TRAUMA AND MEMORY IN SELECT WORKS OF MARGARET ATWOOD AND MARGARET LAURENCE

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature

By

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Declaration

I , Maya Nair , hereby declare that the thesis titled "Trauma and Memory in Select Works of Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence" is a bonafide research carried out by me, under the supervision and guidance of Dr. W. S. Kottiswari with Dr. Praseedha G. as the Co-Guide, and it has not previously formed the basis for any award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Palakkad. Maya Nair
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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled "Trauma and Memory in Select Works of Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence" submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a work of bonafide research carried out by Maya Nair under our supervision and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

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Maya Nair

Dedicated to

My Mother

‘In Memorium’

She shed no tears

But her agony

Fled to the clouds

Came down as rain

And cleansed us.

Thunder and Lightening

Was witness to her cries

She cried only in her nightmares.

Abbreviations of Titles used in the Thesis

AG	…	*Alias Grace*
S	…	*Surfacing*
T	…	*Trauma: Explorations in Memory*
TD	…	*The Diviners*
TSA	…	*The Stone Angel*
UE	…	*Unclaimed Experience*

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

This thesis, titled "Trauma and Memory in Select Works of Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence," is a comparative study of remembrances, forgetting and traumatic memories. The novels selected for the study are *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood, and *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* by Margaret Laurence. Memory, an essential ingredient in these fictional works, is one of the narrative tools that helps build the plot and portray the characters. The umbrella theme of survival through trauma, or painful, disruptive memories in the select works of Atwood and Laurence is discussed with the help of trauma theories.

The Chapter, titled 'Introduction' projects mankind's fascination for and preoccupation with discourses that engage both remembrances as well as forgetting. Selectivity of memory, multiplicity of memory, false memory, amnesia, suppression and nostalgia as survival strategies, provide the vistas of analyses attempted in the study.

The studies undertaken by Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Anne Whitehead, Annette Kuhn, Bessel A van der Kolk, Onno van der Hart and Marianne Hirsch provide the theoretical framework for the study. The template of markers of trauma viz alienation, insecurity, guilt, betrayal, violence, insecure childhood or loss of parents/ loved ones create a pattern of negative events that disrupt the coping abilities of the characters.

The second chapter, titled 'Haunting Silences: *Surfacing*' reveals the negation of trauma through suppression and distortion, hallucination and fear. The young

protagonist is confronted by memories of her native land that surprisingly instils anxiety and discomfort.

The third chapter, titled 'Labyrinth: *Alias Grace*' depicts traumatic experiences re-engaged through memory. The selective amnesia resorted to becomes problematised in this fictionalised version of history.

The fourth chapter, titled 'Cascading Memories: *The Stone Angel'* is a study in nostalgia. The past superimposes on the narrative as remembrances and redefines the anxieties regarding the present. Growing distrust and insecurity reflect in the novel.

The fifth chapter, titled 'Memoryscapes: *The Diviners"* is a study on episodic recollections. Laurence finds the past unwinding through 'snapshots' and 'memorybank' episodes. A re-evaluation of one's past happens through a quest through the 'mind map' of life.

The Conclusion compares the evolution of the empowered protagonists in the novels analysed through their inner quests to the pasts and in reconciling their memories to aid survival.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This last isn't something I actually saw, but what you end up remembering isn't always the same as what you have witnessed. We live in time- it holds us and moulds us– but I've never felt I understood it very well…… Some emotions speed it up, others slow it down; occasionally it seems to go missing – until the eventual point when it really does go missing never to return.

Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending*

Memory Studies: An Overview

Memory, according to mythology, is a gift of Mnemosyne, the mother of the Greek Muses. Mnemonic techniques were integral to oral storytelling, which required a systematic practice of remembering that would enable complex narratives to be passed on through varying historical epochs, from generation to generation, before graphical writing made it possible to encode the stories in script. Plato considered memory as perceptions or ideas imprinted on a block of wax, which would lose clarity over time as they gave way to newer imprints of memories. The metaphor allowed subsequent recall, which could be passive or active. The unreliability and instability of memory has always offered rich possibilities for creative writers, who plumb the intricate workings of the process of human memory. Multiple and simultaneous versions coexist often in a narrative, denoting the plurality of memory, rife with contradictory and contesting impulses that complicate the act of remembering.

In her pioneering work on *Memory*, Anne Whitehead discusses the inscriptions ranging from Plato's wax tablet to mnemonics and finally to writing. While John Locke advocated the notion of spatial metaphors of memory as a 'storehouse', Hegel termed it as a 'pit', and Pierre Nora referred to '*lieux de mémoire'* or 'site of memory' (Rossington, Introduction 4). She discusses the chain of associations and memory prompts, as they appear in the works of Benjamin, Rousseau and Wordsworth. Though it was John Locke who pointed out that memory constructed one's identity, it was Benjamin, Rousseau and Wordsworth who argued that recollection or retrieval arose from associative recall. In continuation, attempts were also made to differentiate memory as a recollection and forgetting as a lapse. This gave rise to various discussions concerned primarily with the collective forgetting of history. The selective remembrances that history often contained also provided possibilities for gaps, distortions and erasure. Paul Ricoeur's phenomenal work, *Memory, History and Forgetting* (2004) insisted forgetting as "an integral part of remembering" (Rossington, Introduction 12).

Whitehead observes that 'body memory' evokes visual and other sensual associations. If in the writings of Proust, "involuntary memory sequences respond to the senses of taste, touch, hearing and smell, but notably not to sight", Wordsworth's poems "place an overwhelming emphasis on the role of the visual in the memory process" (*Memory* 12). Visual memory remains a powerful trigger tool that aids in constructing 'memory sites', a term that Pierre Nora coined to denote the location of memory among social groups. Memory sites include archives, museums, and memorials and represent the symbolic heritage of a community. Today, Memory Studies provides interdisciplinary critical lenses to examine social, cultural, cognitive, political and technological shifts affecting what and why of how individuals, groups,

and societies remember and forget. Memory is a critical tool, which has proved to be of crucial significance to Holocaust studies and Postcolonial studies. Both remembrance and forgetting formulate history, and memory as a construct becomes a social conditioning tool which helps form an identity.

Paul de Man remarks that "Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching, at last, a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure" (qtd. in Terdiman 132). The difficulty in attempting new beginnings, after being freed from the past, is founded on Marx's famous comment that "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (180). The preoccupation with memory in the writings of Fredrich Nietzche, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, and Marcel Proust accounts for the notion of "memory crisis" that Terdiman posits, which eventually evolved into contemporary trauma theory.

Memory studies, an interdisciplinary area, is an enquiry into how past is represented, altered or/and understood. Media and Memory, Transcultural Memory, Narrative and Memory, Life Stories, Memory and Identity, Memory and Archives, Holocaust Studies, and Trauma Narratives are areas that have been garnering increasing academic relevance. The focus of Memory Studies has expanded to focus both on the collective and individual memory in public discourses. Trauma is often regarded as a modernist ailment, and the preoccupation and interest in trauma across various disciplinary subjects become a post-World War II experience. It is reflective of the fragmentation and collapses linked to post-war social structures as well as the growing individual alienation.

The surge in theoretical studies about memory came when memory shifted

from the impasse of merely being the storehouse of knowledge or being just a party to the practised rhetoric of habit memory, to encompass an area that offers a multitude possibilities. Today, there is a profusion of autobiographical or life writing, war memories, trauma narratives and memory sagas, which complement an increasing body of theoretical analyses of how trauma works. Trauma has assumed the central focus in Memory Studies as the term has moved away from being an instigator of malaise to that of an underlying ailment.

Trauma and Memory: An Overview

Trauma as a construct can be both an event and a reaction. According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), trauma occurs when an individual suffers actual or threatened death or serious injury. However, it can also be a reaction to an event involving intense emotions, such as fear, helplessness, or horror. APA adds that "witnessing an event in which another individual is seriously injured or killed or learning about the violent death or injury of a close friend or family member may also be considered traumatic" (Diagnostic APA). According to the *Oxford Living Dictionary* trauma is defined as "a deeply distressing or disturbing experience." Trauma traces its etymology from the Greek word *trau* the extended form of root word *tere* which means 'wound.' Trauma can be both the wounding of the self or the other or witnessing the wounding of the other.

In the 'Introduction' to 'Trauma', Annie Whitehead remarks that Sigmund Freud's conceptualisation of trauma, like Walter Benjamin's understanding of modernity, "figures the consciousness as besieged and disrupted by alien, external forces" (187). In his 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', Freud shifted the function of awareness from the conscious level to the preconscious—an area between the

conscious and the unconscious — which aided in censoring memory or was the first line of defence against external stimuli.

The meticulous understanding of memory and trauma was made possible with the sometimes complementary or contesting theoretical contributions of Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896), Sigmund Freud's *A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'* (1925), France A Yate's *The Art of Memory* (1966), Maurice Halbwach's *The Collective Memory* (1980), Pierre Nora's *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoir* (1981), Mary J Carruther's *The Book of Memory: A Study in Medieval Culture* (1990), Annette Kuhn's *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (1995), Cathy Caruth's *Trauma and Experience* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Anna Reading's *The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust: Gender, Culture and Memory* (2002), Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith's *Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction* (2002) and Dominick La Capra's *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (2004).

It was the post-Vietnam war period that saw a resurgence of interest in trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with its initial moment of focus on the Holocaust. Judith Lewis Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) highlighted childhood sexual abuse and domestic violence, shifting its paradigm to include the gender perspective of trauma. However, it was Cathy Caruth with her *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) who rejected Freud's argument that trauma relived the event stored in the preconscious; instead, she suggested that traumatic experience "is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (8). She questioned whether traumatic experience could belatedly become present, and eventually be relegated to the past and consigned to memory. Caruth, according to Anne Whitehead, emphasises the incomprehensibility of trauma as a "'fundamental

dislocation' which challenges our received notions of memory, experience and the event itself" (Introduction, Trauma 189). Following Caruth's study, trauma not only addressed the Holocaust but also became associated with issues both at a collective and individual level.

Richard Crownshaw, in his 'Trauma Studies', defines trauma as "that which defies witnessing, cognition, conscious recall and representation – generating the belated or deferred and disruptive experience of the event not felt at the time of witnessing" (167). He credits the work of Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in the 1990s for paving the way for the emergence of trauma studies as a separate discipline. Quoting from Felman and Laub, Crownshaw attests to the significance of the role of the listener as evident in Laub's definition of testimony as "an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, despite the overwhelming and compelling nature of its occurrence" (172). The listener is included in the testimony as it is s/he who becomes "the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time" (179).

In 'Notes on Trauma and Community', Kai Erikson mentions that the "classic symptoms on trauma range from feelings of restlessness and agitation at the one end of the emotional scale to feelings of numbness and bleakness" on the other end (183). Traumatized people often scan the surrounding world anxiously for signs of danger, breaking into explosive rages and reacting with a start to ordinary sights and sounds" (183). Erickson, on trauma, adds:

> All that nervous activity takes place against a numbed grey background of depression, feelings of helplessness, and a general closing off of the spirit, as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm. Above all, trauma involves

> a continuing reliving of some wounding experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and is a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances. (183-184)

Analysing the terminology of trauma, Erikson states that it refers not to the injury inflicted, but to the blow that inflicted the injury; not to the state of mind that reflects it, but to the event that provoked it. He remarks that "constellation of life experiences as well as discrete happening, from a persisting condition", can cause trauma. He adds that it "can issue from a sustained exposure to battle as well as from a moment of numbing shock from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as a single shearing assault, from a period of severe alteration and erosion as well as from a sudden flash of fear" (184). Trauma can convert "that one sharp stab of pain into an enduring state of mind" (185).

Erikson also highlights the social isolation a traumatic victim faces by stating that "to describe people as traumatized is to say that they have withdrawn into a kind of protective envelope, a place of mute, aching loneliness, in which the traumatic experience is treated as a solitary burden that needs to be expunged by acts of denial and resistance" (186). Withdrawing into oneself makes one a social recluse, even as, at other times, it prompts one to seek others affected similarly and forge a form of fellowship. He mentions that sharing of collective traumatic experiences like the devastating flood in Buffalo Creek, the defrauding of the 200 migrants in Florida, or the underground gasoline leak in Colorado makes unconnected persons in the community seek one another and develop a fellowship which he calls "a gathering of the wounded" (187).

In contrast to trauma narratives wherein memory is a coded enigma that may

provide the key to the continued trauma in the present, memory narratives, on the other hand, involve life writing, memoirs and fiction that make use of memories, traumatic or otherwise. Writing a story and recollecting memories share a similarity. They both involve selection, omission, editing and, at times, attempt at justification. Traumatic memories or memories overloaded with painful incidents become problematised in their appropriation into the confines of a narrative. Storytelling or narrating one's own story depicts the mixing of memory with desire. Falsification of a narrative or forgetting becomes a crisis as the narrative attempts to recreate the past. There is a multiplicity of narratives about the same event or eventual accommodation of a narrative that seems more plausible.

Memory becomes a chisel with which authors sculpt their work, albeit in different ways and perspectives. Each work of fiction uses memory to shape the plot, and it becomes an integral part of the authorial technique. Use of language, ordering of time, space and relationships help forge memory and its role in the quest for salvation. In an interview with Margaret Atwood at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2016 (Appendix i), Atwood maintained that each novel constructs a past within a narrative — a past that fills the details — the background of the protagonist and others. Memory, she opined, is integral to plot construction in every novel, and it is only in detective novels that the childhood details and thus the use of memory as a filler of past details can be termed redundant. However, in the present study, the memory that Atwood declares to be fundamental to any work of fiction is also seen to have a pivotal role in espousing the trauma that otherwise eludes understanding. The study seeks to compare two novels each from Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence. In Atwood, the reconstruction of the past aids in addressing the lost, forgotten and buried trauma, whereas, in Laurence, the traumatic or painful event in

the present helps trigger the past and its memory.

Memory theories of trauma, identity, gender, collude to provide the framework that posits the novels. The pre-traumatic pasts are reconstructed through memories, the traumatic manifestations are revealed in the narrative and finally trauma is worked through and aids survival. Similar to the tragic flaw in a tragedy, a fractured psyche exists to absorb the trauma and lets it coexist in its dormant mode. The study also proposes to compare the role of both remembering and forgetting in the select novels of Laurence and Atwood through the past-present nexus in the storytelling that reflects trauma through time and space, victimhood and resolution of identity. The progression of the narrative culminates in a cathartic cleansing of trauma, acceptance of the pasts and the protagonists finally emerge forgiving themselves as also the world. *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* of Margaret Laurence and *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* of Margaret Atwood are the novels that are discussed. The central concern remains on the lives, relationships and identity of the characters that emerge through the interplay of both remembrances and forgetting.

