the arrow of time, as we know it, in the universe that we inhabit, is obviously linear. Events occur sequentially or chronologically and can therefore be assigned loci in the arrow of time with increase in the chronological order as one progresses from the left to the right. It must be noted that this is not essentially something that is universally accepted as the norm across all cultures across the world. All said, quantum physicists tend to claim that time is not necessarily linear in parallel universes, and that there can be an infinite number of parallel universes. There must be an infinite number of parallel universes to vouch for all the possibilities. By the same token, there can be infinite number of nostalgic memories. Taking into consideration the context of this theoretical paper, nostalgia could be associated with both the past (the sentimental longing for one's past) and the future (considering the non-linearity of the arrow of time).

The belief in the existence of parallel universes introduces a paradoxical manner of thinking. Cause may or may not precede its effect: the causal event may be preceded by the event or occurrence. Abiding by this logic, a glass of wine that breaks may already have been broken (in a parallel universe) before the wine taster's hand slipped due to whatever reason. In the universe in which we inhabit, there arises an epistemological problem if one makes use of causality as the arrow of time. As David Hume maintained, the causal relation per se cannot be perceived; one only perceives the sequence of events in which they occur. It is believed

that each time a decision is made, a new parallel universe gets created. Nostalgic memories probably exist in different planes of existence, that is, in parallel universes. Communication with the past and the future may thus be rendered possible; however, homo sapiens have not figured this out yet in a way that can be empirically proved to mainstream scientists (which of course excludes parapsychologists and other such allied professionals). The exception is the phenomenon of quantum teleportation and the like, which has been demonstrated by exceptional individuals like shamans, saints, wiccans, and so on. Such gifted individuals have shown the capability of non-conformity to the asymmetry of time. That being said, one knows that mainstream science still does not know how to accomplish this feat.

The Man behind the Concept of Parallel Universes or Multiverse

Hugh Everett was a noteworthy mathematician and an iconoclastic quantum theorist. In later years, he switched to become a defense contractor and had access to very sensitive, secretive military records. Science-fiction aficionados consider him as a folk hero: as the man who postulated a quantum theory of multiple universes. Here, I would like to add a pertinent comment. Today's science-fiction may well turn out to be tomorrow's reality like how yesterday's science-fiction has turned out to be today's reality. One must therefore not underestimate the power of revolutionary thinkers like Everett.

Hugh Everett was the brain behind the development of the idea of multiverse. He came up with it as part of his doctoral thesis, according to which we live in a multiverse of countless universes full of doppelgangers of each and every one of us. Everett's many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics was a revolutionary idea at that time (1954). He said that quantum effects result in the constant splitting of the universe. Although he is highly respected today for his groundbreaking views on reality and quantum mechanics, Everett did not get the reverence that he rightly deserved when he was alive.

Nostalgia and Nostalgic Memories in Context

"Nostalgia for the future" can emerge from memories and memorialisations.[1] When one discusses nostalgia from the conventional perspective, it usually refers to a sentimental yearning of the past, which may have arisen out of mere reaction to a stimulus or stimuli. On the other hand, nostalgia in the context of this paper can refer to the past and the future or both, as mentioned earlier. Information or truths about the past and future may be well accessible to an individual in special circumstances. For instance, the perceiver who lucid dreams may get precognitive messages about the future—of the next day or the next week. These messages may be transmitted to the individual through images, impressions, thoughts, feelings, physiological sensations, etc. The access to the past or future becomes possible through the use of the sixth sense or psi. Some significantly controversial claims have been made on the interpretation of psi or extrasensory perception as in the views expressed below:

> The essence of ESP is that false internal stimulations are mistaken as external objective stimulations which enter through sensory organs, while real external

[1] L. Smith, G. Campbell, "'Nostalgia for the future': Memory, Nostalgia and the Politics of Class," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 23 (7) (2017).

> objective stimulations are mistaken as perceptions which do not result from sensory organs when one is in deep hallucinations.[2]

I condemn this point of view strongly as it almost entirely disrupts the quintessence of not only this paper but, more than that, it is also counter-intuitive to Indian philosophy, to many ancient teachings, and also to contemporary books of wisdom like books written by Rhonda Byrne.

Nostalgic memories that could be retrieved by an individual may relate to explicitly or consciously forgotten memories, implicitly recorded memories, or even memories of other individuals and beings. As is evident, the possibilities are endless and infinite. The brain's capacity for storage of memory is thus presumed to be limitless.

An extremely important point to be made is as follows. Given the inflation theory of quantum physics, the universe is continually expanding, ever since the Big Bang—"the so-called beginning of everything."[3] If one abides by the ancient Indian notion that whatever is inside is outside, then the entire universe is within. This may seem problematic at first glance. People of different worldviews may view this contention very differently. Some may be staunch believers, others skeptics, and the remainder of the people may opine that this argument is pointless.

Qualia as Evidence of Objective Reality

When rationality cannot adequately account for a phenomenon, trans-rationality becomes essential. A transrational experience is not pathological; it is just one step beyond rationality. Subjective experiences or qualia constitute the source of theory, and one does not need evidence per se. What is real for one person may not be in the reachable limits to be experienced by another person. Experiential reality is reality. However, this does not mean that one can discount the experience of the first experiencer. Memories and the way the individual attaches meaning to them is unique for that individual. A string of memories may occur in the mind of one individual, which could be linked with the past or future, corresponding to many different parallel universes. It seems reasonable to reiterate that infinite possibilities must be accounted for. I argue that it is not mere speculation that nostalgic memories could be present in parallel universes. What is real for an individual is absolutely real in the real sense of the term. Inter-experience[4] appears to catch hold of a truer experience of reality. The limitations that come with quale is that although one can see another individual experiencing something, he/she cannot get into the shoes of other person. In this sense, there is always a psychological distance between two experiencers, even of the same experience. This is because each individual's perspective and perception about life, existence, and the universe are uniquely original. For that matter, even identical twins do not share the same qualia. The theory of cognitivism finds salience in this regard. An individual's idiosyncratic experience (quale) is by itself sufficient and evident rather than one having to provide evidence to validate an experience.[5]

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[2] W. Huang "Altered States of Consciousness: A Story about Perception," https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3435728 [access: 1.05.2022], p. 1.

[3] F.A. Wolf, *Parallel Universes* (New York: Simon and Schuster,1988).

[4] R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990).

[5] Ibidem.

Whatever Is inside Is outside: East Meets West

Albert Einstein held the opinion that the speed of light is not surpassed by any other form of communication. Yet, he was able to think different thoughts to formulate his Theory of Relativity, which obviously surpassed the speed of light! Einstein's tenet that no communication is faster than the speed of light does not hold true anymore, as discovered by Alain Aspect in his groundbreaking experiment on subatomic particles in 1982. This discovery established that thought is indeed faster than light. Aspect and his team of researchers discovered that no matter how much distance separates subatomic particles like electrons (be it 10 feet apart or 10 billion miles apart), the particles were somehow mysteriously able to communicate with one another. In an attempt to explain these results, David Bohm believes in a radical explanation: that these findings of Aspect point to the fact that there is no objective reality. The universe is actually a phantasm, a hologram, which makes it difficult to believe that separateness is an illusion. Thus, nostalgic memories in several parallel universes are in fact a part of a unitary entity. Apparently, stimuli that trigger nostalgic memories exist in a seamless web in the universe. What is inside the human mind has potential to be outside, somewhere, as demonstrated, amongst others, by the 'manifestation' anecdote of author Esther Hicks (Blue Glass, Butterflies, and Feathers). I would like to illustrate this powerful anecdote by emphasizing that one must never underestimate one's cognitive faculties. One day, a woman who was on a telephonic call with Esther Hicks was adamant to believe in the power of manifestation, despite having been given numerous explanations. Esther got a wild idea and began talking about things like different shades of blue glass, butterflies of different kinds, and all kinds of feathers. The disbelieving woman disconnected the call due to her frustration. Later on, when Esther was out for dinner with her husband Jerry Hicks, she was pulled into a store by some transpersonal force, a force other than herself and at the back of that store, she came across a beautiful mosaic of blue glass. After dinner, a walk through the park near the restaurant led Esther to an overwhelming number of butterflies. After the tryst with the butterflies, a little boy, whom Esther did not know, approached her and gave her a beautiful feather he had found. He was extremely excited to give the feather to Esther. At this point, Esther finally put all the pieces together. This is one anecdote that portrays the power of manifestation, and the ability of an individual to access elements that are out there, somewhere, in the external world. This reinstates that anything in one's inner mindscape must be somewhere in the external world; it could be the immediate universe or parallel universes.

The universe is ultimately holographic and indivisible, which is akin to the Eastern (Indian) philosophy of *Advaita* (non-dualism) propounded by Sri Shankaracharya and also to the notion of *Maya* or illusion. The word *Maya* procures its etymological origin from Sanskrit which means 'magic' or 'illusion.' It is agreed upon by erudite scholars and laypeople in India that we are presently living in an age of *Maya* or illusion, which is one of the reasons why we are grappling with unravelling the true nature of reality. According to Vedanta, one's true nature is enveloped in divinity; it is pure and perfect. One does not have to realize *Brahman*, because of the simple fact that individuals themselves are *Brahman*. One's true Self, which is the *Atman*, is one with *Brahman*. Ironically, although one's real nature is divine, the awareness of this truth is appallingly lacking. Why is this so? It is because individuals are enshrouded in the veil of *Maya*. This veil of *Maya* makes one's perception of reality deceptive. It is claimed that Maya will cease to exist with the dawn of realization of the knowledge of the Truth. What constitutes the real truth of existence? It is *Brahman*—the substratum of existence, which is the ultimate Truth. Unfortunately, though, conditioning influences and shapes most of one's

reality, "from the *tabula rasa* state to the tomb." One does not identify with the unchanging divine Self, but with the body, mind, ego, desires, and so on. The *Atman* remains unchanged and unaffected by the material world.