Margaret Laurence (1926- 1987) who was the pioneering novelist of the twentieth century, brought global acclaim to Canadian literature. She grew up in the small prairie town of Neepawa, Manitoba. As she lived during the times of the Depression, its harshness provided the background for her later 'Manawaka' novels. After her marriage to Jack Laurence in 1947, she moved to England, then to Somalia and Ghana and returned to Canada only in 1957. In 1954, she published a collection of translations from Somali poetry and folk tales. East Africa inspired her to write her first novel, *This Side Jordan* (1960) and the stories in *The Tomorrow Tamer* (1963). After five years in Canada she returned to England in 1962 and wrote the Manawaka books, which include *The Stone Angel* (1964), *A Jest of God* (1966, filmed as 'Rachel,

Rachel'*), The Fire-Dwellers* (1969), the story-cycle *A Bird in the House* (1970) and *The Diviners* (1974). Canadian schools banned the last novel because of its explicit sexual scenes, a fact which angered her much, but it won the Governor General's Award, as *A Jest of God* had done previously. She later returned to Canada. An open-hearted, friendly woman, she was a writer in residence at Toronto University (1969-70) and went on to write stories, children's books, and a study of African literature. She was completing a volume of memoirs when she passed away.

Margaret Laurence's early life in the prairie town of Neepawa, Manitoba, Canada and her long apprenticeship with writing for college publications and local newspapers honed her skill as a writer. Following an early decision to be a writer, Laurence launched herself into a writing career as a local newspaper reporter in 1943. After graduating in 1947 from Winnipeg's United College, she became a reporter for 'The Winnipeg Citizen'. Africa sparked her imagination: deeply influenced by her appreciation for Africa and its storytelling traditions, she translated Somali poetry and folk tales, collected later as *A Tree for Poverty* (1954). Her writing during this period reflected her Christian faith and ethical dilemmas about living as a white colonist, and issues related to the minority to which she too belonged. Her empathetic identification with exploited Africans transformed her youthful idealism into a mature understanding of their cultures. Her interest in African literature continued with her memoirs of the Somaliland years, *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963) and culminated in a critical study of Nigerian literature, *Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists1952-1966* (1968). In the meantime, she had begun to focus on Canadian themes and concerns as well.

For a while, she lived in Vancouver, and moved to London in 1962, after being separated from her husband. *The Stone Angel*, the first of Laurence's

"Manawaka novels" was published in 1964. Her memoir, *Dance on the Earth* was published posthumously in 1987. A recipient of the 'Order of Canada' and three-time winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for fiction, Margaret Laurence is one of the most influential figures in women's literature in Canada. She was also a founder of the Writers' Trust of Canada, a non-profit literary organisation that still is active in encouraging Canada's writing community.

Margaret Atwood (1939 -), Canada's critically acclaimed writer who is a novelist, poet, story writer, essayist, and eco-feminist activist, has to her credit more than forty books of fiction, poetry, and critical essays. Globally recognised as a writer par excellence, she is the recipient of many awards and accolades, including the Booker Prize (awarded twice to her), the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and the Governor General's Award (which was awarded twice to her). She had debuted as a poet in the 1960s with her collections *Double Persephone* (1961), which went on to win the E.J. Pratt Medal, and *The Circle Game* (1964), which won a Governor General's award.

Atwood's enduring concern with female experience began as early as *The Edible Woman* (1969) continued with *Surfacing* (1972), *Life before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981), and *The Handmaid's Tale (*1985). The female characters become more ambiguous and complex in *The Robber Bride* (1993) and *Alias Grace* (1996). Atwood's varied genius was in full form in what she called "speculative fiction", as demonstrated by the ultra-religious dystopian horror of *The Handmaid's Tale,* followed by the novels of scientific dystopia and environmental disaster *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009), *MaddAddam* (2013), *The Stone Mattress* (2014), *The Heart Goes Last* (2015), and *Hag-Seed* (2016), a novel revisitation of Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest', are recent additions to her rich oeuvre. *Testaments* (2019) a sequel to *The Handmaids Tale* won the 2019 Booker

Prize.

Atwood had based many of her novels on historical evidence and documents and had predicted frightening scenarios which are currently being played out in varying degrees in different parts of the world. Atwood's fictions also chart the complexities of relationships among women and interrogate on how they internalise patriarchy and remain complicit in perpetuating a male order. Her foray into historical fiction in *Alias Grace* remained woman-centric, exploring the complex psychological schisms triggered by trauma, desire, power relations, rendered all the more intriguing because of the ambiguous moral terrains the book charts.

Atwood won the Booker Prize for the multiple narratives of *The Blind Assassin* (2000), gaining a recognition long overdue for all her novels which are, ultimately, about the affirmation of humanity, its sufferings and survival through traumatic, sinister scenarios, both imagined and otherwise. The activist in Atwood has espoused causes as varied as feminism, environmentalism, human rights and social justice, and many of them form the threads animating her fictional narratives. Her *Testaments* which won her the Booker Prize in 2019 prophesies a disintegration of the dystopia that she visions in *The Handmaid's Tale*. She has remained a strong champion of distinct Canadian literature and identity. In *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), she argues that the secondary role thrust on Canada by its powerful neighbour, America, has made Canada a victim, which had to come up with its coping mechanisms to survive the domination. In response, Canadian literature has always oriented itself towards survival, as amply testified by Atwood's writing.

The unmatched range of Atwood's writing showcases her historical

exploration of the 21st century economy which is grounded in its history of lending, borrowing, and debt as in *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth* (2008). She has also examined the craft of writing through the lecture series*, Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (2002), and essay collections such as *Moving Targets: Writing with Intent,* 1982-2004 (2004) and *Curious Pursuits: Occasional Writing*, 1970-2005 (2005). The fraught relationship between the binaries of art and life, self and other, man and woman, and natural and human constructs that she explored in these collections would become many of her abiding concerns in subsequent writings. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale, Cat's Eye* and *Oryx and Crake* were shortlisted for Booker Prize, but it was *The Blind Assassin* that won Atwood the 2000 Booker Prize. *Alias Grace* won the Giller Prize in Canada and the Premio Mondello in Italy. Her female characters are often lonely, suffering, exploited selves trying to break free of stultifying male power structures, weighed down by the codes of silence and complicity that their foisted roles impose on them. However, they are seldom passive victims. The resistance and anguish of women who remained misinterpreted, marginalised, bullied, and bruised were reflected in Atwood's writings.

Surfacing and *Alias Grace* of Margaret Atwood and *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* of Margaret Laurence are the novels selected for the study. The lives, relationships and identity of the characters are highlighted through the use of the interplay of both remembrances and forgetting. Philosopher Jean Francois Leotard who argued with regard to collective memories especially the Holocaust testimonies rightly observes "If there is a history of remembering, there is also a politics of forgetting" (qtd. in Langer 193).

In Greek mythology, Lethe, the river in Hades, symbolises the purgation of worldly memories. It is in Lethe that memories vanish into oblivion in the journey

post-death. Forgetting becomes a necessity as the bonds and bondages get erased in the act of finality. It is similar in the case of trauma, as the experience urges to forget. Both the novels *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* of Margaret Atwood are studies in forgetting and trauma. Forgetting that manifests directly in *Alias Grace,* also reflects as misremembrances in *Surfacing*. The forgetting of the event, its traumatic manifestations, and the narrative about the past conjoin to disturb the lives of the protagonists in the novels. The childhood, the upbringing and the past render the storytelling a cathartic overtone.

Surfacing tells the story of a young artist who returns to the land where she grew up in order to locate her father who is termed missing. This journey provides a platform for the collage of memories that intertwine to reveal an alternate story of a suppressed trauma. The narrative which incorporates the technique of an interior monologue succeeds in revealing the isolation and the storytelling of past experiences that continuously happen in our mind. The conflict of the past and the present and the journey through memories reveal the past trauma that lies buried, an unknown event to the protagonist-narrator herself.

Alias Grace, on the other hand, is based on Atwood's reflections on Susanna Moodle's famous portrayal of Grace Marks, an accessory and a convict in the much-deliberated case of double-murder of 1843. The sixteen-year-old Grace assigns amnesia to the day of the murder, and her selective amnesia becomes problematic in court as well as with the public. With few supporters believing her story of forgetting, multiple accounts of narratives emerge. Atwood uses the plethora of information that was available from historical records, newspaper and media, scrutinises it and selects from it as in the working of the process of assimilating and recovering memory. Atwood quilts the story of Grace by mixing and matching and filling the gaps in the

new narrative. In her 'Afterword' to *Alias Grac*e, Atwood writes: "When in doubt, I have tried to choose the most likely possibility, while accommodating all possibilities wherever feasible. Where mere hints and outright gaps exist in the records, I have felt free to invent" *(AG* 542).

On the other hand, Laurence creates a fictional world Manawaka— a prairie landscape that connects through memory. Her world is made up of remembrances that she would like to recollect or avoid. Absorbing the attributes of the prairie and the small-town narrative, Laurence spins twin worlds that act as a foil to one another, with both the protagonists seeking, at one point in their lives, a life away from Manawaka. Meanings extend beyond linear and spatial boundaries. The construction of different worlds gets erased as the protagonists realise that their memories combine the narratives of their different worlds into a master narrative. Memories merge, and narratives overlap, providing no accessible escape routes.

Unlike in Atwood, the descent into memories in Laurence is consciously worked out as both in *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*. The narratives weave the lives of the protagonists in linear and chronological order. The protagonists in both the novels leave Manawaka in search of independence and identity and soon realise that Manawaka remains with them through their varied and myriad memories that they are unable to forget. It is through confronting the tenacity of the memories in *The Stone Angel* or divining them in *The Diviners* that the shades and overtones of traumatic memories get revealed. The fiercely independent Hagar of *The Stone Angel* and the writer Morag of *The Diviners* realise that memories act as a harbinger to their inability to understand what went wrong with their lives. They need to address their memories and only then will able to resolve the crisis that engulfs their lives.

The Stone Angel presents one of Margaret Laurence's most memorable characters in Hagar Shipley, the ninety-year-old protagonist. The travails of ageing reflect in her growing insecurity and fear of the unknown. The endeavour to eclipse the terrors of the present is managed by engaging with the known — Hagar's past. However, as she shuffles through her remembrances, Hagar finds herself seeing the past through an objective lens that makes her perceive her story differently. Circumstances force her to listen to narratives from different persons and she finds herself looking at life from different perspectives. Her remembrances reveal painful memories that Hagar has managed to hide behind a veneer of pride and dignity. Ageing confronts both her pride and dignity and despite her being staunchly independent she realises that her world slowly crumbles. All she has with her is her handful of memories and nostalgia for the past. It is her engagement with her memories that finally allow her to accommodate her present predicament and bring her the much-needed peace and self-acceptance.

The Diviners, the last of the sequel of Manawaka series, depicts the confrontation of the past that remains unacknowledged by the protagonist Morag Gunn. Narrating her story through photographs and memory bank movies, Laurence captures the revision that the past undergoes as an act of falsifying the interpretations. The trauma that becomes the causative element is remediated and acknowledged in the deciphering and analysis of the past narrative. Places become the symbol of association of memories and running away becomes an attempt to obliterate the travails of the past. The novel charts the landscape with the river being the central symbol connecting both past and present. Morag remembers being a daughter herself and finds herself inadequate as she tries desperately to be a good mother to her daughter Pique.

Borrowing the binary of remembrance and forgetting to graft onto individual memories, the memory sites and the memory gaps conjoin in the re-enactment of traumatic episodes and heighten the horrific implications of both remembrances as well as forgetting. Trauma manifests in subtle ways and creates chaos within an individual in all the works under study. Trauma presents itself as a problematised personal choice between the act of affirming and negating of the event or between knowledge and ignorance. Traumatised victims are incapable of comprehending the visions, fragmentation and the despair that plague them. Confronting and overcoming the shattered self happens only with their acceptance and understanding of the root cause of the abhorrence in their living.

It is to be noted that in the studies involving Holocaust survivors it was the reversal of roles from that of victims to that of witnesses that enabled the survivors to narrate their story. For instance, Michael Richardson's article 'Every moment is Two Moments' is a survivor narrative and addresses collective memory. However, it analyses the Holocaust victims not as survivors but as witnesses. The article highlights *Fugitive Pieces* as a novel that theorises on the poetics of trauma. Narrating the past is not an easy task especially when it is entangled with a suppressed, repressed or unknown traumatic memory. The multiplicity of remembrances, at times, vie with the impossibility of remembering. This becomes worth noting in the context of analysing amnesia in *Alias Grace* and in the surprising clarity of memory of past events as time flows in *The Diviners*.

The amalgam of real and unreal memories colludes in these narratives, revealing traumatic pasts, expressed through fragmented, distorted and even false memories. The works of both Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence reveal traumatic events amidst the travails of mothering, the evolution of an artist and

through unfathomable meta-narratives of parallel lives within the self. Trauma manifests in its latency with age as well as the delayed intensity of reminiscences necessitating a reordering of memories to overcome the pain of surviving. Hysteria, hallucinations and failure in understanding reveal the state of chaos within. Pretence and confusion need to give way before they can recreate hope and confidence in their lives. Forgiving themselves becomes crucial as trauma accompanies hurt and guilt at their inability to cope with a very adverse event in their lives. The progression of the narrative culminates in a cathartic cleansing of trauma and the acceptance of the pasts, with the protagonists finally emerging to forgive themselves and the world.

It is through the lens of trauma theory that the lives of the protagonists of the above novels are viewed. Trauma here is individual and manifests itself in the memory of the protagonists and the narration of their lives. However, the unreliability of memory is associated primarily with the conflict in resolving trauma and the emerging catharsis. The role of both remembrances and forgetting in the course of the narrative provides the impetus – the crutches — to outlive the memory gaps, distortions, re- enactment, confusion, chaos and alienation with society and family.

However, in the context of analysing both *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* and Laurence's *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* in terms of memory theories and those of trauma, it becomes worthwhile to have an overview of the various studies that have addressed the four novels. Much of the research on works by Margaret Atwood are through thematic, post-colonial, feminist and ecological concerns. Novels like *Surfacing* have been read as a quest narrative and as a novel with concerns in language dissociations. *Alias Grace* has also had many critical reviews ranging from historiographical metafiction to a study in psychological textures, with quilting, insanity and narrative techniques also integrated into it. Surviving too becomes a

central concern in all of Atwood's studies. Other works of Atwood, such as *Cat's Eye,* have also dealt with the topic of trauma and memory. Atwood's recent novels are read as prophesying visions of dystopia and the alienated woman. Nature also has found resonating implications with many of the novels read as highlighting eco-centric advocacy.

Laurence's works cover areas relating to themes, readings, particularly on motherhood and memory. Place-based identity also has been a topic of interest as all the novels of Laurence centre in the fictional prairie landscape of Manawaka that she created. Time becomes a part of the linear narrative she adopts, and the concerns affected by prairie lifestyles reflect in the topics in the critical works. Memory becomes an essential concern as she employs 'memorybank movies' and 'snapshots' as a narrative technique in *The Diviners*. Time, space and identity collude to reflect the anxieties of the past with the vagaries of the present.

In an interesting article "'Violent Stillness': Photography and Postmodernism in Canadian fiction," Lorraine M. York mentions that postmodernism is a photographically conscious movement and that modernism is not. Photography, Lorraine says, can be considered in a novel to reflect the reality. She comments that Margaret Laurence's novel uses memory and consciousness as the structural element of her fiction using modernist theories (199). In *The Diviners*, Morag views photographs as totems, which represent the framing of fragments of life. Lorraine's comments on the use of photographs as a continuum of "the memory bank movies" and "snapshots" in Laurence's *The Diviners* and as episodes narrated using the pictures framed within the mind as in *The Stone Angel* is significant. The culture-specific treatment of photographs by Laurence is illustrated with an example of one of the characters— Jules from *The Diviners,* a Metis— refusing to be photographed

(196). Laurence portrays photographs as foreign to the Metis culture. The photographs and their narratives reveal only the world of Morag and never that of the Metis. The lives of the Metis remain outside the frames of popular narratives. York also highlights how Hagar in *The Stone Angel* retreats into her room wherein her "photographic memory" lets her rewind to her past (195).

An interesting concept of 'mindspaces' finds mention in Ben P. Cecil and Lynn A. Cecil's "Memory and place-based Identity of Elderly in Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* and Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel"*. They construct and extend the theme of spaces in terms of alienation and lack of confidence that make the lives of the elderly painful. The life experiences of the elderly are examined from the context of time and place-based identities. The self within and outside conjures the individual at two levels— one at the level where there exists a connection with the geographical space, and the other wherein the person remains a passive spectator in the remaining journey in life. How places define a person and how time enhances the affinity with spaces is discussed. However, the article comments that with age, the bond between spaces and the mind, both spatial and temporal, transform. The nostalgia reclaims one's identity, and it is by using the lens of the past that the elderly live. This article in *Prairie Perspectives* is relevant to the study for it examines how the elderly try to occupy a time that is past in order to overcome the vagaries of the present. The study also examines the impact of spaces internalised and externalised. Ageing alters memory and thereby heightens the alienation and becomes causative of trauma. The imagined 'mind spaces' shrink and the emotional connection with spaces grows. The argument of 'shrinking spaces' that the aged occupy is extended to look at the shrinking relevance the aged find themselves in the course of living.

However, in the present study, photographs appear both in *Surfacing* and in

The Diviners as a prime construct of the narratives. The photographs try to capture the story of the past by freezing the time within its frames. It is through weaving a narrative from the photographs that memory mixes with desire and falsification happens. And instead of forgetting, therein exists an unconscious attempt to replace a memory gap that occurs due to the non-registry of a wounding experience with a false memory.

Jonathan Daniel Sabol, in his 'Memory, History and Identity: The Trauma narrative in Contemporary North American and British fiction' portrays the contradictions of the limitations of the narrative form to depict traumatic violence as opposed to the attempts to represent trauma. The thesis investigates five novels (which include Atwood's *Alias Grace*) which have traumatic amnesia as its theme. He concludes that the narratives of reconstruction always remain unfinished. He argues that an attempt to narrate trauma only succeeds to distort, dilute and misrepresent it. However, in the present study, the effort is to locate traumatic resonances in the past as well as in the present of *Alias Grace* and Dori Laub's theory of witnessing becomes one of the theories that is predominantly used to analyse it.

Dr Laurie Vickroy, a renowned academician and writer on trauma in literature, in her *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* defines a trauma novel as that which uses an assortment of narrative innovations, such as landscape imagery, temporal fissures, silence, or narrative omission. She adds that a nonlinear plot or disruptive temporal sequences are used to emphasise mental confusion, chaos, or contemplation as a response to the experience. Fictional works on traumatic experience and its representation have appeared by creatively reworking the testimony of the Holocaust, Vietnam, and incest, as well as postcolonial analyses of the psychic costs of colonisation and racism. She opined that the writers who used

"this mode include Toni Morrison, Marguerite Duras, Larry Heinemann, Jamaica Kincaid, Pat Barker, Dorothy Allison, and Edwidge Danticat, among others" (2). It is to be noted that Vickroy considers first the frequency of trauma represented as a multi-contextual social issue. Secondly, the coping mechanism of "dealing with loss and fragmentation in our lives" is seen as problematised. Thirdly, the narrative reflects the fears that the reader nurses within himself. Moreover, finally, the dilemma of the relation between the public and the trauma victim is revealed. She summarises that "fictional narratives aid readers to access traumatic experience" (1-2).

Vickroy depicts how devastating trauma can be on individuals by elaborating on the psychology of fear. In her *Reading Trauma Narratives: The Contemporary Novel and the Psychology of Oppression,* individual trauma again is correlated with negative social forces. Here, she focuses on the novels by Margaret Atwood, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, Jeanette Winterson and Chuck Palahniuk. The novels of Atwood that are taken for the study are *The Blind Assassin*, and *Alias Grace* wherein she focuses on power relations and personal trauma. She also analyses the multiple, split narrative strategies in the novels. She uses the psychological theoretical framework and also views the gender, economic exploitation, and class/race identity. The multidisciplinary approach is exemplified and the work has been commented as "a welcome addition to the study of trauma literature, and the representation of the traumatized character in literature" (Bauson *Review*).

The above studies provide a vista to the varied ways in which memory engages a work of fiction. Memory and identity become a crucial factor in the above articles. Traumatic memory also positions itself for scrutiny. However, the thesis tries to discuss the prime traumatic incident along with the narrative consisting of the pre-traumatic phase and also analysing the working through of traumatic memories. The

focus remains on the coping mechanisms which make up the survival strategy.

The theories of Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Anne Whitehead, Annette Kuhn, Bessel A. van der Kolk, Onno van der Hart, Marianne Hirsch and Paul Connorton aid to validate the traumatic implications and the survival strategies in the study. The four categories of survivors elucidated by Margaret Atwood also find mention in the study. Analysis of the world of trauma, remembrances and forgetting form the framework for the thesis. The thesis proposes to examine the traumatic experience in terms of belatedness, incomprehensibility, fear, dreams, visions and hallucinations, photographs, heightened alienation, associative and trigger moments as features connected to traumatic memories. The inhibitors remain as determining constructs, and the survival and coping strategies evolve through the narrating of the experiences through participating in the witnessing of the reminiscences and addressing the memory gaps.

Cathy Caruth, in her 'Introduction' to *Unclaimed Experience,* depicts trauma as "the wound and the voice." She surmises the horror of trauma by quoting Freud who in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' narrates the story by Tasso about Tancred and his beloved Clorinda. Tancred does not recognise Clorinda who is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight and kills her. His tragedy intensifies while in a strange magical forest, he slashes a tree with a sword and blood streams from it with a voice of his beloved crying that he has hurt her yet again. Caruth also comments on the repetition of the act as well as the hearing of the voice that bemoans Tancred's action. This witnessing of a past event through the voice that laments the hurt reinforces the trauma. Caruth terms the trauma to be a "double wound" -- a wound on the body as well as engraved in mind. This wound remains elusive to the consciousness and reiterates through "nightmares and repetitive action of survivors." The haunting of the

pain bears a referential to a "forgotten wound" (*UE* 1-5). This parable, Caruth testifies, is at the centre of Freud's writing on trauma. Trauma bypasses the stages of mediating with the self and enters by bypassing the negotiations that generally affect other experiences. Hence, according to Caruth, it remains outside the zone of understanding. The delayed appearance of truth and the linkage to the unknown makes it enigmatic.

The traumatic experience also enlists a constant mediation of "an unbearable nature of an event" and is the story of the unbearable nature of its survival. The trauma reiterates with the heightened pain of having survived while remaining a spectator to the wounding and listening to the pain of another. This witnessing of the pain that remains negated for some time returns to haunt and contributes to the enigmatic core of the traumatic experience wherein the suffering remains silent and beyond understanding. Trauma is seen both as a departure and a return and Freud terms it the period of latency. "The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all" (*UE* 17).

In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* Caruth discusses the issues surrounding the false memory syndrome (FMS) and that of adopting different approaches to enlist the aid of listening to different traumatic stories. She has included writers from varied fields ranging from psychiatry and neurobiology to literature and film. Caruth deliberates that the trauma victims "recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection". She states that "what returns in the flashback is not simply an overwhelming experience that has been obstructed by later repression or amnesia, but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness." The history of a flashback:

> literally has no place, neither in the past, in which it was not fully experienced, nor in the present, in which its precise images and enactments are not fully understood. In its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that is constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence. (152-153)

For the survivor, Caruth adds the repetition or the re-enactment of the event lies in conveying "*the incomprehensibility"* (153). Caruth proposed the theory of 'inherent latency' which is a prominent feature of any trauma narrative, as much as the "collapse of understanding" (7) is a crucial tool in understanding trauma. Caruth echoes Freud in insisting that the trauma victim is unaware of having undergone the trauma. Freud considers the trauma of the reliving of the incident, whereas Caruth considers trauma as the shock of confronting an incident that had never registered in your consciousness at the time when it happened. Moreover, trauma is elusive as it cannot be appropriately placed in a particular slot of your remembrance unless you recognise the trigger and comprehend its relevance to the gap that you never knew existed (7-8).

Caruth, in her 'Recapturing the past: Introduction', agrees with Freud's suggestion that the traumatic event "occupies a space to which willed access is denied" (152). She mentions that amnesia for the past becomes a paradox when confronted with "the vivid and precise return of the event". She quotes from the study of John Krystal that there "are a number of *temporal paradoxes* that occur in patients with PTSD [One is that] recall of the actual trauma may often be impaired, whereas patients may re-experience aspects of the trauma in the form of intrusive thoughts, nightmares, or flashbacks" (152).

For the survivor of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension. The flashback or traumatic re-enactment conveys, that is, both "*the truth of an event,* and *the truth of its incomprehensibility*" (153). However, this creates a dilemma for historical understanding, for as van der Kolk and van der Hart suggest, the amnesiac re-enactment is a story that is difficult to tell and to hear that "it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody: it is a solitary activity" (153).

Time and space evoke similar survival strategies or coping mechanisms, and this becomes the focus of the study. The multi-layered positioning of trauma is fathomed by incomprehensibility. The varied features of trauma like indecisiveness, witnessing and language are also discussed. However, in the study, witnessing becomes a trope in all four novels that are being studied. It is through witnessing that each narrator survives. Laub's theory of witnessing becomes one of the vital theoretical frames in the thesis.

Dori Laub, the Trauma theorist, details three levels of witnessing an event, particularly about the historical experience of the Holocaust. The first level, according to Laub, is that of being witness to oneself. The past and its memories that are collected stand testimony to you witnessing yourself. The second level is listening to others who have traumatic experiences and witnessing them through a participatory process and in reliving the event. The third level lies in a juxtaposition of the two, where the witnessing itself is witnessed. The narrative of the other and the listening of the self—both appear through the third dimension of witnessing. The three distinct features of witnessing, Laub categorises as 'My position as Witness', 'The Imperative

to Tell' and The Impossibility of Telling' (61-68).

Listening becomes a construct along with witnessing. The narrative extends beyond listening to visualising in mind's eye. The narrator or the witness reaches out to the reader, and the reader inevitably becomes a continual witness who gathers the totality of not only remembrances but also of the forgetting, the overlappings as well as the voids that need to be guessed to connect the narratives into a meaningful whole.

Memory by Anne Whitehead examines the historical purview of the development of the construct of memory as both remembrance and forgetting. Memory is discussed as a mode of inscription, as a construct of the self, as an involuntary association and as collective trauma. An overview of memory as a concept that lends different meanings in different ages is highlighted emphasising the need to view memory as recall, association, as anamnesis and as forgetting. The importance of forgiving and forgetting gain importance in the future trajectory and direction of memory studies.

The "disruptive impact" of trauma becomes the focus in Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart's paper *'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma'.* They quote Pierre Janet's study of how memories aid survival by making mental constructs of how to make sense of experience:

> It is only for convenience that we speak of it as a "traumatic memory". The subject is often incapable of making the necessary narrative which we call memory regarding the event; and yet he remains confronted by a difficult situation in which he has not been able to play a satisfactory part, one to which his adaptation had been imperfect so that he continues to make efforts at

adaptation. (160)

The imagined past is poetically restated by Edward O. Wilson that "the brain is an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern. Since the mind recreates reality from the abstractions of sense impressions, it can equally well simulate reality by recall and fantasy. The brain invents stories and runs imagined and remembered events back and forth through time" (as qtd. in Caruth *T* 171).

In 'Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction', Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith have tried to define gender and cultural practices about memory. It constitutes how identities happen with recalling of a "shared past that is based on common norms, conventions and practices." Also, what a "culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender." Identity according to Hirsch is "a story that stretches from the past to the present and the future, that connects the individual to the group, that is structured by gender and related identity markers [….]" (225). Hirsch also the term "postmemory' as that which denotes memory transmitted to the next generations. It enables people to absorb cultures and recreate memories of the experiences of the earlier generation.

Annette Kuhn, reconstructing events through memory in her Family Secrets and mentions that "Family secrets are the other side of the family's public face, of the stories families tell themselves, and the world, about themselves. Characters and happenings that do not slot neatly into the flow of the family narrative are ruthlessly edited out" (231). Kuhn also opines that family secrets lie undisturbed and are shaped by the traces of memory that have within them an extended network of meanings.

These are “derived from private (family photographs) and public (films news photographs, a painting) bring together the personal with the familial, the cultural, the economic, the social and the historical.” Memory is characterised, comments Kuhn, “by the fragmentary non-linear quality of moments recalled out of time” (232). It also is about varied “connections between memory and the past, memory and time, memory and place, memory and experience, memory and images, memory and the Unconscious” (233). Memory reveals, according to Kuhn, by drawing aside “veils of forgetfulness,” and becomes a “potentially interminable” enquiry as there is always something yet to be remembered (233). One can never have the totality of memory as it always comes with gaps.