Conclusions

"Once we have granted that any physical theory is essentially only a model for the world of experience," Everett wrote in the conclusion portion of the unedited version of his dissertation, "we must renounce all hope of finding anything like 'the correct theory' … simply because the totality of experience is never accessible to us."[6]

R.D. Laing quipped that we are all surrounded by the false consciousness of pseudo-events and that we are all far away from authentic possibilities that could have been experienced.[7]

The question that hangs in midair is: do nostalgic memories exist in parallel universes? Until the material universe is *Maya* or illusion and until we are able to perceive the infinitely connected universe in unity, yes, nostalgic memories do continue to exist in parallel universes. And finally, when we *are* able to perceive the infinitely connected universe in all its unity, it would be safe to surmise that "all the parallels have met."

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[6] H. Everett, III, *The Many-Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics*, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/manyworlds/pdf/dissertation.pdf [access: 1.05.2022], p. 134.
[7] Laing, op. cit.

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SUMMARY

This paper explores nostalgic memories from an unconventional perspective and their complex relationship with parallel universes. The arrow of time is not necessarily linear, and nostalgic memories pertaining to the past or the future, be it in this world or in parallel universes, could be accessed in various states of consciousness. Whatever is inside (in the internal environment of an individual) is outside (in the external environment), which is in line with esoteric teachings and individualistic experiences. The Indian concept of *Maya* (illusion) that applies to the material world, acts as a hindrance to experiencing *Brahman* or the ultimate Truth. Until one is able to perceive the infinitely connected universe in all its gigantic underlying unity, it may be posited that nostalgic memories exist in parallel universes.

KEYWORDS

nostalgia, memories, parallel universes, multiverse, arrow of time

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Loss, Longing, and Desire:

The Poetics of Nostalgia in Qurratulain Hyder's *My Temples, Too*

Sushobhan Das

Jadavpur University
ORCID: 0000-0002-4562-9414

Introduction

"Nostalgia," writes Svetlana Boym[1], often emerges in times of "historical upheaval"—that is to say, at times when the "rhythms of life" are suddenly "accelerated." As we can understand, such nostalgic outbreaks are the consequences of the experience of impending loss, of observing the world around oneself change, and of an uncertain future heralded by such a change. One such moment was the Partition of India in 1947 that came hand in hand with Indian independence. For millions of people across the country, a known familial world was rendered unknown overnight. A memorable depiction of this change comes in the Urdu writer, Qurratulain Hyder's novel, *My Temples, Too*. In this paper, I look at the longing and nostalgia for the pre-Partition world as depicted in this novel. For this, I will first consider a few ideas of longing and belonging, memory and nostalgia, particularly in the context of lived spaces and places. Thereafter, I will attempt a brief reading of Hyder's novel to explore its poetics of loss, longing and desire.

Spaces, Places, and a Sense of Belonging

The house of one's childhood, writes Gaston Bachelard[2], is an "oneiric" place. In his book *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard goes on to draw a phenomenology of the house, outlining for us

[1] S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xvi.
[2] G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M. Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 15.

the secret poetry of the cellar and the garret, the romance of closed drawer and locked doors, and the cosmic potentialities of the otherwise trivial cracks and crevices on the walls.[3] One thing that Bachelard maintains throughout the book is the importance of our "imagination" that, according to him, animates the house. For Bachelard, the house is an "intimate space"[4], a space that is animated by the fact of our living in it. As he sums it up beautifully, "a house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space."[5]

The house, for Bachelard, is then a 'lived space'—a place that acquires meaning by the fact of our living in it, of dwelling in its many spaces. "Dwelling," writes Heidegger, "is the basic character of Being in keeping with which mortals exist."[6] To dwell then is to be in a place, and to be in a place, as Edward Casey tells us, is to know it, to "be in a position to perceive it."[7] We dwell in a place, root deep within it, by grasping it through our senses: we reflect on it, revive it in memory, invest it with meaning. And this is not limited to the house(s) we live(d) in but includes other inhabited spaces like our neighborhoods and secret hides, a beloved street or an old bridge, and it even extends to the objects they occupy. Dwelling, in short, is to sense spaces; in sensing, we inscribe spaces with meaning, and in inscribing, the "physical landscape" of these spaces, as Keith Basso reminds us, "becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination."[8]

The sensing of places, however, is not unidirectional; as Steven Feld observes, it is a "doubly reciprocal."[9] Feld sums it up in the sentence: "place is sensed, senses are placed; as place makes sense, senses make place."[10] Thus, we can say then that there exists a complex, multidimensional relationship between places and the people who inhabit them, a relationship that, to further quote Andrea Frank, is "dependent on human interpretation of the place setting," and thus can "vary from person to person."[11] This relationship is summed up in the phrase 'sense of place.'

Memory, Longing, and Nostalgia

Places are retained in memory and memory plays a significant role in investing them with meaning. But "[m]emory," as Anh Hua writes, "is the construction or reconstruction of what actually happened in the past"[12] and as such, is subjected to distortions. Bachelard addresses

[3] Ibidem, chapters 1–8.
[4] Ibidem, p. xxxviii.
[5] Ibidem, p. 47.
[6] M. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971), p. 158.
[7] E. Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in: eds. S. Feld, K.H. Basso, *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996), p. 18.
[8] K.H. Basso, "Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape," in: S. Feld, K.H. Basso, op. cit., p. 55.
[9] S. Feld, "Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea," in: S. Feld, K.H. Basso, op. cit., p. 91.
[10] Ibidem.
[11] A.I. Frank, "Sense of Place," in: ed. R.W. Caves, *Encyclopedia of the City* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 590.
[12] A. Hua, "Diaspora and Cultural Memory," in: ed. V. Agnew, D*iaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 198.

this concern in the observation: "Memory does not record concrete durations…. We are unable to relieve duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it, in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness."[13]

Bachelard is indeed right, but his version of memory as "abstract time" deprived of "all thickness" is more close to nostalgia—that is, the yearning for a time out of time. The word 'nostalgia' was first coined by Johannes Hofer in his 1688 medical dissertation *Medica de Nostalgia, oder Heimweh*, to refer to a form of 'homesickness,' but has come to mean a lot more than that. Forged from the two Greek words, 'nostos,' meaning return home, and 'algos,' meaning pain, today nostalgia represents a longing for a time in the past, a time that is lost and cannot be retrieved or returned to. Boym makes this same point when she notes that while "nostalgia" may seem "a longing for a place" at first glance, it is actually "a yearning for a different time."[14]

Nostalgia, however, as Linda Hutcheon reminds us, "is rarely the past as actually experienced"[15]; rather it is "the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire."[16] In this context, Hutcheon finds nostalgia as "less about the past than about the present."[17] Using Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of "historical inversion" (that is, the projection in the "past" of that which can be only realized in the "future"[18]), she describes nostalgia in the following words:

> …the ideal that is not being lived now is projected into the past. It is "memorialized" as past, crystallized into precious moments selected by memory, but also by forgetting, and by desire's distortions and reorganizations.[19]

Moreover, as Boym clarifies, nostalgia can also take root "for a home [or a past] that one never had."[20]

"Outbreaks of nostalgia," Boym writes, "often follow revolutions."[21] The reason, for Boym, is simple. Revolutions are times when a society goes through change. Revolutions, in this context, "accelerate the rhythms of life."[22] With moments of change, of transition and turbulence, furthermore, comes the threat of losing touch with the local and intimate space of everyday lived and felt experience. This is a space inflated with personal imagination and collective memory, a space that has been inhabited and thus made meaning out of, a space that informs our identity. It is, to use Dubravka Ugrešić's[23] words, the "bit of space" shared by people living in it, that cannot be "shared" by others, or even "translated," for it is "marked" by the "experience" of a "shared life in a particular country, in a particular culture, in a particular system, at a particular historical moment." The space of the local and the every-

[13] G. Bachelard, op. cit., p. 9.
[14] S. Boym, op. cit., p. xv.
[15] L. Hutcheon, M. Valdés, "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern: A Dialogue," *Poligrafias, Revista de Literatura Comparada*, 3 (1998), p. 20.
[16] Ibidem.
[17] Ibidem.
[18] M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in: *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. C. Emerson, M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press,1981), p. 174.
[19] L. Hutcheon, M. Valdés, op. cit., p. 20.
[20] S. Boym, op. cit., p. xiii.
[21] Ibidem, p. xvi.
[22] Ibidem.
[23] D. Ugrešić, "The Confiscation of Memory," https://newleftreview.org/issues/i218/articles/dubravka-ugresic-the-confiscation-of-memory [access: 20.02.2021].

day, in this sense, is unique to every group and every individual, and by association, too intimate. When such spaces begin to transform, they impinge upon us with longing and nostalgia—longing that, as Felipe De Brigard reminds us, is not limited to a "particular location," but can extend to "general childhood experiences, long-gone friends or family members," and even to "foods, costumes, aromas, [and] traditions."[24]

We can say then: places and spaces, the objects they possess, the sounds and smells they harbor, the rituals they nurture, all tie us to them through a 'sense of place,' and evoke in us a longing for them whenever the knots of this relationship are threatened. It is useful to remember here Boym's caution that though nostalgia is thought to cause the "afflicted to lose touch with the present"[25], ironically nostalgia can also take root for the present—for the "present perfect and its lost potential."[26] We need only wonder how we are often overcome by a longing for the moment that, in trying to be experienced, is too quickly lost, with the feeling that it was fully experienced. Nostalgia, in other words, can emerge from a longing, and a failure, to "arrest the moment."[27]

Hyder and the Partition of India

The plan for the Partition of India, that divided the Indian subcontinent into the two separate nations of India and Pakistan, was passed on June 3, 1947. Some three weeks later, the Boundary Commissions was set up, and Sir Cyril Radcliffe was appointed to demarcate the boundaries of the two would-be nations by diving "a province of more than 35 million people, thousands of villages, town and cities, a unified integrated system of canals and communication networks, and 16 million Muslims, 15 million Hindus and 5 million Sikhs, who despite their religious differences, shared a common culture, language and history."[28] For his part, Radcliffe, writes Urvashi Butalia, had "little time, no familiarity with the land or the people" and presumably "old" and "outdated" "census statistics."[29] There was immense pressure from the party leaders for the work to be finished by 15th August, and within "five weeks"[30], Radcliffe drew the line.