Paul Connerton, British Social Anthropologist and Memory Studies expert, distinguishes seven types of forgetting that affect society. *Repressive erasure* associates to totalitarian regimes wherein historical memory is deliberately and forcefully erased. *Prescriptive forgetting*, on the other hand, is acknowledged as conducive to the public interest and reflect in peace treatises that try to erase the memory of the divide. Forgetting also help *forge a new identity* with an emphasis on a new set of “tactically shared silences” (63) that accompany a cultural change. Forgetting as *structural amnesia* which Connerton attributes to John Barnes’ (1947) study of genealogy is the remembrances that constitute our markings of the desired socially significant pedigree which erases the undesirable or deficit information. Forgetting is seen as an *annulment* where it applies to a surfeit of information that makes weeding out the unnecessary imminent. Information excess makes forgetting the collapse of a paradigm or aids a paradigm shift. In the capitalist system of communication, Connerton observes forgetting as *planned obsolescence*. Consumer desire drives planning, and short-term goals remain the focal element. Discarding the

past consumer behaviour becomes the natural culmination and extends it to the redundant world of forgetting. The seventh type of forgetting that Connerton describes is that of a "covert, unmarked and unacknowledged" (67) marking of forgetting as a *humiliated silence* (67). Memory exhibits the past through ravaged monuments and memorials in a post-war scenario. However, war testimonials conveniently forgot the narratives associated with shame and humiliation. The memorials referred to the dead and not to the survivors who bore the devastation of the war.

The thesis attempts to extend the above analyses of societal forgetting by Connerton to incorporate the individual lapses of memory too. The intervention from society, family and others can lead to 'repressed erasure' of traumatic experiences or the norms of societal conditioning may prompt a "prescriptive erasure' to overlook trauma and allow its registry. In forging a 'new identity', many traumatic memories are suppressed to carry on living. There can be 'structural amnesia', multiple remembrances that lead to a diffusion of memories and forgetting becomes a natural extension of this 'multiplicity'. False memory or falsified memory may also emerge. 'Short term memory' may overlap, and the long-term ones get disremembered. Finally, a memory can exist within an individual as a repressed or suppressed state as the 'humiliation' and bury it to the world of forgetting and void.

In *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature,* Atwood talks about four basic victim positions visible in the Canadian literature. The first is of a victim who denies being one. The second accepts the victimhood and assigns it to be beyond control. The third acknowledges being a victim but does not consider it to be inevitable. The fourth and final position is of a creative ex-victim. In the study, the protagonists are victims of both at individual and social contexts. The empowerment

of the characters happens when they seek to arrive at the position of an ex-victim.

Laura S. Brown discusses the definition of a traumatic event which must have occurred for this diagnosis to be considered by the clinic practitioner as defined by the American Psychiatrist Association: "The person has experienced an event that is outside the range of human experience" (250). She quotes from *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM III R) of the APA that the characteristic feature of trauma includes, "re-experiencing symptoms nightmares, and flashbacks; avoidance symptoms, the marks of psychic numbing; and the symptoms of heightened physiological arousal: hypervigilance, disturbed sleep, a distracted mind. However, first and foremost, an event outside the range of human experience" (Brown 100).

Marcel Proust, the French novelist, critic, and essayist is best known for his monumental *In Search of Lost Time* (translated earlier as *Remembrance of Things Past*) is a seminal work on memory, published in seven parts between 1913 and 1927. Proust is associated with the concept of involuntary memory. Whitehead quotes from Proust that the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, "like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest for their moment; … and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection" (Whitehead *Memory* 107). Nostalgic memory finds its zenith in Proust's imagery saturated work.

The mystic writing pad or *wunderblock* of Freud made up the concept of memory – of overwriting, erasure and yet retaining traces of the inscriptions. Benjamin alludes to an optical device providing entertainment to children with a series of images that constitute the 'thumb cinema' that almost recreates the world of the fantastic. Memory reflects a totality of inscriptions wherein every moment

contains the gain of selective imagery as well as a loss or hiding of certain others — the authorial use of memory in the narratives in the portrayal of traumatic experiences and survival tropes. Emotional scarring in childhood or a troubled or a vulnerable psyche becomes the pre-traumatic framework that presents a multi-layered memory narrative to resonate with themes of victimisation and survival. The realistic depiction of fissures in social adaptability and identity formation highlight the dilemma of the character and project this into the public interface. Ageing and trauma -- both with its varied problems—occupy the modern milieu with increasing alienation and isolation patterns. The narratives attempt to incorporate public crisis and portray the nuances of how isolation, violence, loss and alienation endanger coping mechanism

The reduction of memory into traces verging on oblivion is manifest with forgetting becoming an eventuality in the cases where the traces of memory are never located observes Esther Leslie, a scholar in aesthetics and philosophy. She states that "forgetting is all there is and memory becomes too distant a memory" (184). However, it becomes noteworthy that as Freud's mystic writing pad-- the *wunderblock* -- reveals the erasure of the traces is always incomplete and there exists a retention of the traces of images. The *wunderblock* is a toy that helps retain only traces of writing and aids as a writing pad. Consisting of translucent paper, celluloid and wax, it portrays the writing with a stylus onto it till the paper once when lifted removes the trace of writing and becomes blank. It facilitates continual overwriting although faint traces do remain that slowly get erased. Freud draws a parallel to memories which go missing.

Leslie also refers to the thumb cinema that intrigued Benjamin, which point to a "series of rapidly passing images, strung together into an illusory continuity." She mentions Benjamin's version of the 'afterlife' of the moment of taking a photographic

image and the similarity of processing such frozen images in the darkroom of the mind. The optical unconscious makes photographs or films or audio recording a mediating experience wherein absorption with the unconscious takes place. Time-lapse, enlargements, occurs within the unconscious and continues in its 'afterlife'. She states that it is perhaps "the catalytic power of a word, a sound, a smell, an echo from the past into the present that helps them develop. Memory glimpses a set of flickering images that are bound up with the moment of recognition, a moment which may come unbidden or be extracted forcibly" (178)**.** The world of animation also becomes a representative of how memory-- its imprints and its erasure -- testifies. Esther quotes animator Norman McLaren as manipulating multiple images while merging the different frames of drawing as in a thumb cinema.

Shoshana Felman, literary critic, analyses testimonies in narrative literature in her "Education and Crisis, or the Vicssitudes of Teaching". She evaluates narrative and testimony in Albert Camus' *Plague* and confession and testimony in Fyodor Dostovsky's *Notes from the Underground* as also, the psychoanalysis and testimony in Sigmund Freud in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, poetry and testimony in Stephane Mallarme, and finally in life testimonies by analysing screening of two testimonial tapes of the Fortunoff Video Archive consisting of Holocaust survivors telling their stories. The narration of trauma becomes a therapeutic exercise and validates the breaking of silence and confrontation of the past.

Trauma traces its root to the past. However, the dysfunction of the defence mechanism occurs in the childhood wherein social estrangement, death of parents and witnessing of violence become a framework wherein trauma thrives. Instead of merely assigning the traumatic experience to a forgotten and buried moment, or a moment experienced in the present belatedly as theorists of trauma agree, the study of

the novels proposes to argue that the fundamental traumatic initiation happens in the past much before the prominent traumatic event in the narrative. Shades of alienation, withdrawal symptoms, or rebellious nature all point to a differential in accommodating the world within and outside.

The study attempts to portray why a character remembers or forgets, either consciously or unconsciously and also how both real and false memories negotiate with trauma. Revisiting and reframing pasts through both episodic and associative memories aid deeper understandings of the past and help in overcoming the inherent trauma. The narratives in the novels construct and validate pre-traumatic paradigms of alienated and problematised childhood, loss of a loved one, witnessing violence or betrayal. The study intends to focus on the similarities and differences in the fictional world of the above authors on how memory shapes survival through traumatic memories in the narrative, through its contextualisation of time and space, victimhood and finally to empowerment by resolution of identity.

The second chapter, titled 'Haunting silences', depicts traumatic experiences reengaged through memory. It discusses *Surfacing* of Margaret Atwood as trauma revealed through suppression. The narratives of false memory or distortion in *Surfacing* remain a testimony of how trauma disrupts living. Trauma is visible in the course of the narrative, especially with the fear of the unknown, hallucination and hysteria presenting itself in the novel. *Surfacing* reveals negation of trauma through suppression and distortion, although finally, the trauma resurfaces with higher intensity.

The third chapter, titled 'The Labyrinth' depicts traumatic experiences Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* reengaged through memory. Forgetting remains

questionable until the very end of the novel and retains its traumatic structure. The buried trauma revisits through surreal images of hysteria, identity disassociations and hallucinations retracing the self-imposed isolation that has its root in their hitherto forgotten and sketchy past. The selective amnesia becomes problematised in this fictionalised version of history wherein quilting becomes symbolic of holding the threads of memory together.

The fourth chapter, titled 'Cascading Memories' discusses Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* as a study in nostalgia. Ageing becomes synonymous with solitude and reminiscences. The trauma of being old, weak and dependant allows the past to flood in with memories. The past superimposes on the narrative as remembrances and redefines the anxieties regarding the present that the protagonist experience when they recall the past. Growing anxiety, distrust and insecurity reflect in the novel.

The fifth chapter, titled 'Memoryscapes' discusses Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners as* a study on the episodic recollections. Laurence finds the past unwinding through snapshots and memory bank episodes. The travails of relationships, and worlds, within and without, reflect through remembrances. It is the memory that transverses geographical space as well as spaces and niches crafted through time. A re-evaluation of one's past happens through a quest through the 'mind map' of life.

The sixth chapter, Conclusion, compares the evolution of the empowered protagonists in both the authors through their inner quests to the pasts and in reconciling their memories to aid the living. All the protagonists resolve their multiple version of multi-layered memories with their inner and outer selves. The erasure of alienation and assimilation and acceptance of self ensures their working through

traumatic pasts by narrating their life story. Memories aid in determining the identity of the protagonists and their urge to survive.

Memory enlists both remembrance and forgetting. However, the painful memory or traumatic memory becomes a framework that aids analysis. Through the vistas of trauma and memory, the narrative strategy employs varied features that indicate the pain, the helplessness and the inability to recognise the root cause for the discomfiture which is symptomatic of a trauma victim. The three-pronged viewpoint viz. memory, trauma and witnessing form the schematic design that aids in resolving the identity crisis that engulfs the protagonists in each of the narratives. The study also locates the awakening of trauma in the phase located before the happening of the traumatic events and subjects them to scrutiny. The pre-traumatic phase also bears significance in letting the trauma heighten an already scared psyche. The scars of childhood or formative period reveal the same ingredients of having been witness to that outside of memory. The lost or hidden memories emerge on the prompts that trauma and the trigger associations facilitate. These markers and scars of the pre-traumatic phase also need to be addressed in order to work through trauma. However, Atwood and Laurence experiment with the narrative by using different approaches to resolve the dormant, traumatic or painful event in their lives. In the select novels, Laurence relies more on reminiscences while Atwood portrays more of distortion or suppression in depicting trauma.

Traumatic experiences emerge in a narrative through trigger associations based in the present and redefine living through either remembrances or forgetting. Memory remains a link between the past and the present and acts as a catalyst and a cathartic tool expunging traumatic memories. It aids forgetting or acceptance of painful reminders that remain dormant within. Memory becomes therapeutic and

attempts to amend the alienation and isolation that pervades the lives of the protagonists. Surviving becomes an important keyword in the study that also balances it with the concept of witnessing. The study investigates the need to develop a coping mechanism in dealing with trauma through a socially inclusive strategy with unburdening the trauma through narrating the past.

Chapter 2

Haunting Silences**:** *Surfacing*

> *I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.*
>
> Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*

Psychic breakdown and depiction of trauma through fragmented narrative and language marks Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. Many works have critically reviewed the novel against cultural, religious and identity theories and postcolonialism. Analysing it in the light of trauma theories of Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub would be a new departure. A reordering and validation of memory in the novel enable it to be read as a narrative of a traumatic incident and its suppression through substitution by a false memory. *Surfacing* depicts the story of an unnamed narrator who is accompanied by her boyfriend, Joe, and a couple Anna and David. The narration takes place as an interior monologue and traces the journey of the protagonist to a remote island in Quebec to search her father who is reportedly missing. She reclaims the past as she returns after nine years to the landscape that once was her home, but she finds her narrative broken and reflecting the visible signs of trauma. Her

alienation, need for isolation, fear and hallucinations represent a hidden hitherto unknown traumatic experience. The narrative memory aids reflection by the creation of an internal witness and becomes instrumental in developing the coping strategy when confronted with the traumatic memory. The internal witness who views the interior monologue, its hesitations and gaps, finds the dilemma of the broken narrative, multiplicity of versions and the improbability of situations eventually lead to questioning of the past that hitherto was not subject to such scrutiny. Witnessing becomes a crucial tool in developing the survival paradigm that connects the works under study.

Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson remarks that survival has always been the central theme to all of Margaret Atwood's works. She considers *Surfacing* as a palimpsest text– "a text that is layered over with meanings that erase and disrupt the picture that the reader receives" and explains that in the terminology of an art, "a palimpsest is a parchment that has been partially erased and then painted or drawn over with another image. As the piece of art ages, the first image can bleed through, creating a new, hybrid image" (33). It is noteworthy that the erasure and the false images become extensions of the multiple inscriptions that blur the traces of the happening. This multi-layered meanings, inscriptions, erasure, and traces of inscriptions resemble Plato's wax tablet that was explained earlier.

Atwood in *Surfacing* highlights the predicament of women along with issues of nationalism, ecology, consumerism, art, history, identity and politics. Fiona Tolan's critique of the novel extends the thematic positionings to include self, guilt and innocence. The quest for the narrator's missing father becomes the quest for her missing memories -- a quest to retain innocence and isolation associated with her idyll childhood. The narrator identifies herself not as a survivor, but as a victim of social

degeneration of the times. The novel, seen as a fantasy, attempts to reclaim "the primitive self, a primitive land unpolluted by experience" (55). The quest motif of *Surfacing is* highlighted in several other works. *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* mentions *Surfacing* as a quest, not for the idyllic world of childhood, as Tolan argues, but instead for the repression in the narrator's past and the associated cultural inhibitors being overcome with the literal regression into an animal state of the narrator.

On the other hand, literary theorist, critic and editor Barbara Godard comments on the narrative as an archetypal retreat into the irrational and in contact with native and Quebec cultures before integrating with society. She views the novel as a conflict between technology and nature. The novel with the central metaphor of drowning and surfacing, becomes a quest for self-realisation in *The Bloomsbury Dictionary of English Literature*. However, Cheryl Mary Quintal sees the quest in the novel as a symbolic representation of the search for self as well as Canada's cultural identity. Gina Wisker, alternatively, sees *Surfacing* as a quest for identity as well as for her missing father. In *the Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English,* Petra Utta-Rau surmises *Surfacing* to be a Bildungsroman as Atwood has advocated for emancipation and liberation as well as letting the reader rewrite the open-ended narrative. Most of the commentaries on *Surfacing* highlight the need to link the personal and social responsibility of women to the negation of being a victim. Atwood's theory of victim position detailed in her *Survival* evoked great interest as the novel appeared in the same year. Kate Fullbrook, on the other hand, sees the novel as a going "back through memory and madness until she reaches a point of nullity from which she can begin to reconstruct her identity" (611). John Ferres, however, mentions the novel as a psychic survival in an unstable and manipulative

world. The novel has thus been viewed as a survival testimony through disintegration and final assimilation of self.