"The term 'partition,'" Sangeeta Ray writes, "implies a neat cartographical creation of a new geographical entity that elides the personal and political vicissitudes accompanying such remappings."[31] Partition came with Independence, but Partition also came with a spree of unprecedented violence and bloodbath. Indeed, as one survivor of the communal massacres recounts, "it was only after the riots started that people began to recognize that Independence had come."[32] Loot and arson were unleashed on communal lines, with Hindus

[24] F. De Brigard, "Nostalgia and Mental Simulation," in: ed. A. Gotlib Anna, *The Moral Psychology of Sadness* (London, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), p. 159.
[25] S. Boym, op. cit., p. 3.
[26] Ibidem, p. 21.
[27] Ibidem.
[28] U. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (India: Penguin Random House, 2017), p. 83.
[29] Ibidem, p. 84.
[30] Ibidem, p. 83.
[31] S. Ray, *En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 131.
[32] G. Pandey, "Partition and Independence in Delhi: 1947–48," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32 (36) (1997), p. 2262.

and Sikhs killing Muslims and vice versa. Trains that had erstwhile featured in the collective imagination as symbols of conjunction, connecting distant lands and communities, overnight became symbols of disjunction and dislocation, taking people away from the concrete reality of their houses to the illusive and elusive claims of two newly created nations. More often than not, they arrived with butchered bodies and gunny bags full of mutilated breasts.

To go by the facts, somewhere around twelve million people were uprooted, rendered homeless; some around a million people died; and about 75,000 women were abducted and raped. That is to go by the facts; but Partition also had its "human dimensions."[33] These "human dimensions" are many and often overlapping and one of its facets include the tragedy of parting from one's ancestral house and lived spaces. As stories of the time tell us, many people had to flee overnight with only the bare essentials. Hyder recounts in *My Temples*[34], for instance, how one of the characters discovers in one of the vacated houses, "the tea-things still lying on the dining-table and the radio was on and all the lights were burning." Moreover, once the borders were drawn, it became easier, to paraphrase Attia Hosain[35], to visit the whole wide world than the home one had belonged to. To sever all ties with the house one grew up in, leave all the too-familiar people and surroundings and neighborhoods, all those spaces one belonged to, never to return: that was Partition. In a moment, all was lost.

Qurratulain Hyder was born in 1927 in Uttar Pradesh, in an affluent family, and to parents, both of whom were writers. She was educated mostly in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, from where she earned a Master's degree in English Literature. Hyder was 20 when India was partitioned. She migrated to Pakistan along with her mother, only to return to India in 1961. In her two-volume autobiography, *Kaar-i Jahan Daraaz Hai*, Hyder tells us how, when her train was attacked by a rioting mob, she and her mother made a bare escape.[36] As such, Hyder had experienced Partition, its horror, and its loss, from close quarters. They dominate not just *My Temples*, but also her other works, like her magnum opus, *River of Fire*, her novel *Fireflies in the Mist*, the two novellas, *Sita Betrayed* and *The Housing Society*, amongst many others.

My Temples, Too and the Poetics of Nostalgia

My Temples is Hyder's first novel. Originally written in Urdu as *Mere Bhi Sanamkhane*, and published in 1948, it was later 'transcreated' by the author in English. By and large, the novel focuses on a small aristocratic group, collectively called "the Gang," that includes the three Ali siblings, Rakshanda, Peechu, and Polu, the children of the Rajah of Karwaha, and their friends, namely Kiran, Ginnie, Diamond, Hafiz, Christabel, and Vimal. It begins 2 years prior to Partition, in 1945, and details the time leading up to the moment of rupture, as well as its aftermath, as experienced by the Gang. As such, *My Temples* differs from many other Partition narratives in that it only briefly deals with the horrors of the time—"the pornography of violence" as one scholar called it[37]—that is so defining of the latter. Rather,

[33] U. Butalia, op. cit., p. 6.
[34] Q. Hyder, *My Temples, Too*, trans. Q. Hyder (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger and Women Limited, 2018), Kindle. All references are to this particular edition.
[35] A. Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (India: Penguin Random House, 2009), p. 289.
[36] N. Anjum, "Questioning Partition's Rationale: Qurratulain Hyder's 'My Temples, Too,'" *Indian Literature*, 60 (3) (2016), pp. 146–47.
[37] P. Gopal, *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009),

Hyder's book is an elegy, a nostalgic evocation of the many spaces of "the modern syncretic culture" of Lucknow, crisscrossed with "pre-modern and historical antecedents"[38]—a culture that was lost with Partition. Since Hyder began her literary career at a time when this culture, as Farooqui notes, was already "heartbreakingly demolished by partition and the attendant massacres," even as she "celebrates it, it is already and always pre-figured by the destruction it is going to face [t]hereafter."[39] This nostalgia of the author for the lost past, accompanied by nostalgia of the characters for an present experienced as ever-fleeting, results in what we can call a poetics of longing and desire, of a yearning to prolong the present, to preserve those doomed intimate and syncretic spaces—perhaps more intimate because doomed—that made the beloved haven of Hyder, and is the lived home of her characters.

The landscape of *My Temples* is haunted by longing and desire. Hyder evokes the myriad achings of the human heart by syncing the rhythms of human life, its aspirations and failures, with the rhythms of nature. This syncing results in an overflow, a spilling over and absorption of human emotions into the social and natural 'scapes' of the novel—something that invests them with emotive qualities. Thus, for instance, autumn leaves in one of the scenes are seen falling off and being "carried away by the current" in the same rhythm in which the "heart" of the characters seem to sink under the weight of romantic and political disillusionments with the approach of Partition. Again, with the arrival of monsoon, the bells of Noor Manzil are heard "peeling" incessantly along with the heavy pour of rain, as Queen Rose, unable to contain her longing for Salim, plaintively awaits his arrival, wondering hopelessly what he could be doing in his "huge house" somewhere in the district. Two other memorable instances of this syncing come in the 'moolsiri scene' and the song of Gul Shaboo. In the 'moolsiri scene,' which comes just after the 'Noor Manzil scene,' the Gang is seen to converse about love, transience, and temporality in the lawn of Ghufran Manzil in a post-rain surrounding, as clusters of "moolsiri blossoms" fall on them like "waterfall." Moolsiris in the Indian tradition are often associated with love and beauty as well as transience for their exhilarating smell and yet brief lifespan: while they begin to bloom and give forth their heavy and intoxicating fragrance only from the evening, by the early hours of dawn they are all fallen off. In this context, when Rakshanda, in consonance with Kiran, observes, "isn't it enough that all of us are here at its moment and the moolsiri blossoms are raining on our hair like a waterfall…?" her comment, while trying to seek consolation in the moment's plentitude in an attempt to outdo the force of its temporality, ironically acknowledges its very impermanence. In the second instance, the "rain-song" that Gul Shaboo is heard singing—"O Rama, the monsoon are passing by, come soon, come soon… O Rama"—alludes to the romantic longings of the characters. It is a reference to 'Ramakatha' or the story of Rama, found most memorably in Indian epic, the Valmiki Ramayana, and is an example of songs that exist in folk memory. It images the story's female protagonist, Sita, in exile, singing longingly of her husband Rama, after being abducted and held hostage by Ravana in the island-nation of Lanka. Interestingly, there too, Sita was abducted just before the rainy season, so that conjunction of Sita's wait with the passing monsoon makes perfect sense in popular culture.

Hyder evokes the syncretic culture of Lucknow through Ghufran Manzil, the 'home' of the Alis, along with the many lived spaces and places of this old world which includes the

p. 71; Gopal herself refers to Gyanandra Pandey.

[38] M. Farooqui, "Aini Apa," https://kafila.online/2007/09/06/aini-apa/ [access 20.02.2021].

[39] Ibidem.

Awadhi districts of Faizabad, Barabanki, Pratapgarh, as well as the very land itself, traced through cultural and religious markers, like (Sufi) monasteries, mosques and temples. Housing the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb—a popular metaphor comparing "the Hindu-Muslim harmony and friendship," as Priyankar Upadhyaya writes, "to the holy confluence of India's major rivers—the Ganges and the Yamuna"[40]—this world, however, is seen through the hooves of time as always on the verge of rupture. Ghufran Manzil, a symbol of the two-hundred-years old Awadhi Nawabi regime that had already been annexed by the British Raj by the time the story unfolds, itself stands in a "dilapidated" state. Yet, its spaces are still charted by a vivid synergy of cultural identities. The staff of Ghufran Manzil, for instance, includes Abbasi Khanum, the "housekeeper of Mughal descent" who is described as "a living monument to the old regime," the more contemporary Gul Shabbo and Shola Pari, the maids of Abyssinian descent, Zammurund and Almas, and the Indian maids, Gainda and Ramania, the wives of Ram Bharose, the syce. Even the Gang stands as an example of the religio-cultural synergy of the pre-Partition world. The Ali siblings, for instance, are of Awadhi descent, while Ginnie Kaul comes from a family of Kashmiri Pandits, and Kiran Katju is of Kashmiri extraction. Hafiz, who has a Christian wife, Christabel, also hails from a feudal family like the Alis. That this old world is not static or out of time is reflected by the entry of Salim in the Gang. Salim, who comes from the middle class, represents the class of men who broke away from their traditional fates under the opportunities opened up by the colonial system (particularly WWII, as in Salim's case), and rose in the socio-economic ladder.