However, the present study attempts to extend the conflicts mentioned in the above works to work through the traumatic past by addressing the novel as a typical trauma narrative. It provides a new approach to view the novel as one that contains a traumatic incident that has never been registered in the consciousness of the protagonist. The defence strategy makes a plausible explanation for not visiting the narrator's parents, homeland, or dare revisit memories. *Surfacing* reveals that the trauma and guilt of abortion and the suppression of the experience becomes central to the schema. The narrative combines two parallel stories of the unnamed protagonist yoked through an interior monologue. The narrative primarily charts the journey to the land where she grew up as a child in search of her missing father. At a secondary level, it becomes a quest within her attempting to make sense of her remembrances. The markers in the landscape help her recall childhood memories and as the memories return, the narrative that constructs the past becomes an ordeal for her.

The revisiting of the hometown reminds the narrator of a series of lost images of childhood. The trauma buried in her revisits her through hallucinations, fear, confusion and a premonition of there being something wrong which, predictably, heightens her alienation and her urge to locate what she recognises as her anxiety about her missing father. The trigger that prompts associative memories and active recall happens when the narrator chooses to return to Quebec, her home town and enters the once-familiar landscape and the narrative begins on a note of disbelief at the return to her past -- "I can't believe I'm on this road again" (*S* 3). The narrator regrets returning home and is gripped by a fear of the unknown as the paradox lies in the fact that the territory is not alien to her, but it is she who is alienated from it. The

alienation heightens in her inability to bond the memories of her past with the images of the present and finally, increases her sense of unbelonging.

Alienation remains one of the characteristic features of trauma and the breach in relating to the narrator's hometown reveals a deeper malaise of being estranged from the family and land. As the narrative progresses, the protagonist, who is also the narrator, recognises some of the landmarks that is retained in her memory. She recollects the tearing down of the bridge three years before she left and the building of a concrete bridge "which is here now, enormous, monumental, dwarfing the village" (30). Her appraisal of the intrusion of tourism into the wild and destruction of nature finds resonance with Atwood's environmental consciousness and implies the erosion of bonds among people, as also between humankind and nature.

Significantly, the alienation and insecurities of the present remain in contrast with her childhood reminiscences. The narrative reconstructs her childhood and reveals a lack of comprehending the adult world of war, bombs and concentration camps as Hitler used to be reduced to games she and her brother played. She was enthused by the fanfare of leaders roaring at the crowds, "flags rippling in time to the anthems" (19). Later, although her brother had suggested that there was something terrifying about Hitler, she states at "the time it felt like peace" (14). It is only in retrospect that she realises that meanings had eluded her.

One aspect that Cathy Caruth elaborated on trauma is the inability of a trauma victim to recollect. The victim of trauma has to wrestle with making sense of the meaningless fragments of the past that is always accompanied by a sense of helplessness or fear or terror. The narrator's alienation and isolation become predominant as only sporadic remnants of memory remain. Typical of a trauma

victim, she is unable to comprehend and understand the voices or images of the pasts — the narratives of the past and the present merge to provide a new version of estrangement. Her alienation from the past has been deliberately cultivated, but it merges with the present heightening an unknown terror and fear that resonates in the landscape and her relationships with others. The dam that overpowers and the dilapidated church, all point to a weakening of the forces around her, as also her fragile relationship with her friends. She finds herself terrified of the vandalism of Nature represented by the dam, of the ruins of the church which served as a grim reminder of the past she did not want to remember and of her growing distrust towards her friends.

It is to be noted that the narrative offers paradoxical versions as the narrator highlights that she would not have made the journey if not for her friends. "I like them, I trust them, I can't think of anyone else I like better, but right now I wish they weren't here. Though they're necessary: David's and Anna's car was the only way I could make it….. They're doing me a favour, which they disguised by saying it would be fun, they like to travel" (12). She realises that her friends could never fathom why she was returning home as they had disowned their parents and were unable to relate to her attempt to search for her father. "They all disowned their parents long ago, the way you are supposed to: Joe never mentions his mother and father, Anna says hers were nothing people, and David calls his 'The Pigs'" (13). The narrator gets immersed in her thoughts and is soon unable to respond to what she perceives as the trivialities and hollowness of her friends' behaviour. As events unfold, we realise that there is no bonding among them.

The death of her mother reveals as a submerged memory from which she distances by leaving her hometown as an escape route for pursuing a career as an

artist. However, her drawings lack originality and the submissiveness that she projects while working on her canvas finds resonance in the pictures in the scrapbooks she had drawn while a child. She says, “I have a title though, a classification, and that helps: I'm what they call a commercial artist, or, when the job is more pretentious, an illustrator” (49). The conforming nature of self seems in contrast to the narrative when she talks of a divorce and a child she left with the estranged husband. The violence and destructiveness that she enjoyed in playing games shouting ‘Hail Hitler’ and in tormenting insects reveal in her a person capable of pretence. Her memories imply her guilt at enjoying destroying things when she was a child as she recalls the tearing up of their doll, mutilating it and throwing it into the river. Earlier it was the animals that she and her brother killed while playing war games. She realises that deep down she too had the destructive streak and that frightens her. She remembers her fear of her brother, who was angry with her for letting the animals in his laboratory out from their jars into the lake. He trapped other animals and changed the place where he stored them. She never dared to let them out again although she realised that it was because of her fear “they were killed” (132). These memories implicated her as an accessory to the killing and acted as a prelude to her suppression of the memory of the abortion she underwent.

The intensity of the insecurity that accompanies trauma is evident as the narrator confesses:

> I have to be more careful about my memories, I have to be sure they're my own and not the memories of other people telling me what I felt, how I acted, what I said: if the events are wrong the feelings remember about them will be wrong too, I'll start inventing them, and there will be no way of correcting it, the ones who could help are gone. I run quickly over my version of it, my life,

checking it like an alibi; it fits, it's all there till the time I left. (70)

It can be construed that her inability to narrate or recall without editing her memories makes it impossible for her story to be told. Her story is being validated even before being told, and this only serves for the traumatic memories to remain silent and continue to haunt the narrator's behaviour.

The unreliability of the past narrative becomes a concern as the narrator discovers forgetting of varied events that were contained in the picture albums and the scrapbook. The socially acceptable conformity revealed in them stands in contrast to the inhibitions, silences and her thoughts that she does not share with her friends who accompany her on her trip to her hometown. This image that she has of herself is projected as she attempts to narrate her life story through a phantasmal of visions, colours and vivid descriptions. Her drawings were neat and disciplined with the "sun in the upper right-hand corner of each picture, moon symmetrically in the left." However, it looked automated and mechanised. "No monster, no wars, no explosions, no heroism." She felt disappointed and blamed herself for being "a hedonistic child ….. and quite stodgy also, interested in nothing but social welfare. Or perhaps it was a vision of Heaven." The drawings had left no residue in mind as she could not recall "ever having drawn these pictures" (91). As in Plato's tablet, only a few inscriptions lingered and the unreliability of her memories remain exposed.

Silence and loss become a refrain in the novel. The memory of her mother haunts her in every part of her return. She states, "My mother's jacket is hanging on a nail beside the window, there's nobody in it; I press my forehead against it. Leathersmell, the smell of loss; irrecoverable" (178). On her entering the home she left years ago, she is confronted with the memory of her mother lying "unmoving,

covered with a brown plaid blanket, her face bloodless and shrunken". The memories recollect that their mother used to "recover soon, and they ceased to take her illnesses seriously" as they believed "were only natural phases, like cocoons" (31). Traumatic memory relegates adverse events to the world of silence and distances it to the world of the unknown. The emptiness and the void reverberate the absences and thereby intensifies the loss of meaning within a narrative and remains buried within her as haunting silences.

For a trauma victim, silences can get associated with fear. In the novel, the narrator is unable to bear the sound of silence and as she reaches the cabin, she is afraid to call out a greeting as she is frightened to "hear their absence". This fear reflects in varied ways and she is frightened to be both alone as well as with her friends. She recognises that having her friends with her makes her feel less alone. However, she is afraid that her father will return and order Anna out of the log cabin as he is wary of strangers, especially of groups. Fear connects both the past-- her memories and her present.

> After Evans left that day I was uneasy: the island wasn't safe, we were trapped on it. They didn't realize it, but I did, I was responsible for them. The sense of watching eyes, his presence lurking just behind the green leaf screen, ready to pounce or take flight, he wasn't predictable, I was trying to think of ways to keep them out of danger; they would be all right as long as they didn't go anywhere alone. He might be harmless, but I couldn't be sure. (76)

The self-exploration becomes imminent as the trigger of death and the journey towards home unleashes a whirlpool of associations, recall and an unfathomable fear. Her inadequacies heighten and her capability to interact disrupts. The intervening

fixation with locating her father runs adversely with the intention of her friends who have accompanied her merely as on vacation.

Fear becomes a feature of trauma and trauma, in turn, lacks comprehension. The latency and the elusiveness make it frightening, and she tries to remain calm and not let her friends know that she is frightened for them. “Fear has a smell” (77), and she equates it with ‘love’ the word that she does not trust. She recollects her ordeal at the time of the delivery of her child with the pain of feeling abandoned and being alone at the hospital. It is her suffering in her earlier marriage that becomes the justification for rebuking her boyfriend Joe who proposes to her. Her panic intensifies as Joe seems to “grow larger, become alien, three-dimensional”. She confesses to Joe that she has been married and is a mother. The mechanical manner wherein she narrates the marriage, and her separation numbs her and she terms herself “tried and failed… inoculated, exempt” (39) and “classified as wounded” (87). She compares divorce to an amputation stating that “you survive, but there's less of you” (39). A remark on the maiming of self is the closest that she gets to accept her traumatic condition. The wound or the trauma remains hidden despite her mental disorientation and her inability to communicate with others.

The fear within her finds resonance outside in Nature in the form of a heron. It is found dead, and its mutilated body signifies the depravity of the person who killed it. She assumes it to be the American tourist with whom she attributes the hegemony of “power to kill” (118). “It was behind me; I smelled it before I saw it; then I heard the flies. The smell was like decaying fish. I turned around, and it was hanging upside down by a thin blue nylon rope tied around its feet and looped over a tree branch, its wings fell open. It looked at me with its mashed eye” (116). The eye becomes the camera or the lens which alternates within and outside. Its mutilation is symbolic of

the total deviant manner of portraying and understanding life. The wounded eye also symbolises the wound or the trauma within. The prolific use of the word ‘eye’ in the novel has been commented on by reviewer Sharon R. Wilson. She details the use as a portrayal of the distortions of vision, primarily through mirrors and camera that Atwood uses in the novel. The visual imagery becomes the gaze and leads to witnessing and becomes a ‘trickster creator’ and helps manipulate and create possibilities and aid “multiple levels of surviving” (Blindness 178).

The fragmented or incomplete narrative strategy makes the reader suspect the memories of the narrator and forgetting is always a temporary balm. She is unable to identify the city where she got married. She only recalls that “He said he loved me, the magic word, it was supposed to make everything light up, I'll never trust that word again”(*S* 44). She realises that she was always unable to communicate with her parents about her marriage and her divorce. She realises that they were upset with her leaving home. Later they never forgave her nor understood what had happened -- getting married, then leaving both the husband and child. Abandoning the child was to them an unpardonable sin “, and it was no use trying to explain to them why it wasn't mine” (25). This inability to neither explain nor wish to be understood traces its beginnings to her life that she witnesses as she narrates as a mystery beyond understanding. Betrayal becomes one of the painful ordeals that the narrator had to face. It remains a pang of guilt whether she was betrayed or whether she betrayed her parents. Each incomplete or varied narrative becomes poignant as she confides to herself and thereby to the reader.

Dreamlike reverie or hallucinations are also symptoms of trauma. The trauma also reveals through the ritualistic and intuitive descent into the animal world. Her confrontations with the images that have haunted her become assimilated into one

frame and she realises that she has located the lost memories. She sees her fake husband as stripped off the idealism that she once viewed him with and recognised him to a mere "normal man middle-aged, second rate, selfish and kind in average proportions…" (195). She reflects on what her parents stood for and realises the fences her father had built and the alienation he had imposed on himself and his family was to protect them all from war and poverty. She realises that her mother never revealed the "pain and isolation" that she perhaps endured. Both her parents belonged to "vanished history" (196) -- a realm which she could not reach and hence could not know. She realises how unreliable her memory had been. Her hallucinations reiterate the gaps, and her attempt to extend and sustain the narrative beyond the unreal world remains futile. However, she acknowledges that her remembrances are selective and forgetting is a natural phenomenon and thereby, her memories and their authenticity become suspect.

'Memoryscape' refers to the showcasing of the historical memory embedded in the landscape. However, the borrowing of the word 'memoryscape' here helps to denote the memory spaces that are internalised akin to the outer landscape. The panorama of the landscape provides resonating images of the past, where certain aspects of the landscape act as a trigger ushering in hidden memories. Associative memory helps recall and photographs also aid in creating memory spaces and act as prompts to a range of association. The selective reordering of the past happens through recall in the case of *Surfacing*. The journey to the interior of her homeland also becomes a journey into the interior recesses of her being. The shift in time and space is effortless and retrace memories. As the narrative progresses, confusion and doubt emerge and remain markers of a disturbed psyche. The referential exists as a trigger point either in the physical sense as in a landscape or as crucial links in a

"memoryscape".

The lake becomes one such referential trigger point for her memories. It is to be noted that Campbell in her article observes that the narrator while diving reluctantly into the lake has a vision of her "father's death and the spiritual death of self by her complicity in the abortion of her child" (22). The repressed memory of abortion transforms into a creative force. She remarks about the acceptance of her father and mother as part of Nature and accepting their humanness. She also acknowledges their "frailties and subsequent guilt" (22). The metaphor of the lake also reveals the narrator's descent into herself. Campbell also quotes Marge Piercy that the metaphors of the descent apply that of space, time and water, and a hazardous return to the surface too.

The mirror and the lake become symbolic representations that reflect the distorted self. Just as Harry Potter peers into the 'pensieve' and descends into the past time frame, the lake also acts as a storehouse of memories enabling shifting of time. The pensive in the Harry Potter series is the magical container with swarms of mist into which Harry is seen to get caught and transmitted into another time frame. H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* also lets the character transport into another time another place – the past as well as the future. The descent into the lake resembles a descent into the consciousness as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The narrator descends into the lake and surfaces with the shroud over the past lifting with each time revealing a past incident with diffused images seen to acquire clarity.

The narration of the past alters with time and it concerns not only incidents but also lived spaces. With the trees that had grown taller after she left, the house seemed to have become smaller. The space that she envisaged had shrunk and the perspective

had changed. It was like a camera within that captures spaces. The pictures of the same space from different angles look different. Photography or films alter perspectives using the long shot or the zoom lens. She wonders why her father didn't build the house to last forever and this question seems to reflect a regret of not returning to the space that she belonged to or returning to an altered space which makes it less of the home she recollected. The memory of her home becomes a construct that betrays her.

The space that memory reconstructs is the ideal world of her childhood, which surprisingly takes time for her to recollect. Her anxiety is attributed to her concern for her missing father. Remembrances of her missing father and dead mother make her sensitive to their belongings, and she tries to reach them. Photographs retain the markers of memory, making multiple narratives with memories frozen in time. Like the engravings on the urn in Keats' 'Grecian Urn', the photographs retain the timelessness. The fluidity in time extends to most of her recollections as the narrative she weaves remain filled with people from the past whose names are not recollected. She justifies by stating "none of the women had names then" and the same lack of clear identity projects onto the narrator, who remains unnamed throughout the narrative. However, the Madame she remembers running the store, an older woman with one hand remains thus unnamed and also faceless. She is able to recollect only "the potent candies, inaccessible in their glass reliquary, and the arm, miraculous in an unspecified way like the toes of saints or the cut-off pieces of early martyrs, the eyes on the plate, the severed breasts, the heart with letters on it shining like a light bulb through the trim hole painted in the chest, art history" (*S* 23). The innocence of the child projects to a time warp wherein names did not matter. People with names are perhaps the ones who betrayed her.

The revisitation of her childhood happens through the mediation of art. The narrator reconnects the past with the photo album and several scrapbooks that she locates in her house. Her brother's scrapbook revealed what she terms "explosions in red and orange", pictures of the war, soldiers, tanks, and swastika. There also were "explorers on another planet" and "flying men with the comic –book cafes." The"purple jungle" and "the green sun with seven red moons" were retrieved from the world of forgetting. In contrast to the splash of colours, the range of subjects that the brother's scrapbook contained was her scrapbook. It was merely a collection of pictures of hats, veils, and dresses. There was nothing she could personally own as hers. She recollected that whenever people asked you what you wanted to be when you grow up, she always answered "… "A lady" or "A mother," either one was safe; and it wasn't a lie, I did want to be those things" (90). Her urge to conform becomes an extension of the social conditioning for adapting to the role prescribed by her gender.

Death remains a recurrent motif in the narrative. Although her relationship with her parents is reviewed with images, memories, nursery rhymes and scrapbooks providing the testimony, the vision and the remembering of the drowning of her brother becomes a recurring theme which forms the basis of different narratives. Caruth mentions that the traumatic incident or thought "is not a possessed knowledge, but itself possesses, at will, the one it inhabits, often produces a deep uncertainty as to its very truth" (Caruth *T* 6). This lack of clarity in the traumatised transmits to the reader of the story, and the meaning of the maladjustments and incongruities in behaviour remains unknown to both the reader and the narrator. Trauma persists with recurrent images that terrify but are unable to lend meaning. The ability to comprehend eludes the victim. The brother's drowning becomes a recurrent image

that provides an irrational explanation. As she and her friends reach the dock, she remarks “but it's the same dock my brother fell off the time he drowned” *(S* 28). The image recurs while she admits that it was a scene she witnessed before she was born. The recurrent narrative regarding her brother who drowns and that of her witnessing it is casually narrated as having been part of a past that happened even before her birth. This testimony of the phrase “before I was born” and of the crude image of perhaps being able to see from the womb of her mother does render incredulity to the monologue of the narrative. Instead, it is interspersed with the casual witnessing of various incidents like the torture of insects by the brother and her repulsion. The brother and the vision of witnessing his drowning recurs. The narrative continues to remain credulous.

Death of her mother is narrated amidst the hesitant portrayal of a docile and weak character who is portrayed as a homemaker keen on preserving the testimonies of the childhood of her children leaving behind only her blanket as a reminder of her frailty. She recalls that her mother had been suffering from a brain tumour and had been finally admitted to the hospital as she was unable to bear the pain and had been on morphine. The narrator had always believed that her mother would recover. She recalls going through the diary of her mother while her mother was in her deathbed. It revealed, “no reflections, no emotions” (18). All it contained was the work done daily and details of the weather, and she used it merely to compare the coming of different seasons each year. She understands looking at the blank pages that her mother had given up the struggle months ago. The memory of her visit to her mother at the hospital remains with her. “She may not have known who I was: she didn't ask me why I left or where I'd been, though she might not have asked anyway, feeling as she always had that personal questions were rude” (17-18). She recollects the pain of

inability to witness the suffering her mother had to bear and also decides that she would not attend the funeral. She retraces the pain of confessing to her mother her decision by stating --"I had to lean close to her; the hearing in one of her ears was gone. I wanted her to understand in advance and approve" (18). The memory of her mother's death suddenly creates the need to continue searching for her missing father and also makes her aware of the possibility of his death. The trigger for the trauma happens with a preoccupation of loss and a possibility of death as she returns to her hometown in search of a father who is missing. Her father, a renowned botanist, was a recluse who preferred to live in isolation on an island. The fact that he knew the woods, the surrounding area and the lake made the possibility of his being dead remote to her. However, the memory of her mother and her dying returns to haunt her and makes her recall her memories of her childhood through pictures in the family album.

The albums trace the framing of memory in a linear, chronological manner. It started with the "Grandmothers and grandfathers first, distant ancestors, strangers…." Her mother before marriage looked like a stranger to her, the wedding pictures of her parents, her brother and herself. Growing up through the framing of pictures revealed the narrator in most of them but "shut-in behind the paper; or not me but the missing part of me" (91). This lost self or the other-self becomes apparent when the narrator sees her reflection in the lake. " My other shape was in the water, not my reflection but my shadow" (141). The phrase reiterates the lost memories as well as the lost childhood, lost mother, missing father, and she entirely lost self.

The death of the land recurs through the description of the fauna and flora—"Dead fish, dead seals, and historically dead beavers, the beaver is to this country what the black man is to the United States" (36). The rock paintings of the ancient

native culture that her father researches on become another dead and buried memory. The mystery of dearth had haunted the narrator when she was a child. She recalls wondering “If it had happened to me I would have felt there was something special about me, to be raised from the dead like that; I would have returned with secrets, I would have known things most people didn't” (71). The lack of comprehension of trauma seems to manifest in varied ways in making the victim unsure about other events. The narrative recalls incidents which the narrator claims she witnessed before she was born. The memory traces find logic misplaced, and the narrative becomes a fragmented rendering of the past. The narrator is plagued with self-doubt. The right-wrong dichotomy reiterates in the novel. “I've driven in the same car with them before, but on this road, it doesn't seem right, either the three of them are in the wrong place, or I am” (4). Again, “Now we're on my home ground, foreign territory” (5). The using of antithetical words brings out the conflict within. Her confusion intensifies as she acknowledges that “Nothing is the same; I don't know the way anymore” (5). She prefers to return to the city than search for her father. She does not want to let unedited memories to rupture her “safe” living. She states “Anaesthesia, that's one technique if it hurts invent a different pain. I'm all right”(5).

The ‘knowing’ and ‘not knowing’ as in Caruth extends to the inability to understand the fear of the unknown that accompanies the narrator in her journey to locate her missing father. The features of trauma become prominent with the disintegration of the self of the narrator. A hallucination that was attributed to the reconstructed past reveals variable memory and multiplicity of narration. The reliability of the narration is questionable. Her interior monologue rises in a crescendo to exclude her friends as well as her boyfriend. With communication becoming strained, the narrator seeks refuge in an attempt to locate her father. The house and its

remembrances prove to be destabilising as she is unable to comprehend her heightened fear.

Caruth differentiates flashback and traumatic recollection stating that "flashback provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of willed memory or of the very continuity of conscious thought." She adds that "the traumatized are called upon to see and to relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection" (Caruth *T* 152). The pictures mother had arranged the album and her scrapbook reflecting the methodicity and restraint in containing narrative into a single mode of envisaging life. The flashback narrative relates to the assurance with which the narrator willingly reveals the associative memories that alternate with the present in the narrative. The traumatic recollections appear through visions, hyper-vigilance and disconnected thoughts.

> Data are not stored in already constituted places but are arranged and rearranged at every point in time. Forgetting is thus an integral principle of this model, since the activity of compulsive interpretation that organizes it involves at once selection and rejection. Like a well-censored dream and subject perhaps to similar mechanisms, memory has the orderliness and the teleological drive of the narrative. Its relation to the past is not that of truth but of desire. (Frow 154)

There are many fallible in reconstructions of the past, especially those that pertain to traumatised selves. The past remains an enigma to the trauma victim as the remembrances cannot be trusted. The saga of forgetting a trauma episode or rather the attempt to overcome the event can, many a time, lead to erasing entirely or partially

the remnants from the mind. As in Plato's wax tablet, impressions are not erased through overwriting. Instead, it is converted to a forgotten, buried moment in time. The recurrent image of her brother's drowning alters with one of the visions recalling his being saved by her mother. She admits that it was merely Nature which accidentally paved the way for her mother to realise he fell into the water. It reiterates the observation made by Caruth of trauma being a return of a haunting experience that shatters comprehension.

Memory is a reconstruct from fragments. Annette Kuhn, the British film scholar and cultural historian, remarks that two sets of concerns determine narratives of selves. How "memory shapes the stories we tell, in the present, about the past- especially stories about our lives" and "what makes us remember: the prompts, the pretexts of memory: the remainders of past that remain in the present". Memory, its traces, and stories told about the past reflect the past of "living memory." The markers that point to a past presence aid (re)construction, a "simulacrum" of the event, and a "patching together reconstructions out of fragments of evidence" (232). Kuhn highlights the fragmentary nature of memory and states that memory is "interminable" and explains that there is always something yet to be remembered. (233). The lack of totality of remembrances is reflected both in the albums and in the scrapbook with which the narrator seeks to resurrect her past. They provide alternate narration by including gaps. The lost or forgotten memories remain problematic. The narrator addresses the gaps that present themselves as alternate stories. The multiplicity of remembrances and contradictions make the narrative fallible. The narrator recollects details of episodes that happened before she was born:

> My brother was under the water, face upturned, eyes open and unconscious, sinking gently; the air was coming out of his mouth. It was

> before I was born, but I can remember it as clearly as if I saw it, and perhaps I did see it: I believe that an unborn baby has its eyes open and can look out through the walls of the mother's stomach, like a frog in a jar. (*S* 28)

The absurdity of recalling episodes to a time before she was born makes the. reader suspect the unreliability of the narrator's memories.

Forgetting becomes problematised in the novel. The narrative meanders to a point when the memories are found to be falsified. The agony of confronting the real memory of what happened and revising the narrative results in a psychic breakdown of the narrator. The latency and the collapse of understanding the traumatic event that was causative of the aberration in the narrative remind one of Caruth's analyses of trauma. Caruth comments that the victim does not recognise the happening of the traumatic event as it has failed to register at the time of happening. The multiplicity of narratives emerges on account of the underlying error in assuming the linear effect of retrieval as a closed system. The narrative style embeds a contradiction in the willed flashback and the intrusive recollections and reveals the perfect album, the perfect remembrances, but imperfect past.

Silence becomes noncommittal, and memories start plaguing her with a narrative that needs to be addressed and validated. Her confusion at remembering many incidents very clearly and at the same time, her hesitancy in wondering whether they were reliable makes her want to prefer being alone. She recalls her father's desire for isolation. He was only interested in science. He believed animals were more "consistent" and their behaviour "at least was predictable" (55). "Even the village had too many people for him; he needed an island, a place where he could recreate not the settled farm life of his own father but that of the earliest ones who arrived when there

was nothing but forest and no ideologies but the ones they brought with them" (56). His need to work in isolation and his knowledge about the wild made the narrator hope that he was lost, but not dead. "If he's safe I don't want to see him" (25).

Esther Giller, in her article on trauma, comments that "it is an individual's *subjective experience* that determines whether an event is or is not traumatic" (Para 1). She states that the key to understanding traumatic experience lies in seeing it as the inability to cope with a stress reaction. Trauma, Giller adds, is defined by the experience of the survivor. When betrayal of trust happens, seeds of lifelong misery and fear are planted. The intrusion of the past into the present becomes problematic to the trauma survivors and the event re-presents as distressing, prosthetic memories, flashbacks, nightmares, or overwhelming emotional states.

False narratives help create an alternate truth. There are a series of false narratives that come to play as the past is reconstructed. The narrator confesses to her pain of her child forcibly taken from her "I have to behave as though it doesn't exist because for me it can't, it was taken away from me, exported, deported. A section of my own life, sliced off from me like a Siamese twin, my own flesh cancelled. Lapse, relapse, I have to forget" (*S* 45). She shares with the reader that it was primarily the wish of her husband to be a father that acted as a prompt to her getting married. However, she reveals that she was alone at the hospital at the time of her delivery of the child. Her memory reconstructs the agony she felt at being alone in her predicament but casually remarks that her husband collected her from the hospital in his car:

> He hadn't gone with me to the place where they did it; his own children, the real ones, were having a birthday party. But he came afterwards to collect

me. It was a hot day; when we stepped out into the sun, we couldn't see for an instant. It wasn't a wedding, there were no pigeons, the post office and the lawn were in another part of the city where I went for stamps; the fountain with the dolphins and the cherub with half a face was from the company town, I'd put it in so there would be something of mine. "It's over," he said, "feel better?" (144)

Associative memories are understood to aid recall and remembrance. When memories are fragmented and appropriated into differential elements that distort the real, memories become falsified and are unconsciously manipulated into a flux of contradictory or enigmatic aberrations. It is significant to reiterate what Caruth mentions as new ways of listening and also the need to recognise the truth of memories by confronting the repression, suppression and exposition of memories and also exhibiting concern for false memories, suggested memories and falsified memories (Caruth, *T* Preface viii).

An invented past at times reveals itself while carefully listening to the retelling of one's story. However, to a trauma victim who does not live with the binary of truth and falsehood, even the retelling of the narrative becomes an extension of perpetuating the falsehood. The narrative becomes their first line of defence in their inability to recollect what happened. For instance, the wedding of the narrator is described in detail, but surprisingly, the warmth and happiness in the narrative of the occasion is missing. She mentions:

At my wedding, we filled out forms, name, age, birthplace, blood type. We had it in a post office; a J.P. did it, oil portraits of former postmasters presided from the beige walls. I could recall the exact smells, glue and humid socks

> and the odour of the second-day blouse and crystallized deodorant from the irritated secretary, and, from another doorway, the chill of antiseptic. It was a hot day; when we stepped out into the sun we couldn't see for an instant; then there was a flock of draggled pigeons pecking at the scuffed post office lawn beside the fountain. The fountain had dolphins and a cherub face missing. (*S* 88)

The details she provides are her observations on the day, the setting, the place, its people, birds and the old fountain. It reminds of the entries in the diary of her mother – the routine jottings of the weather and the blank pages.