The syncretic Awadhi culture is further sketched in the novel in various rituals, festivities, and activities. For instance, the Ali siblings are seen to celebrate the Hindu festivals of Holi, Diwali and Ram Leela, as well as the Muslim festival of Id in their village house at Manather. More interestingly, Holi is celebrated with Nauroze, the Iranian New Year. Again, on learning about Qamar Ara's marriage to Salim, Hyder shows Diamond imagining Qamar with "vermilion powder in the parting of her hair." The use of vermilion, an essentially Hindu practice, by Qamar, a Muslim, refers to the intricate and embodied ways in which the lives of different communities were tied together in the pre-Partition era. The modern, global culture in the novel, on the other hand, is represented by the Gang who frequent the coffee houses, talk of progress and politics, host charity shows, opt for modern occupational opportunities opened up under the British Raj, and mix freely without following the constrains of the zenana that used to separate the spaces inhabited by Muslim women in traditional families. Finally, on the crossroads of the old and the modern there exist other identities, like that of Queen Rose, the Anglo-Indian dancer from Lal Bagh. It is this peculiar world of old and new, tradition and modernity, past and future, embedded integrally in the various (physical) spaces of the novel and harboring a "heterogeneous and democratic mix"[41] of various identities, that Hyder writes nostalgically of in *My Temples*.

The passage of time in the novel is felt palpably throughout. The seasons keep on churning one after the other as swiftly as the clocks of Ghufran Manzil are seen to tick away the present (reminding us once more of the syncing of the natural and the human). This present in the novel, as Sunder Rajan observes, is realized as the "period of youth and happiness"[42], so

[40] P. Upadhyaya, "Communal Peace in India: Lessons from Multicultural Banaras," in: ed. K. Warikoo, *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 86.
[41] S. Rajan, "Zeitgeist and the Literary Text: India, 1947, in Qurratulain Hyder's *My Temples, Too* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*," *Critical Inquiry* 40 (4) (2014), p. 447.
[42] Ibidem, p. 449.

that the relentless sense of the present's erosion, of its continual receding into the past even as it unfolds, sits hauntingly on the characters, engaging them in pensive reflections. Pondering on the fugaciousness of the moment when Shehla meets Salim for the first time, the former thus wonders, "these are the moments I am going to remember all my life. They will haunt me forever, him sitting here near me in the blue evening, with the river flowing by," while at another point, Rakshanda, realizing how transitory everything is, questions herself:

> Why do we all find ourselves present in this particular context, in this particular place? How have these pieces assembled here in this jigsaw puzzle? Soon, something will happen, pieces will scatter and become part of a new pattern. We won't be here anymore, this time will pass. What are we going to do in the days and nights to come?

The image of the jigsaw puzzle, it's arranging and rearranging here refers to the order of human things that is wielded by the larger, unseen, but all-pervasive Time—something that, to borrow Sunder Rajan's words, features as a "destructive force," bend on "overturn[ing] the certitudes and arrangements of generations and pos[ing] the ominous threat of death and political disintegration."[43]

The fleeing sense of the present in the book is coupled with an irrepressible longing for the eroding old world. Early in the novel, Abbasi Khanum reflects on the way the "city" of Lucknow has "changed." Thinking nostalgically of the many "European-style houses" (another example of the cultural synergy as reflections in architecture) that were built by the "Anglicized Nawabs of Oudh" in the old days, she laments as to how such houses "would never be built again." We may note in this context that houses function as visible symbols of the old world in the novel, and as such, arrest the characters with nostalgia for the past. Thus, while Rakshanda is quite aware that Ghufran Manzil was built on the exploitation of the subaltern masses and represents the "solidarity of the privileged classes," she cannot help loving its many spaces, for as she reasons to herself, "it was a silent reminder of past splendor." Rakshanda's nostalgia, as we can understand, is not for the "past splendor," for she has never experienced that past firsthand; rather, it is for a conjured past, a past that exists not in time but in memory. Objects, like places, are tied to our identities; they inform our sense of belonging, and separation of them, or their loss, can bruise our conception of our 'selves.' Ghufran Manzil, accordingly, is part of Rakshanda; it informs her past and grounds her present through memory and imagination. It is not surprising, therefore, that its loss following the Partition renders her mentally unstable.

The pangs of loss, of longing and desire are perhaps most acutely felt by Rakshanda. Unable to contain the menacing march of time, the porosity of the present renders her emotionally wretched. Hounded by melancholic upsurges, she is forced to take refuge in philosophical conversations with her own self. It is in one of these moments that she wonders:

> Do you recall what Krishna said to Arjuna, that time destroys its own creations? Do you know me, brother Kiran? This is I who am nothing. This is you who are nothing, too. Together we have seen the dawn breaking on high mountains, we have wandered through woodlands, singing. You and I have roamed those arbours
>
> where the koels solemnly sing their eversong. Don't you still recognize the futility of it all? We have left Time far behind.

[43] Ibidem.

The reference here is to a section of the Indian epic, *Mahabharata*, namely the 'Bhagvada Gita,' where Krishna is found to discourse on dharma to Arjuna. Interestingly, there too, one of the central things that the former advises the latter to conquer is desire (particularly of the senses, and for the fruits of action). The recognition that Rakshanda has in this passage, which goes in tandem with Krishna's teaching, is of the impossibility of trying to capture time; yet unlike Arjuna, she is unable to reconcile with this bitter truth. Rather, referring nostalgically to the halcyon days of past—the image of Rakshanda and Kiran watching the dawn break on high mountains and wandering through woodlands is, if anything, from an oneiric, make-believe world of folkloric time—she laments as to how they have left that "Time far behind." Sitting in the twilit garden of Ghufran Manzil, she thus mourns:

> The caravan will pass and nothing will be left behind…. Here come a pack of harmless raving lunatics who once thought they were going to beautify the world and bring peace to mankind. The end has come, Kiran Bhai, and the red petals are dropping in the eucalyptus grove and I am sitting by the fountain….

The "end" comes with Partition, and ruptures everything in its wake. Refugees start to pour in, the Gang scatters, mass killings begin. Hyder portrays the last few pulses of the old world through an anecdote of the last surviving descendent of the last King of Oudh, who, in deciding to hold his coronation and declare himself King, becomes the laughing stock of the newspapers. Trying to grasp the "acute tragedy" underlying this "comic coronation," she comments, "Who can know what they feel who are left behind on the shore, while the river changes course…?" It is this understanding that brings her to the fateful conclusion, "The old sun has set. The world that has existed only for the sake of a humanistic culture was no more." Towards the end, both Peechu and Kiran are killed by riotous mobs; Christabel returns to England, Ginner gets married, and Diamond migrates to Pakistan. Before long, the Zamindari Abolition Act is passed, and unable to meet the debts, Polu, in a moment of harsh irony, rents Ghufran Manzil to the government for establishing a department for refugee rehabilitation. In gaining the nation, the home is lost. In the end, when we meet Rakshanda, her mental world is completely fractured. Having lost all that was dear to her, her people and her spaces, she can hardly make sense of the present. Lost in her own thoughts, she only utters in a monotone, "The whole day has gone… whole day has gone."

Conclusion

In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym distinguishes between two kinds of nostalgia: the first she calls restorative nostalgia; the second, reflective nostalgia.[44] By restorative, Boym means a "nostalgia" that "stresses nostos and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home"[45]—something that she locates "at the core of recent national and religious revivals."[46] In the context of India, this can be seen in the nativistic and nationalistic revivals and movements that preceded and followed the birth of the twin-nations of India and Pakistan on communal lines. At present they prosper, at least in the case of India, by inventing a "so-called" lost Hindu past[47] along with an equally elusive set of traditions, what Hobsbawm and

[44] S. Boym, op. cit., p. xviii.
[45] Ibidem.
[46] Ibidem.
[47] R. Thapar, *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Identities Through History* (New Delhi: Aleph Book

Ranger would call "invented traditions"[48], and frequently claim, out of a desire to return to (misappropriated) origins, a Hindu country. In Hyder's novel, elements of restorative urges can be discerned in the many references to the Two-Nation Theory. On the other hand, by reflective nostalgia, Boym means a "nostalgia" that "thrives in algia, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wishfully, ironically, desperately."[49] Writing nostalgically in her brother's flat in the new country of Pakistan about the old pre-Partition world of Lucknow[50], one may perhaps identify in Hyder a similar reflective strain. The novel thrives in longing, in the irrepressible desire to return to a lost world. It looks back, pauses, and dallies there wishfully for a moment. Yet the recognition that this world is lost and past is always there, felt palpably in the ominous passage of time throughout the novel. Thus, in a strange instance of a dialectics of anachronism, even as Hyder commits the old world to paper from the luminous storehouse of memory, it is always already marked by its subsequent disappearance.

The anachronistic dialectics of the past informing the present-in-the-past that Hyder's novel engages in can also be felt in its title. The Urdu word 'sanamkhana' that Hyder translated as 'temples,' has a wider range of connotations in the original. It means an idol-house, but it also means the house of a beloved, a sweetheart, one whom you worship, one whose house is akin to a refuge, a temple for you. It is taken from a couplet found in the fifteenth ode in the *Bal-e-Jibril of Iqbal* that, when translated[51], reads: "You have your idol-houses; I, too, have mine/My idols are perishable, and your idols are too." The 'sanamkhana' of Hyder, her 'temples,' are the many syncretic places and spaces of the old world of pre-Partition times, the world of the Ganga-Jamuni tahzeeb that she once inhabited and dearly loved, the world that perished with Partition. By using the second half of the first verse, she nostalgically commemorates these spaces, preserving them in her writing; yet in the following silent verse, their destruction is always already pre-figured. For a moment, that world gleams with all its aches and laughter in luminous spots of memory; the very next moment, all is gone.

Company, 2014).

[48] E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger Terence, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[49] S. Boym, op. cit., p. xviii.

[50] N. Anjum, op. cit., p. 147.

[51] Q. Hyder, *A Season of Betrayals: A Short Story and Two Novellas* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999), p. xviii.

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SUMMARY

"Nostalgia," writes Svetlana Boym, often emerges in times of "historical upheavals" or when the "rhythms of life" are suddenly "accelerated." One can well understand that such nostalgic outbreaks are the results of the experience change. One such moment was that of the Partition of India in 1947. This paper focuses on this moment as it is depicted in Qurratulain Hyder's novel, *My Temples, Too*. Hyder's novel, that centers around the experience of Partition, is haunted by a palpable sense of loss, of rupture, and an acute longing for the places and spaces of the past that its characters witness as eroding. Following scholars like Boym, Linda Hutcheon, De Brigard, Gaston Bachelard, Edward Casey, and others, this paper first prepare the ground of its argument by showing how memory and nostalgia are often deeply rooted in everyday things, objects, and places of habitation, investing them with a sense of belonging. Thereafter, it situates Hyder's novel in its immediate context and explores its poetics of loss, longing, and nostalgia.

KEYWORDS

Qurratulain Hyder, nostalgia, longing, desire, Partition of India

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Nostalgia, Depression and Suicide as the Consequence of Acquired and Inherited Trauma in Amelia Rosselli's Poetry

Olga Zasada

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
ORCID: 0000-0002-8789-809X

In one of her many descriptions of poetic motivation included in her literary works and comments, Amelia Rosselli points to difficult life experiences as a factor influencing her artistic creativity. This Italian twentieth-century poetess emphasizes repeatedly the direct impact of her mental well-being as the driving force of her writing process. For this reason, the subject of this article is the minor overtone of her multilingual literary output motivated by difficult experiences in her personal and family life. In terms of interdisciplinarity, I would like to show how the experience of melancholy and nostalgia in Amelia Rosselli's artistic creativity touches upon the psychological, social, historical, cultural, political, and artistic areas. Before providing a more detailed analysis of the most severe trials that form the melancholic expression of Amelia Rosselli's poetry, it is worth introducing the poetess herself.

Amelia Rosselli was an expatriate.[52] This statement portrays the woman precisely because, as she confessed, she did not feel like belonging to any country and had no motherland with which she could identify. She was born in Paris in 1930, where she lived for her first seven years. Then, she was forced to move first to Switzerland, then the United States, Great Britain, and finally to Italy. All these changes of countries, environments, and the necessity to abandon her current lifestyle and start a new one influence the nature of her poetry. The poetess writes in Italian, French, English, as well as in music notation and also uses Yiddish. A motif of statelessness and repatriation is present in her multilingual literary output, which made Italian literary critics divide her works into thematic categories. Amelia Rosselli's poems are categorized as follows: *Variazioni belliche* (1964)—war, *Serie ospedaliera* (1969)—exile,

[52] G. Marano, „Ecco che è tempo di risplendere," https://criticaitalianablog.wordpress.com/2018/02/19/ecco-che-e-tempo-di-risplendere-la-patria-meridionale-di-amelia-rosselli/ [access: 27.03.2021].

Documento (1966–1973)—repatriation. Amelia Rosselli is mentioned by Vincenzo Mengaldo in the anthology *Poeti italiani del Novecento* as the only woman among the most eminent Italian authors of the 1930s.[53] Above all, a melancholy character emanates from her lyric poetry which is closely related to her difficult life experiences. The poetess herself reveals that gloomy flashbacks—together with concepts, experiences and fantasies—influence her artistic expression and structure her literary space:

> Interrompevo il poema quando era esaurita la forza psichica e significativa che mi spingeva a scrivere; cioè l'idea o l'esperienza o il ricordo o la fantasia che smuovevano il senso e lo spazio. La realtà è così pesante che la mano si stanca, e nessuna forma la può contenere.[54]
>
> (I interrupted the poem when the psychic and semantic force that drove me to write was exhausted; that is, the concept or experience or memory or fantasy that moved meaning and space. Reality is so heavy that the hand gets tired, and no form can embrace it.)[55]

Factors that had a noticeable impact on her poems and gave them a minor tone include the painful reality of fascist Italy, related to the contract killing of family members, the sudden and untimely death of her beloved and her brother, mental illness in the context of DNA memory, and finally the promise of suicide.

In order to commence a structural analysis of her poetry, it is worth reaching to the very beginning of Amelia Rosselli's life that is closely connected to the relationship with her mother. In the poem "Diario in tre lingue" that makes part of *Primi Scritti*, she uses the epithet "empty mother" which is not related to the subject matter of the entire fragment in which it appears. The few existing biographies of Amelia Rosselli, biographies of her mother Marion Cave, and historical references to the Rosselli family, known for its political activities in Italy, show that Amelia suffered from psychological problems and emotional blindness, according to a definition proposed by Alice Miller who in the study *Saving Your Life* admits:

> The reality of childhood will never go away. Even if these parents were suddenly all transformed into angels, the memories of their cruelties, their hatred, their rejection remain as knowledge stored in the bodies of their children. The task devolving on the adult children is to free themselves of those memories, not by forgiving and forgetting, but by accepting the logical response to torture, the experience of rage they have denied themselves for so long. Medication can do nothing to reveal this truth. All it can do is to camouflage it, often for decades, without bringing any genuine relief.[56]

By tracing Marion Cave's history of mental disorders, we can draw some conclusions about the quality of the mother–child relationship at the earliest stage of Amelia's life. On the basis of scientific studies developed and successively published by psychiatrists, it is possible to formulate a hypothesis about the influence of Amelia's mother's depression which began already in infancy and even earlier in the perinatal period, on her later functioning in society. It is known that not only her father was in prison, but also her mother, Marion Cave, who was pregnant with Amelia. This circumstance becomes at the same time a reason motivating

[53] P.V. Mengaldo, *Poeti italiani del Novecento* (Milan: Mondadori, 1978), pp. 993–1004.
[54] G. Spagnoletti (ed.), *Antologia poetica* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987), p. 63.
[55] All translations in this article are made by the author.
[56] A. Miller, *Saving Your Life* (New York: Norton & Company, 2007), p. 35.

the poet's creative process, especially the choice of specific linguistic means and mournful overtones.

In this case, I would like to refer to an experiment named *Still Face* in which the author of the project, Ed Tronick, demonstrated how a negative reaction is triggered in a several--month-old infant by the mother's lack of interest which is a repercussion of postpartum depression. Postpartum depression occurs as a result of a high concentration of hormones, and, as opposed to standard b a b y b l u e s, a syndrome called by scientists 'postpartum sadness,' considered a common phenomenon, lasting up to six weeks after parturition—it results in a lack of emotional bonding with the baby. This condition lasts longer than the usual six weeks of baby blues and is characterized by chronic sadness without finding any joy in the new life role. Research also shows that such dysfunction in the baby's relationship with the first person in its life often has serious consequences not only for its later relationship with the mother but also for its relationships with other people. In postwar hospitals, orphaned newborns, whose only contact with another human being was limited to ensuring their nutritional and hygienic needs, died without any medical cause. So far, there have been many scientific studies conducted both on human and animal offspring of various species that confirmed the significant role of eye contact and touch in stimulating oxytocin production. Fascinating results were also achieved by Harry Harlow in an experiment with rhesus monkeys carried out in China and the *Goose Mama* study performed by Konrad Lorenz. Both studies show that the first experiences with mother's help build a child's emotional maturity. Already in the Renaissance, the Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro and the Spanish educator Juan Louis Vives emphasized the importance of the mother's behavior through which the child acquires knowledge of the world. Based on these studies and opinions, it can be concluded that Marion Cave's traumatic experiences during her pregnancy with Amelia and her postpartum depression had considerable influence on her daughter's sensitivity. The early childhood events could have affected her later relationship with her mother. The consequence of these circumstances was Amelia's emotional state, which was the driving force behind the mechanism of her melancholic poetic creation.

The reflection of the problems in Rosselli's initial mother-daughter relationship is not only the expression "empty mother" but also the phrase "diffetto di gioventù e di femminilità" that means "defect of youth and femininity"—both used in the same work. This phrase directs our attention to the impact of the relationship with her mother on Amelia's perception of herself as a woman. Adrienne Rich, American poetess and radical feminist, despite her strong criticism of institutionalized motherhood, emphasizes that the relationship with the mother is a fundamental element in shaping beliefs and attitudes. Both the phrase in which the poetess attributes negative qualities to her youth and womanhood, and the previously quoted epithet, like keywords, lead us through her poetry to the story of a woman who bears the lasting imprint of the imperfections of maternal intimacy during her life.