The shock of creating an alternate memory about the abortion traumatises her to erase not her past but on the other hand her present as atonement. She realises she has crossed the barrier to senility. “To have the past but not the present, that means you're going senile” (70). This life on the borderlands of being senile makes her memory volatile, and this switching over to the imagined space of freedom from tormenting memories happens with increasing frequency. As the first part of the novel ends, she is seen reluctantly entering into the lake-- the lake which stored memories for her. She is still unaware of the trauma that she underwent and that her real memories have been repressed. All she has with her is a falsified narrative.

Barbara C. Ewell’s observations on the use of language as a problematic choice in the journey to self –discovery in the narrative is in this context noteworthy. She adds, “Stripped of both the expression and the experience of appropriative relationships; the narrator suffers most keenly the effects of this language: her means of understanding vitiated, she has lost contact with herself as well as with others and the world she inhabits” (187). Social acceptance becomes a priority in the narrator’s

invented past. In altering the truth, she distances herself from the emotion and its contextual language. Language becomes a barrier in different ways. Language reduces to meaningless words and it finally regresses to silence. Moreover, when logic abandons, the narrator sees visions of reaching out to the alternate world that is ideal and by falsifying, she distances herself from the emotions and its corresponding language.

Ewell draws a parallel to the making of the film 'Random Samples' by David and Joe with the fragmented, broken sentences used in the narrative. "Arbitrarily fragmenting the world about them, the film mechanically reduces reality to manageable frames, tokens of the Nature that the men have subdued: the fish they caught, the log they conquered, the mutilated heron, the woman they humiliated" (187). This observation of the lack of storyline controlling the film can be extended to capture the essence of the narrative style in the novel. The film endeavoured to capture the adventure, and mesmerising nature regresses to an act of capturing weird moments and those that amuse them. Anna is asked to pose in the nude for the film, and this becomes a verbal conflict as they try to humiliate Anna. The power over women and David's disregard for women become apparent. She finds Anna relying on her makeup for satisfying the expectation of David. The narrator soon discards her notion that Anna is happily married to David and realises that relationships can only be built on trust and respect. She has not been a witness to real affection. She recalls her mother, who remained a shadow of herself adjusting to the demands and life vision of her father. The only independent streak in her mother was in her decision not to let her father know of her terminal illness until it was too late. Her choice for freedom lay in suffering and choosing to die without being tormented further by medical interventions. The narratives about Anna and her mother merge to reflect her

agony of being used by men in the world that belongs to men. Both her mother and Anna remain subdued and silent victims who refused to protest and were willing to suffer.

Surviving a trauma can be a crisis and surviving after being the witness of trauma in another heightens the traumatic implication. The guilt that accompanies survival does not let the memory register the trauma and creates a void filled with silences. It is significant that Ann-Janine Morey remarks that Atwood's *Surfacing* exhibits the guilt about abortion and that the narrator is "implicated in that loss". The void erases language and her unborn child is imagined as a god with shining fur, and the narrator with insistence states, "I will not teach it any words" (*S* 193).

Alice M. Palumabo terms *Surfacing* as "archaeology of both a time and a person on the point of serious rupture" (23). This rupture can be further elaborated with a closer analysis of the novel. The narrator realises that she was merely exhibiting a memorised range of emotions that were appropriate to different situations. "I rehearsed emotions, naming them: joy, peace, guilt, release, love and hate, react, relate; what to feel was like what to wear, you watched the others and memorized it" (*S* 112). She feared the demands of maintaining relationships and her act of only revealing her feelings when Joe was asleep made her believe that it reduced his power over her and also insured her from the hurt of betrayal. The artificiality of succumbing to pretence and projecting a strength that was absent finally shatters the world of make-believe that the narrator devises.

The interior monologue within the narration reaches a crescendo with her need to integrate with her dead mother and her lost father. Her parents are the only persons she trusted and she needs to reinvent a survival strategy to connect with them in order

to recover. The discovery of the body of her father ushers the breakdown of her Self, and she reinvents another 'time-space' for herself. She tries to identify with Nature and distance herself from the rest of the civilised human world and instead prefers to identify with an animal or a vegetable.

The descent into her primordial self happens in four stages. First, she plans her being left alone on the island. Second, she returns home, where she longs for her mother. The absence is sensed by touching the empty leather jacket of her mother. "there is nobody in it" "other than the smell of loss, irrecoverable." She tries to call her parents to her but realises her logic does not bring them back, there is only terror remaining. Thirdly, she starts abstaining from using the aids of living, any material convenience that human beings have devised. As she charts her memory, she creates new rules and harsh indictments. Mirror, brush, camera compact, ring, mother's leather jacket and father's felt hat all are rejected. Finally, she imagines entering the space of the dead parents instead of letting them enter her world. Nature beckons and she destroys the clothes and the trappings of civilisation and culture. She resorts to adopt the life of an animal or a person from the Stone Age. Her breakdown has a sensory description. The visual images are colourful lending the artistic flavour. "Green foods are mixed from blue and yellow" the primary colours. The frog which includes her shines and does not move in the web of life and is termed as an "ancestor" the taste of the raspberries, "their sweetness sourness, piercing" her mouth and her "teeth cracking on the seeds." The tubers are dug and eaten raw. She does not even wash them. She resorts to just scratching the "earth" from them with her nails. The relapse into a stone age where mankind lived in harmony with Nature is replicated. She waits for "the fur to grow" (182).

The identity markers are rejected as she tries to free herself from the rigours of

civilisation and attain a new identity. The ritualistic cleansing accompanies the ritual of discarding. She first rejects her identity as an artist by discarding her paintbrush. The mirror which provides reflects and contains an identity within its margins becomes a casualty. She reverses "the mirror towards the wall; it no longer traps" her (*S* 203). She is reminded of her friend Anna's soul, which she believes is trapped within the gold compact. She wishes she had destroyed the compact and released Anna from her world of artificiality, hypocrisy and fear of truth. She recalls destroying the camera and the film 'Random Samples' (195). She feels it would have been appropriate to destroy the compact more than the camera which merely captured the hypocrisy and the lies and the pretence of life. Bindings and bondages are sought to be shed as she discards her wedding ring. She puts the ring into the fire. "It may not melt, but it will at least be purified, the blood will burn off" (207). History must be eliminated, and she attempts to erase the "circles and the arrogant square pages" (207). The memories that trap her to a minuscule world of photographs, diary, and scrapbooks are burnt. The glass and plates are smashed, and the utensils that do not break are strewn around. Even shoes are discarded. She finally becomes as pure as land stripped off the remnants of the clothing; her past erased and dips her head beneath the water. She "washes her eyes" and sees life anew. She becomes part of the land. She retains only the blanket as she believes soon her fur would grow and she can soon relinquish it too (181-183).

The approximation to Nature happens with the belief of her transforming into an animal, her feet "paw printing", and food consists of vegetables, leaves, fruits and tubers. She needs to let the child in her survive. She deliberately assumes her intuition has made her seek redemption of creating a child within her. Her identification with Nature is complete when she transposes herself with the tree. "I lean against a tree; I

am a tree leaning." She becomes "a word a place." She sees her mother feeding the jays wearing the leather jacket she earlier had burnt. Fear transforms, and she is unable to recognise which of the jays was her mother (187).

Elizabeth R. Baer observes that the narrator of *Surfacing* "must pierce the layers of artificiality to get back to the source, the source of her feelings, her instincts, her humanity. To get in touch with her body again, she becomes virtually an animal" (Baer 30). The return of the narrator after the cathartic cleansing to relate to life in the imperfect world happens after a series of hallucinations. The trauma converges as the search boats arrive and fear returns that they will recognise her. She attempts to mask her fear by pretending that she was not a woman but part of the land. She spies Malstrom who wanted to buy the island from the father and then from her. Her imaginative identification with the land makes her state that the land cannot be sold as "nobody owns it" (*S* 191). She immerses herself into the lake and is now confronted with the vision of her father. However, her father gazes at her uninterestedly and fails to recognize her. She believes she was a mere part of nature and justifies his reaction and accepts it. Her hallucination continues as she wonders whether he transforms himself into a fish that jumps from the lake or the shape of "an idea of a fish' jumping from the lake. She believes he is everywhere and is able to transform himself into anything in nature as she remains fascinated by observing "how many shapes can he take" (191). She dreams about her parents and believes that she had summoned them and that she has gone into their world and seen them as pure and clean as the fauna and flora. She sees them as part of nature and as part of a greater truth. The vision prompts to other the ideal world that she craves for and the make-believe world that she creates for herself. She senses before her a choice to return to reality and re-enters the cabin. She confronts the broken utensils and starts

eating beans from the can and lets the memories return. The mirage of entering and living in an alternate space is erased, and the traumatic memory acknowledged.

The narrative reveals an alternate past, and it aids to break down the barrier of trauma. The narrator realises that her marriage, the child and her divorce become socially acceptable false memories. The pain of undergoing abortion intensifies as the memory of having been through the trauma alone hurts. The realisation that abortion was not simple "like getting a wart removed". Moreover, that she "could have said no" it made her "one of them too, a killer". Since then she "carried that death around inside, layering it over, a cyst, a tumour, black pearl" (145-146). Moreover, she recollected that she had to endure the agony alone as "emptied, amputated" while "they had planted death in me like a seed". She recalls the events of her being in love with her art instructor, getting impregnated and then undergoing an abortion. She compares both the narratives as she tries to segregate the real from the false. She realises that she has never allowed the memories to surface as they accompanied the guilt of surviving. She recalls that even when she was devastated, he had never mentioned that he loved her:

> He did say he loved me, though, that part was true; I didn't make it up. It was the night I locked myself in and turned on the water in the bathtub, and he cried on the other side of the door. When I gave up and came out he showed me snapshots of his wife and children, his reasons, his stuffed and mounted family; they had names, he said I should be mature. (150)

According to La Capra, traumatic experiences are bound up with its belated effects and symptoms in certain cases "confusion of the imaginary or vicarious experiential identification with certain events and healing the past can happen only by

altering a dimension, try to manage and salvage the future. When past is relieved there is a fusion of the past with the present narrative helps to work through post-traumatic symptoms in the present to open possible futures" (207). It helps to recount events and evoke experiences typically through non-linear movements that allow trauma to register in language and its hesitations, indirections, pauses and silences (208).

It may be surmised that the relations with her parents also were severed. She never could let them see her void, her guilt, her sin. "In my deflated lap there was a purse, suitcase. I could not go there, home; I never went there again. I sent them a postcard" (*S* 144). Her falsified narrative was necessary to survive. She recalls that her parents were unaware of the trauma that she was undergoing:

> They never knew, about that or why I left. Their innocence, the reason I could not tell them; perilous innocence, closing them in glass, their artificial garden, greenhouse. They did not teach us about evil; they did not understand about it; how could I describe it to them? They were from another age, prehistoric when everyone got married and had a family, children growing in the yard like sunflowers; remote as Eskimoes or mastodons. (144-145)

Her life she confesses to herself has been a "faked album, the memories fraudulent as passports" (145). She adds, "I needed a different version. I pieced it together the best way I could, flattening it, scrapbook, collage, pasting over the wrong parts" (145). The lake transforms into a lake of memories. The drowned brother again becomes another false narrative. "Then I recognised it: it was not ever my brother I had been remembering, that had been a disguise" (144). Again:

> I knew when it was; it was in a bottle curled up, staring out at me like a

> catpickled; it had huge jelly eyes and fins instead of hands, fish gills, I could not let it out, it was dead already, it had drowned in air. It was there when I woke up, suspended in the air me like a chalice, an evil grail and I thought, Whatever it is, part of myself or a separate creature, I killed it. It wasn't a child, but it could have been one, I didn't allow it. (144)

The trauma that confronts the narrator extends its ripples not only to the shattering of her being but also reminds of the narrator's inability to adjust to relationships as revealed through her narrative. Atwood uses Anna as a foil to the narrator bringing out Anna's eagerness to please her boyfriend and her desperation to conform to the make-believe world -- of pretence. The layer of makeup hides Anna's agony and her insecurity that she wears. The toleration of the disregard her boyfriend bestows on her shocks the narrator. However, Anna remains connected to her as she too is unable to be alone. The inability to trust and engage in relationships becomes a hurdle, and she breaks away from the traps of civilisation and prefers hiding in the woods.

The narrator recognises the fragility of relationships as David once tries to taunt her mentioning that her boyfriend Joe and Anna are together. The narrator realises that many relationships lack sanctity. Her fear of being abandoned reinforces the memory of her mother's death, her vision of other painful incidents and converges on the disappearance of her father. Her inability to communicate with her parents and her choice to get away to the city and merge in the invisibility that it offers remains painful stages of maladjustments. It is only in engaging with the memories that the falsified memory gets corrected. The past becomes the harbinger of the traumatic event of abortion as well as the memories of the narrator's dead mother. Both her mother and the foetus remain lost to her till she retrieves them to free herself of the

guilt and the hauntings of the past. The meaningless mirages and hallucination are deciphered and assimilated. The hope of being pregnant once again atones for the guilt that thaws her. She realises that she has confronted both the past the present and the future in her trance of revelation. The search for her father and his death become a trigger for the memories to return.

The ending reiterates the aspiration to refuse to be a victim. The narrator in *Surfacing* finally resolves to confront her memories, work through the trauma, and finally forgive herself. She reflects on her choices and wonders whether they will search for her before winter. She seeks the return to her familiar world and remarks "I reenter my own time" (197). However, she has travelled beyond time and within the five nights has transcended the typical notion of time and space. Words too regain power and she can accept Joe, not as an ideal person but someone whom she terms 'half-formed'. She chooses to trust him and take the path where adjustments, acceptance and forgiving are possible. She decides to return to the city and accept her life and face the future.

The narrator is a witness to painful events in her past that make her withdraw into herself. Her memories rake up her past – her upbringing by her father who preferred to live on an island, her knowledge that her family was different from the rest in the town, her sick mother whom she remembered feeding the birds, her brother who she remembered to be naughty and creative and at the same time having drowned while a child troubles the narrator. The feeling of belonging is absent in the canvas that her memories paint in the narrative. Her witnessing the events follows not only the present predicament of being with friends who also are strangers to her as also in listening to her interior monologue. She, by being both the narrator and the listener, creates the internal witness in herself through the interior monologue. She rises again

like a phoenix of the traumatic ramification that haunted her for long. The narrating of her story, listening to the departure and the sudden return of the traumatic event helps to forgive herself and the world. By absolving herself of the guilt and retracing the actual narration of events, she discards the falsified narrative and emerges anew. She confronts the departure from the socially accepted norms of marriage and narrates the event of being betrayed and being unmarried. It is only by her admission to herself that her narrative can be revised and rectified. She acknowledges that her narrative omits, forgets, and consoles by accepting that she loves Joe and decides to return to him. At the end of the narrative, she is seen waiting to be reunited with Joe.