In the analysis of the poetess's morose temper, it is worth considering the impact of experiences that occurred before conception, in the context of DNA generation memory, and during Amelia's prenatal life. As previously mentioned, there are historical reports according to which Marion Cave was pregnant in prison. During this period, she was separated from her husband, who was also imprisoned. In these circumstances, it is worth reflecting not only on the physical discomfort, but more importantly on the dual stresses of her own situation and fear for the fate of her politically repressed husband. The results of American tests conducted using specialized equipment wired to pregnant women confirm that the mother transmits her thoughts to her unborn child. Nikki Bradford, in his book *The Miraculous World of Your Un-*

born Baby, cites evidence of telepathic communication between mother and child during the prenatal period[57]. It turns out that not only stress is passed on to the child, but also the events preceding the child's birth, even those that the family did not mention. This hypothesis was reinforced by the results of psychoanalytic sessions during which patients' family stories were analyzed. The phenomenon of gene memory, known also as post-memory, going far beyond the memory of an individual, also called inherited memory or memory of the second generation, is a term proposed by Marianna Hirsch. The case of the so-called witnesses-heirs can be found in the stories of children from traumatized families. So far, it has been argued that the concept of post-memory can only be associated with collective trauma such as the Holocaust. The research cited by Mark Wolynn in the work titled *It didn't Start with You* shows, however, that gene memory can pass on individual trauma to generations. In both cases, children from families experiencing a severe, unspeakable event demonstrated psychosomatic anxiety symptoms such as dyspnea, numbness, and the desire to get out of the chimney depending on the type of misfortune suffered by the previous generation. Both the above study and the experiences described by Anna Janko in the book *A Little Annihilation* allow us to analyze the expressions used by Amelia Rosselli in her poetry in the context of transmission of family trauma. An example that is worth studying is the epithet "inherited family trauma" from the poem "Diario in tre lingue" in the context of Amelia Rosselli's Jewish origins.

Moreover, assessing the melancholic creativity of Amelia Rosselli, it can be noticed that it serves as a process of auto-therapy. In the study *Free from Lies: Discovering Your True Needs* published by the previously mentioned Alice Miller, the author emphasizes the need to free herself from trauma.[58] Looking at some of the expressions used by the poetess, it can be assumed that Amelia Rosselli attempts to work her psychological problems through writing. The fragments written in four languages (Italian, French, English, and musical notation) offer hints that can be used in the poetess's psycho-emotional analysis. The starting point for such thesis is, for example, the phrases referring to the murder of her father and uncle, Carlo and Nello Rosselli: ZioNel, preceding the fragment: "La terriblelégende / descoupés-à mort en 17 pièces" written in "Diario in tre lingue" that in the very form of the diary constitutes an attempt of self-therapy.

Melancholy is fairly a general term expressing a state of permanent sadness. This state is wonderfully depicted in the engraving of the same name by the Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer. According to reports, Dürer created his work under the influence of his mother's death. The encrypted date of her death was read from the numbers in the magic square.[59] The concept of nostalgia, on the other hand, is even narrower and refers to a longing for something or someone. It can be a person, place, or period. The term itself comes from Greek and includes the word ἄ λ γ ο ς (*'alɣos*) meaning pain, suffering, torment, but also sorrow. Constantine Sedikides, the head of the team of psychologists at the University of Southampton working on the phenomenon of nostalgia, admits that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nostalgia was classified as a disease. This condition was accompanied by symptoms such as sobbing, irregular heartbeat, and anorexia. In the twentieth century, it was confirmed that nostalgia is a mental illness accompanied by insomnia, anxiety, and depression. In recent years, scientists have started to address the positive and even therapeutic aspects of this phenomenon. The term nostalgia has therefore acquired a new meaning.

[57] N. Bradford, *The Miraculous World of Your Unborn Baby* (Surrey: Contemporary Books, 1998), p. 33.
[58] A. Miller, *Free from Lies: Discovering Your True Needs* (New York: Norton & Company. 2009), p. 73.
[59] M. Bolaños Atienza, *Jak czytać sztukę* (Toruń: Buchmann, 2008), pp. 28–31.

The melancholic nature of Amelia Rosselli's work is enhanced by the element of nostalgia. The poetess's fragile soul was shattered by the loss of important people in her life. In her poems, nostalgia is expressed most by reference to the death of her beloved. Several poems were written in the memory of Rocco Scotellaro, an Italian writer, poet, and politician, struck down by a heart attack when he was only 30 years old. The poetess addresses the man directly in these poems without name, making part of *Primi Scritti*, trying to enter into a dialogue. It is also an attempt to evoke his presence. The fragment "ti presi fra le braccia, morto" ("I took you in the arms, dead") in a nostalgic style takes us to the moment of the man's death. The first part, "Dopo che la luna fu immediatamente calata" ("When the moon immediately fell down"), is a subtle introduction to the event. It shows a tragedy, a breakdown of the previous order in the life of a woman in love. We can find other traces of nostalgia in the poem "Tutto il mondo è vedovo…" ("The whole world is widowed") which belongs to the collection *Variazioni Belliche*. Rocco Scotellaro died in 1953 and the collection was written by Amelia Rosselli in 1960 and 1961 and published in 1964. Evident is the fact that the poetess uses an apostrophe when addressing her beloved:

Tutto il mondo è vedovo se è vero che tu cammini ancora
tutto il mondo è vedovo se è vero! Tutto il mondo
è vero se è vero che tu cammini ancora, tutto il
mondo è vedovo se tu non muori! Tutto il mondo
è mio se è vero che tu non sei vivo ma solo
una lanterna per i miei occhi obliqui. Cieca rimasi
dalla tua nascita e l'importanza del nuovo giorno
non è che notte per la tua distanza. Cieca sono
chè tu cammini ancora! Cieca sono che tu cammini
e il mondo è vedovo e il mondo è cieco se tu cammini
ancora aggrappato ai mei occhi celestiali.[60]

(The whole world is widowed if it is true that you are still walking
the whole world is widowed if it's true. The whole world
is true if it's true that you are still walking, the whole
world is widowed if you don't die! The whole world
is mine if it's true that you aren't alive but only
a lantern for my slanting eyes. I have been blind
since the day you were born, and the meaning of a new day
is nothing but night through your distance. I'm blind
if you are still walking! I'm blind if you are still walking
and the world is widowed and the world is blind if you are still walking
attached to my heavenly eyes.)

Although the two artists (Rocco Scotellaro also composed poems) were not married, the woman in love identifies herself with the word w i d o w . In this way, she describes in a nostalgic tone the world as seen through her eyes. According to British researchers, nostalgia plays the biggest role in the lives of older people who have lost their life partners. Longing becomes the mechanism used against loneliness. This thesis fits perfectly with the poet's life story of losing her partner, which resulted in the poems we can read today. "Nostalgia is an affliction with a long past, but also with an intriguing future" say the authors of the study carried out at the University of Southampton. They also emphasize a broader understanding of the phenomenon of nostalgia in order to look at the issues of memory, emotionality, and

[60] P.V. Mengaldo, op. cit., p. 1000.

social relations from a different perspective.

The influence of difficult, unworked life and generational experiences is the spiritus movens of Rosselli's use of intimate language. It is described by Italian critics as "lingua del privato"[61] and is characterized by a poem titled "Diario in tre lingue." This poetry results from psychological hesitation and immersion in life and everyday events —maintains Tatiana Bisanti, referring Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo's opinions. Further, the concept of "lingua del private" is described as a stream of consciousness—an intensely informal narrative style characterized by extremely private themes and linguistic informality. The issue of informal writing was already touched upon by Benedetto Croce, another Italian literary critic of the twentieth century. Then, this feature was assigned to feminine literature. Writing the way someone speaks, talking about feelings, being spontaneous and natural—the critic reserved these attributes for female artists who, in his opinion, are more predisposed to externalize emotions.[62] The personal literary space, as Amelia Rosselli points out, is also noticeable through the form of the diary in which the piece was composed. The poetess's confession seems to be an invitation to a deeper analysis of the private code:

Moi c'est le monde, les choses qui se passent –
le pouvoir de m'exprimer dans mon langage
inventé. Pas seulement la forme du journal mais
en premier lieu le lexique privés ont les
tentatives d'étendre le propre moi.[63]

(Me is the world, the things that happen –
the ability to express myself in my invented language
Not just the form of the diary but
in the first place the private vocabulary make
the attempt to express myself.)

If we consider the childhood years that Amelia spent discovering different linguistic codes, we see that in "Diario in tre lingue" she pursues the project of expressing herself in a more natural way, that is, through the freedom of thought. Consequently, Rossselli's linguistic code becomes the characteristic feature of her poetic style. "Diario in tre lingue" which means a diary in three languages, could be defined as a general exercise based on automation, and presented entirely through the use of space on paper. The arrangement of sentences or individual words, their logical connections, continuous returns, punctuation, and rhetorical issues are visible in the untranslatable poem written in three languages at each step:

.....
Generalmente pratico la Ritirata. La Serietà.
les araignées sensibles

ha il tatto di una tartaruga

Esthétique pour le Futur réalisée par des Moyens que trop bien
trop modernes

[61] Ibidem, pp. 993–1004.
[62] T. Bisanti, *Opera plurilingue di Amelia Rosselli* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2007), pp. 24–26.
[63] G. Spagnoletti, op. cit., p. 63.

imparar. Oroscopia
storia lingue
German (Grk. Latin texts): problem quantitative rhythm in
modern languages: Why not?

anche '600
see piedi term. irraz
study complexity construction of phrases (Latin, Proust,
Dante, Lautréamont; also

beginning of) l'heure Chinoise (se forcer d'aller au lit)
.....[64]

All these elements emphasize the fact that the reader enters an extremely private zone. Within it, the narrator reveals a challenge to organize the mixture of different languages. Indeed, "Diario in tre lingue" takes on the role of a notebook full of notes, forming the foundation of the concepts used in the creation of subsequent works. The work appears as a variation on a word (just like music-related variations, as in the compositions of Frédéric Chopin) and at the same time a daily mental exercise. The lexical variation applied to the field of languages results in a certain action: it starts from a node to later develop the concept and create new variants, where one language explores another. Rosselli admitted: "... why not twist phrases as you wish, why not invent words?"[65] The author, in fact, in "Diario in tre lingue" makes us note the rules for creating new untranslatable words:

(il n'est pas sorti il n'y a
pas de sang (fang) dans
la maison pourpre
poupine
poupéenue

(the com plete nonsense
con pleat non sense
con pleat 9° cence)[66]

In that way, Rosselli's creating process becomes very dynamic and closely psychological and instinctive. The continuous flow of the mind includes motives that return and build her poetic world, as well as enrich and modify her poetic language.[67] When we analyze Rosselli's other poems composed in the convention of multilingualism, we realize that each of these poems has been expressed through a single linguistic code. We see that the textual structure of "Diario in tre lingue" is an intertwining of French, Italian, and English which are constantly mixed. Being a mixture of many forms of communication, the work cannot be subjected to the process of translation. "Le Chinois à Rome" is a poem composed entirely in French and is one of the ten parts of the collection entitled *Primi Scritti.* In this work, Rosselli offers us a motif characteristic of her poems, in which fragments must coexist, excluding changes also on the linguistic level: "The creative process is a fusion of many not distinguished, not

[64] A. Rosselli, "Diario in tre lingue", in: *Primi scritti* 1952–1963 (Milan: Guanda, 1980), p. 72.
[65] La Penna 2013: 90).
[66] A. Rosselli, op. cit., p. 80.
[67] T. Bisanti, op. cit., p. 10.

separable elements: do not let your imagination go astray."[68] The expression "many elements" suggests the use of numerous communication systems, which, even if Rosselli's writing is characterized by automaticity, are practiced intentionally and depend on her mental state.

Summing up, Amelia Rosselli's relationship with Sylvia Plath and an inspiration with the American poetess along with her inclination towards confessional poetry should be mentioned. Given the literary elements linking the two women and the suicides in their own homes, Sylvia Plath may have been an inspiration to Rosselli in her writing and her decision of auto-destruction. Apart from the suicide in severe depression, the dates are also significant. The American poetess committed suicide by gas poisoning on February 11, 1963. Inspired by her work, Amelia jumped from the window of her Roman apartment on February 11, 1996 – the exact thirty-third anniversary of Plath's death.

[68] A. Rosselli, "Le Chinois à Rome", in: *Primi scritti* 1952–1963 (Milan: Guanda, 1980), p. 49.

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SUMMARY

In one of her many poetic motivation descriptions included in her literary works and comments, Amelia Rosselli points to tough-life experience as a factor influencing her artistic creativity. The Italian twentieth-century poet repeatedly emphasizes a direct impact of mental well-being as the driving force of her writing process. A gloomy flashback, hand in hand with a concept, experience, and fantasy, influence the expression of her pieces and structures the literary space. A minor overtoned reference to the grievous reality of Fascist Italy connected with the murder-for-hire of family members, sudden and premature death of her sweetheart and brother, mental illness in the context of the DNA memory, and, finally, the promise of suicide had all impacted noticeably upon the verses of her poems. Another thing worth mentioning is the issue of stress and hardships lived through by Amelia Rosselli's mother and her immediate relatives just prior to the poet's birth. According to the latest developments in medicine and cognitive sciences, any psychical damage influences bodily and mental functioning of persons not only directly affected by them, but also their descendants. The linguistic terms applied in the pieces of the Italian poet provoke a discussion of the phenomenon of post-memory. The term, which was proposed by Marianne Hirsch to refer to collective trauma inheritance, has been recently broadened by psychologists to encompass individual memory as well. The fragments written in four language codes (Italian, French, English, and music notation) offer hints to be used in the psycho-emotional analysis of the poet. Additionally, scrutinizing Amelia Rosselli's nostalgic lyrical pieces, we can discern, by referring to psychological sciences, how the composition-making can constitute an auto-psychotherapy procedure. In terms of interdisciplinarity, the experience of melancholy and nostalgia in Amelia Rosselli's artistic creativity covers the psychological, social, historical, cultural, political, and artistic areas.

KEYWORDS

nostalgia, depression, suicide, trauma, Amelia Rosselli

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The Role of Memory in Penal Sciences

Agnieszka Romanowska

The University of Bialystok
ORCID: 0000 0003 4365 4883

The ancient Greeks believed that memory was a gift from the beautiful goddess Mnemosine, daughter of Uranus and Gaia, belonging to the first generation of titans and a titanide. Nowadays, memory is understood and defined in many different ways. Memory is a multi-stage process consisting of the ability to register and recall data information. Memory processes are undoubtedly very closely related to emotions. They differ depending on the duration of the memory trace, as well as the type of information and the degree to which we are consciously involved in the process of remembering and recreating information. Due to the durability of the memory trace, ultra-short-term, sensory, short-term, and long-term memory are distinguished.[1] The type of remembered information tells us whether we are dealing with event memory, procedural memory, skills, or norms. The temporal properties, on the other hand, divide memory processes into the memory of current or past events and memory related to our intentions and the date of their execution. Among the processes of memory, conscious and unconscious memory is also distinguished. In my work, I would like to present a correlation between memory and penal science, focusing on interrogation techniques, the problem of child testimony and memory disorders.

According to social psychology, an interview is a process of interpersonal communication in which we deal with a two-way transfer of information and mutual interaction between people participating in it. The hearing is an activity carried out by a procedural authority, which is of an evidence nature. The main goal is to obtain information from the witness about the event, people, objects, and other phenomena that may help the judiciary find the way to the truth. The procedural authority conducting the hearing may not apply any pressure to the witness, nor may it influence the content of his/her statement. During the interview, it is also forbidden to use measures aimed at controlling the unconscious reactions of

[1] B. Bielski, „Gdy Sąd słyszy «nie pamiętam»", *Prawo i Prokuratura*, 2 (2005), p. 130.

the body without the consent of the interviewee or asking questions in a manner suggesting a specific answer.[2] The organization of the examination of a witness is included in the Code of Criminal Procedure. One of the newest techniques used in questioning a witness is so-called Cognitive Interview (CI).[3] Mnemonic techniques are techniques by which more information can be extracted from a witness' memory without increasing the number of errors. The basic principle of CI is to reverse the roles of the interviewees. In such a structured conversation, the interrogated person should not perceive the interrogator as the only one controlling the interrogation. The purpose of the cognitive interview is to improve the recall process and to improve the quality and quantity of information obtained from the witness. Currently, the cognitive interview uses four mnemonic techniques:

1. Recreating the context of the incident. This technique is intended to motivate the witness to recall all the circumstances of the incident and is directly related to the specific coding hypothesis. This point includes what concerns the witness's activity on the day of the event, his/her mood, thoughts, and emotions. The interviewed person is asked to remember not only the appearance of the place of the event, but also the sounds or smells associated with the situation, which leads to a significant improvement in the recall process.[4]
2. Full coverage. This technique allows the interviewee to recall as many details as possible. The aim is for the witness to play the role of the narrator in the story of the incident, encouraging him/her to continue his/her story from start to finish.[5]
3. Change of perspective. In this technique, the interviewee is also asked to describe what he/she thinks other witnesses of the incident or even the perpetrator himself/herself may have seen. This technique, however, is somewhat controversial and raises procedural doubts, because the witness ceases to report his/her own experiences and instead of his/her own observations, he/she cites likely descriptions of other people.[6]
4. Change of chronology. This is a way for a witness to respond too superficially. The use of chronology change causes the witness to look at each stage of the event as a separate part. This causes the recall of certain elements and circumstances that were not recalled in the original reconstruction of the context. This technique also verifies the truthfulness of the witness. Changing the chronology of events requires greater effort, which also causes greater difficulty in lying convincingly.[7]

During the cognitive interview, a witness is encouraged to report every detail, even if it does not seem relevant to him/her in any way. This detail can be a key information about the event that has occurred. It should be remembered that the effectiveness of the method applies to witnesses who are sincerely focused on cooperation and a witness present at the crime scene. Otherwise, the use of this method appears to be very limited. Research has shown

[2] D. Wilk, *Kryminalistyka – Przewodnik* (Toruń: TNOiK, 2013), p. 138.
[3] R.E. Geiselman et al., "Eyewitness Memory Enhancement in the Police Interview: Cognitive Retrieval Mnemonics versus Hypnosis," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70 (2) (1985), p. 401.
[4] M. Jagodzińska, *Psychologia pamięci. Badania, teorie, zastosowania* (Gliwice: Sensus, 2008), p. 454.
[5] V. Grudzień, W. Jasińska, *Przesłuchanie poznawcze* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Szkoły Policji w Katowicach, 2010), p. 8.
[6] A. Biederman- Zaręba „Wywiad poznawczy a przesłuchanie świadka w podeszłym wieku", *Prokuratura i Prawo*, 7–8 (2011), p. 36.
[7] M. Ciosek, *Psychologia sądowa i penitencjarna* (Warszawa: LexisNexis, 2001), p. 99.

that CI is generally not effective in improving memory in terms of identifying suspects in photos. Each person is unique, which is caused not only by an individual personality, but most of all by individual features of the body – especially the face.[8] Research shows that it is impossible to find fourteen people in the population, each of whom would be similar to each other. A human being is individualized by both inborn features and signs acquired during life – tattoos, scars, and sometimes even some pathological changes such as deformities, missing limbs, or humps.[9] Memorial portraits are widely used in the activities of law enforcement agencies – to identify and detain persons suspected of criminal activity. The police use memory portraits to select perpetrators of crimes, in cases, suspects' observations, excluding people from the circle of suspects, as well as for arrest warrants and registration in files.[10] These portraits are often posted in public places and in the media in the hope that someone will identify the perpetrators. Unfortunately, this is an extremely laborious process and does not always lead to the capture of suspects. Identifying people based on their faces is – apart from identification based on the characteristic features of the voice and the way they walk – one of the oldest and most basic methods. Nowadays, the memory portrait takes two forms – descriptive (drawing) and pictorial. The first one is a description of a person's appearance which includes a description of the features and proportions of the anatomical structure of the body – the type of figure, the shape of the head, face, and its individual elements, way of moving, etc. The description should therefore contain static features (e.g., age, sex, height, and silhouette), as well as dynamics (gait, facial expressions) and specifity (birthmarks, tattoos, or scars). A pictorial portrait is the most effective and the most refined form of a memory portrait. It is the transformation of a description (descriptive form) into a visual form.[11] Preparing a portrait based on a description given by a witness is an activity for detective purposes (sometimes also as evidence), but it is only possible if the witness remembers many details related to the appearance of the person. Compared to the expertise in other fields of forensics, a memory portrait is performed a few hours after the event due to the passage of time, which has a significant impact on memory traces. "Memorandum on the description of a person's appearance" includes two categories of information:

1. Concerning the conditions of observation: distance from the object, time of observation of the face and the time elapsed since then, place, and circumstances of the event (weather conditions).
2. Concerning the descriptive features: sex, age, height, body type, face shape, hair, eyes, eyebrows, nose, mouth, facial hair, and characteristic features.[12] At the end of the form, there is a witness statement that he/she is able to identify the person sought. However, experts point out that sometimes even listing all the required features is not a guarantee for the creation of a portrait, because there are people who, at the time of direct contact with the described perpetrators, were not able to recognize them. In practice, there are also many errors – the most serious one is showing the witnesses the photos just before taking the portrait, which makes

[8] K. Finger, K. Pezdek, "The Effect of the Cognitive Interview on Face Identification Accuracy: Release from Verbal Overshadowing," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84 (3) (1999), p. 340.
[9] E. Lewandowska, R. Wiśniewski, „Metodyka realizacji zleceń w Pracowni Odtwarzania Wyglądu Osób i Przedmiotów LK KSP", *Problemy Kryminalistyki*, 257 (2007), p. 39.
[10] S. Zubański, „Odtwarzanie wyglądu osób", w: *Kryminalistyka. Wybrane zagadnienia techniki*, red. G. Kędzierska, W. Kędzierski (Szczytno: Wyższa Szkoła Policji w Szczytnie, 2011), p. 164.
[11] Ibidem, p. 161.
[12] E. Lewandowska, R. Wiśniewski, op. cit., p. 44.

it much more difficult, and sometimes impossible (the witness is thus able to unconsciously describe one of the people he/she saw in the photos). Another mistake is to brainstorm a portrait in which all witnesses are involved simultaneously. In cases where there are several witnesses to the event, the image of the wanted person should be analyzed separately in order to eliminate suggestions of the others. In order to obtain as much useful information as possible, it is important to create appropriate conditions for witnesses – peace and a sense of security, sometimes ensuring the presence of a psychologist. However, you should not allow the presence of bystanders. In forensics, there are three methods of visualizing a descriptive portrait – drawing, editing, and computer. The drawing method is the oldest among them but still significant despite the huge technological progress.[13] It is based on the drawing by a cartoonist (the skill of a portraitist is required) of a face sketch on the basis of information provided by the witness during the creation of the portrait. This method does not require complicated technical measures – sketches are made with a pencil, crayon, or charcoal. A variation of the drawing method is the form of a shortened portrait, which does not focus on the details of the face, but only outlines its similarity. It is very often compared to caricatures (it consists of several lines). However, the negative side related to this method of visualization should be noted – it concerns the subjectivism of the cartoonist, who sometimes unconsciously imposes his/her own vision of the person at a time when the witness has doubts as to the details.[14] In Poland, this method is used quite rarely – it usually applies to cases where technical devices do not give the right results.

It is important to remember that there are several factors that can limit memory capacity. Physical and mental impairments increase with age. When memory problems occur in older adults, short-term memory is affected first, while long-term memory areas may remain intact. Memory deterioration is a natural consequence of the physiological aging of the nervous system. The brain, like the rest of the body, is also subject to change. An older person may have difficulty understanding oral or written statements, may have difficulty finding words, keeping the thread of speech, and may have a decreased vocabulary. There are problems with spatial orientation, even in familiar places or when returning home, difficulty recognizing objects, solving problems, exercising judgment, making decisions, managing money, shopping, or assessing situations. This can make it difficult to interview an elderly person as a witness or victim. Research shows that factors that protect against neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's disease, include keeping the intellectual activity as high as possible. This can be done by performing specific exercises that increase cognitive function.[15] Questioning an elderly person as a witness, suspect, or victim of a crime involves the need for comfort. The interrogation should take place in early morning hours and as close to the time of the incident as possible. Adaptation to the individual characteristics of the person being interrogated is a very important element of conducting the interrogation, because it is the

[13] J. Kabzińska, „Reprodukcja twarzy sprawców przestępstw na podstawie zeznań świadków – rysopis obrazowy i portret pamięciowy", *Palestra Świętokrzyska*, 5–6 (2008), p. 52.
[14] T. Kozieł, Z. Dębliński, „Portret obrazowy w identyfikacji i poszukiwaniu osób (stan i perspektywy)", *Problemy Kryminalistyki*, 197–198 (1992), p. 197.
[15] A. Bednorz, „Zaburzenia pamięci i funkcji poznawczych u osób starszych", http://www.zrozumiecstarosc.pl/artykul/zaburzenia-pamieci-i-funkcji-poznawczych-u-osob-starszych/ [access: 15.03. 2021).

way of directing the conversation and the ability to ask the right questions that determines the quality of the information obtained.[16]

On the other hand, interviewing a child can be a challenge. It is important to personalize the interview and establish a good rapport with the child, starting the interview with greeting the child by using his/her name, have an initial conversation about a topic that is not related to the possible conflict experienced by the child, e.g., questions about the child's interests or favourite leisure activities. Next step is explaining the purpose of the interview and also encouraging the child to describe anything that comes to mind when he/she thinks of it. This includes details that may seem trivial or repetitive. It is also helpful to remind your child not to guess or make up things that he/she does not remember. The context of the event can be reconstructed by directly asking the child to think about all the environmental and personal circumstances of the event or by asking specific questions that will make the child think about it. It is helpful to take brief notes and record topics that can be returned to when questions are asked. For a free-form narrative, ask the child to recount, in narrative fashion, his/her memories of the event. It is important not to interrupt the child during his/her free narrative, nor ask detailed questions at that time.[17] It is also a misconception that children do not have the same level of developed memory skills as adults. It is currently indicated that even a three-year-old can provide meaningful and complete information about past events. After a year, young children's memories are still accurate and, when asked in an appropriate way, can give a reasonably accurate description of events. It is also a proven fact that children, compared to adults, are more precise in remembering not only key facts but also details.[18] It cannot be assumed that a child is a less reliable witness than an adult. However, it is important to ensure that he/she is comfortable speaking up. If the child is a victim, he/she must feel safe, not afraid of the abuser, and importantly, not be interviewed in the presence of an offending parent.

Memory is inevitably accompanied by the process of forgetting. We all know that we sometimes forget facts, dates, or circumstances that are important to us. If we were not able to forget, our mind in a very short time would be cluttered with often useless information. Forgetting is a process as common as it is indispensable. Several theories of forgetting are mentioned in psychology. The oldest is the theory of trace fading, according to which each learned material leaves a trace in long-term memory, so-called engram. If we do not use such a trace, over time it will disappear, and the acquired information will 'escape' in the process of gradual decay of the engram. As a result, it is impossible to use such information because it is no longer in the memory resources. Undoubtedly, memory plays an important, if not the most important, role in the process of questioning a witness. It influences the perception of all correlative penal teachings.

[16] J. Konopko, „Metodyka przesłuchania osób starszych i wykluczonych społecznie – wybrane zagadnienia", *Gerontologia Polska*, 24 (2016), p. 301.
[17] T. Jaśkiewicz-Obydzińska, E. Wach, „Przesłuchanie poznawcze dzieci", *Dziecko Krzywdzone*. Teoria, Badania, Praktyka, 4 (1) (2005), p. 3.
[18] K. MacFarlane et al., *Przesłuchanie i diagnoza małego dziecka* (Warszawa: Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje, 2002), p. 22.

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SUMMARY

The ancient Greeks believed that memory was a gift from the beautiful goddess Mnemosine, daughter of Uranus and Gaia, belonging to the first generation of titans and a titanide. Nowadays memory is understood and defined in many different ways, sucha as multi-stage process consisting of the ability to register and recall data information. Memory processes are undoubtedly very closely related to emotions. They differ depending on the duration of the memory trace, as well as the type of information and the degree to which we are consciously involved in the process of remembering and recreating information. The aim of this paper is to show the importance of human's memory in penal science. Memory allows to recreate a so--called memory portrait with the help of a qualified police cartoonist or a computer program, the perpetrator of which the witness or the aggrieved person saw only for seconds. Such portraits are published through various means of communication, such as the press, the Internet, and television. They often cause the quick identification and apprehension of the perpetrator.

KEYWORDS

memory, mind, penal science