It is significant that Margaret Atwood mentions that memories constitute both the real and the imagined. "The inability to distinguish the real and the imagined, or rather the attitude that we consider real is also imagined: every life lived is also an inner life, a life created" (Atwood, *Negotiatin*g 6). This observation can be extended to the novel as it depicts an inner life that consists of the repository of memories. The narratives that emerge remain in a state of constant flux with the memory gaps being filled with plausible connectors. When a memory misplaced is retrieved and placed in a correct slot, the narrative is revised and replaces the earlier one.

The theme of survival is central to any Canadian novel opines Atwood in her *Survival*. It is in this context that we need to note that the narrator acknowledges that death of her father was a possibility, and this was in contrast to what is termed as an ideal world of "total safety" (*S* 14). Death poses itself as a problem and has an increasing probability as the search for her father continues. Trauma exists as an unacknowledged condition of having had a problem and the memory traces have to be rebuilt in order to align it to the master narrative of the victim's life.

Surfacing, which often has been read as a post-colonial narrative, can also be read as a narrative that reflects the marginalised lives of women. The individual memory represents the collective memory of stories of pain and suppression that lie dormant in our narratives. Victimisation of women, the agony of abortion, suppression and living with guilt that remains outside the levels of understanding define traumatic lives. The collapse of language regresses into the primordial-self and echoes the silences of the memories fitting into a void. The narrator comes to terms with her past on realisation that she had been nursing an idealised version of events as well as an ideal notion of her parents. She becomes aware of her guilt at not being perfect in her roles as a daughter as well as a mother. She confronts her suffering through the recollection of her past.

Primarily, she can negotiate her past and present to overcome the guilt of surviving. It is surviving that is worse to a trauma victim as it continually reminds of the witnessing of the other's wound. The accepting is negotiated about the pre-traumatic past that reveals fissures of forgotten and mislaid remembrances. The narrator can work through the past only by addressing the alienation and insecurity that she felt in childhood, particularly the memory of her mother's death that she needed to confront on her return. The narrator finally tries to bridge her submerged traumatic memory of the abortion-- that of "maternal grief" (Hinz 221) -- with the patterns of a pre-traumatic set of memories that she discovers in her quest within. Her resolution of the guilt, her alienation and replacing of her false memory with the hitherto forgotten painful memory of her mother's death helps her work through trauma. It is through her review of her remembrances, her hesitations, and her compulsion to confront the unknown that provides her with an opportunity to reencounter the traumatic visions. Her "collapse of understanding"(Caruth *T* 7) is

evident as she comes into terms with her collapse of being a witness to events that were beyond the 'wound' that bled with her abortion and the scars of the death of her mother and her isolation had to be reconciled together for a holistic understanding. She can accept imperfections as she finally returns to the imperfect world that she earlier tried to relinquish.

Hirsch remarks that identity markers in the social commune preserve and influence community and social groups through time. The cultural remembrances and forgetting that happens in a community stem from the inability to function in social interactions, community practices and acceptability norms. The individual absorbs culture through social conditioning. The narrator in *Surfacing* has been conditioned to conformity as is evident in the portrayal of her drawings in her sketchbook both as a child and as an adult. The creative outpourings of her brother stand in contrast to the sketches. Restraint in her sketches makes her revise her life to a socially acceptable narrative. The narration of marriage, and begetting a child find social acceptance. However, her falsification of the story ruptures as she admits to a divorce and the narrative of the husband taking custody of the child as an explanation that will satisfy her parents. The missing child is conveniently explained. Moreover, she is upset that her parents never really understood why she was not to be blamed for abandoning her child. The guilt of both the abandoning of the child in the altered narrative as well as the guilt of abortion in the closeted buried and hitherto 'unknown' narrative doubles the traumatic pain. The wedding ring on her finger becomes another protective element in her interaction with the others who will possibly betray her again. Her refusal to remember cloaks her trauma into adopting various conventions and conforming to the narrative of what culture demands.

Forgetting becomes a handy tool for social conditioning, where memories are

charted and prescribed. *Surfacing* is seen as reflecting 'repressed' forgetting and the forgetting of 'humiliated silence' – both concepts which have been borrowed from Connorton. His repressed forgetting stems from social pressure. Here in *Surfacing* the narrator finds her need to be included in the societal norms of behaviour that she was conditioned to follow while a child. Her attempts to conform to the expectations of society fail with her affair with her art instructor. Her aborting the foetus becomes a pang of guilt that she is unable to absorb. The event gets buried with a false narrative bridging the memory gaps. The attempt to create a false narrative is a simultaneous occurrence along with the suppressed trauma. The silence extends to engulf her interpersonal relations. She becomes a participant in the journey to her hometown with her mind cautioning her to return to the anonymity of the city where she feels insulated. The memories of her childhood return as the journey chart a return to the past.

The narration of her past as an interior monologue gets interrupted with the present and its fragile retentions standing in contrast to the memories of the home she has known. Her dead mother and the possible death of her father become a hurdle in her return home and the journey back in time. Her exclusion by not being to school except during winters made her feel inadequate and hesitant. Her father, who kept her away from people and making her lead a solitary life becomes a causative factor in her inability to befriend and trust. Her narrative of marriage and divorce and a child left with the father becomes a strategy to forge social acceptance. Her leaving home too points to the need to explore herself in the vastness of the city and its crowd. She, however, admits to preferring isolation to the crowd as she reclaims herself while being alone.

The emotional alienation that the isolated and cocooned life of the narrator

reveals is an impasse of social accommodation. It leads to one of the prime constructs that generate from the childhood experiences of having witnessed the death of her mother and living of an isolated life without friends. The narrative with its broken sentences, pauses, contradictions, multiple narrations of the same event leaves much of the past to be assumed — the narrator chooses to reveal and think only by allowing gaps that distort understanding. The alienated and troubled child sought love in a land far away from home and was betrayed. Her agony is multiplied with the guilt of aborting the child. The pre-traumatic paradigm consists of her alienation, withdrawal, sensitivity, and of her attempts to pretend and conform to a make-believe world that had never understood her. The traumatic breakdown provides the opportunity to narrate her story as an interior monologue and refusing to be heard by others; she charts her isolated attempt as a solitary activity of expunging the trauma. The typical features of hyper-vigilance, distracted mind, psychic numbing, avoidance of interaction with certain situations, flashbacks, nightmares all point to the experience of an event "outside the range of human experience" (Brown 100). The assimilation of the traumatic experience remains another secret allotted knowingly into the proper niche in memory.

Typical of a trauma narrative, *Surfacing* depicts the inherent forgetting of the sudden, repeated vision that terrifies its narrator. As the event returns after being dormant for a long time, it shatters the being of the narrator. Be it in the narrator experiencing the return of the unbearable event, or in the surfacing of falsified and repressed memory, the narrator recovers a past that is vehemently denied by replacing it with a false narrative. The lack of comprehension and the inability to comprehend the emotional upheaval of the traumatic event makes the event remain truthful by its very departure from the narrative of the past. The 'collapse of understanding' (Caruth

T 7) becomes a keyword in the traumatic narration as the trauma is comprehended only as a vision, hallucination, alienation, void, isolation and silences. The shock of confronting the incident of abortion that was earlier absent in the narrative becomes a feature of trauma. It is only at the end that as Caruth remarks, the gap in the memory is realised, located, and the memory revised. The nightmares, flashback and fragmented thoughts become external signifiers of the trauma. The attempts to relate, revise the narrative of one's life is an ongoing process as Van der Hart points out that the memory of the event remains elusive and the making of the necessary narrative falls short of the real event. Hence, every trauma victim engages in a revision of the narrative until the 'departed' traumatic event eventually 'returns'. Crafting of survival becomes critical in every victim of trauma and one can only quote Caruth 's observation, "In a catastrophic age, that is, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves" (Caruth, Intro.11). *Surfacing* exemplifies traumatic cleansing through narration.

Surfacing has been often studied from the perspective of post-colonial themes as well as from the perspective of the native memory embedded in its cultural ethos. The evolution of the protagonist to culminte with a cathartic purgation of the buried trauma happens only through confronting and mediating with the traumatic experience. Similar to a therapeutic session, the solitary activity results in a frightening psychic breakdown seen as a visionary experience where the narrator sees her dead parents. This revelation becomes the dream sequence that helps in acknowledging, forgiving and surviving. The coping strategy of the protagonist is now redeemed, and she can confront life. She has fathomed the real from the false,

the ideal from the ordinary and she made her choice to let herself heal. The reader realises his role as a witness as at the end of her open-ended narrative as the protagonist confides:

> To trust is to let go. I tense forward, towards the demands and questions, through my feet do not move yet. He calls for me again, balancing on the dock which is neither land nor water, hands on hips, head thrown back and eyes scanning. His voice is annoyed: he won't wait much longer. But right now he waits. The lake is quiet, the trees surround me, asking and giving nothing. (198-199)

Chapter 3

The Labyrinth**:** *Alias Grace*

> *A chronicler of passing events may report that the episode itself lasted no more than an instant—a gunshot, say—but the traumatized mind holds on to that moment, preventing it from slipping back into its proper chronological place in the past, and relives it over and over again in the compulsive musings of the day and the seething dreams of night. The moment becomes a season; the event becomes a condition.*
>
> Kai Erikson, "Notes on Trauma and Community"

Atwood portrays yet another unreliable memory in the novel *Alias Grace* wherein the imperfect nature of remembrances with its numerous selections and omissions are highlighted. The factual story of the 1843 murders of Thomas Kinnear and his mistress and housekeeper Nancy Montgomery in Upper Canada and the conviction of their servant, Grace Marks, form the skeleton for this novel. McDermott, the stableman, was convicted of the murder of Thomas Kinnear and was hanged to death. Although Grace, the sixteen-year-old immigrant, was convicted along with McDermott, her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on account of an appeal by a few supporters. Nancy Montgomery's murder never went to trial, and Grace remained in the Kinston Prison for thirty years before securing a pardon. There are no verifiable records to know what happened thereafter.

If in *Surfacing,* the past is altered to conjure a false memory in order to hide a trauma, in Atwood's *Alias Grace* the past offers multiple possibilities and demands altering as none of the versions seem convincing to the protagonist herself. Although

Grace Marks, the protagonist in *Alias Grace*, forgets the crucial day of the murder, it is her clear memory about the rest of the days that prompt her to fill the void with the multi-layered possibilities of what might have happened. Grace's innocence becomes the contention with which Dr Jordon is approached by the Methodist Reverend Verringer, the Governess and a few supporters of Grace and thus begins the narrative harping on the loss of memory. By introducing Jordon, Atwood succeeds in attempting to unlock the presumed amnesiac chapter in Grace's life that concerns the day of the murder.

Fiona Tolan comments on how Atwood "appropriates factual and fictional documents" and uses an assemblage of ballads, epilogues, letters, newspaper reports, court judgments and commentaries to present *Alias Grace* as a fictionalised history (223). The text is constituted of "a patchwork of voices" (224) and many textual styles. Grace, with "her feminity, her criminality and her possible insanity" was the subject of "public gaze" and was "branded a murderess" (227). She had been caught red-handed with the stolen goods with McDermott. Grace could never throw light on many of the contradictions that she happened to say on the record. It was difficult to prove her innocence as she claimed that she did not have any recollection of events of the day of the murder. Atwood succeeds in narrating the past through the addition of a fictional character, Dr Simon Jordon, a psychiatrist, who visits Grace at the penitentiary. Dr Jerome Dupont is another fictional character who plays a vital role in the narrative. He doubles as a peddler Jeremiah earlier in the narrative and presents as a hypnotist towards the end of the novel.

The novel has been analysed through varied theoretical angles. The narrative style in the novel, identity resolution and gothic element have attracted interest as also

has the enigmatic character of Grace. Fiona Tolan sees the novel as recovery of “lost female histories” and as giving voices to the silenced women of the past” (222). Gina Wisker discerns dual interesting approaches to the novel as that of problematizing historical narration from the plethora of sources and that of “historically contextualising the representation and treatment of women” (118). Sharon Rose Wilson studies quilting as a narrative art highlighting the folk element of oral storytelling along “with the folk activity of quilting” (84). Bethany Mannon in her critique "Fictive Memoir and Girlhood Resistance in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*" catapults the silenced and oppressed women of the nineteenth century to the position of “an agent capable of radical social critique rather than as a victim or passive object of rescue” (551). She posits the novel as reflective of “patriarchal justice” and “possibilities of female resistance and agency in the face of social structures.of dominance” (552). Grace's “compelling, persuasive voice” and the “complex shifting perspective” (553) of being both the victim and the agent of victimization highlight both the patches of narrative along with its gaps. The article views it from the “strategic girlishness” (561) represents the marginalized. On the other hand, Eleonora Ravizza poses the perception of identity and alterity in *Alias Grace* and as a typical historiographic metafiction. Grace, the Irish immigrant whose retrospective account challenges the otherness and her repositioning in terms of intertextuality and multi-perspectivity.

The discussion of *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* in terms of detective stories with a trauma overtone reflects in Burkhard Niederhoff’s “The Return of the Dead in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace*”. The article is a textual analysis and a comparative study on how knowledge and ignorance reflect in the novels. “While *Surfacing* is about the necessity of surfacing, of emerging into the full light of

knowledge, Grace must remain below the surface to survive. Ignorance means life to her." The protagonists of the two novels are "heavily traumatized by experiencing (*Surfacing*) or witnessing (*Alias Grace*) an abortion" (75). The narrator in surfacing "fabricates a false past" and "Grace's response to trauma is amnesia". Forgetting reflects differently in the novels; with one seeking knowledge while the other opting ignorance. The hypnosis session and Doctor Jordan's intervention echoes Freud's "cleansing of the soul" by the "talking cure" (Freud 184). In a response to Niederhoff's above article, Rao points out a comparative study of *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace*, the two novels "which have hardly ever been discussed together" (68). Tolen adds to it with her discussion in *Cat's Eye* as another instance of repressed childhood trauma (Psycho 97).

The endeavour to view the novel as a trauma narrative and study it in the light of trauma theories of Caruth and Laub makes a new departure. The theory of being a witness to the trauma of self and others as well as creating a witness to narrate and relocate the traumatic experience becomes central to the study. Traumatic resonances are predominant in the painful story of Grace. Although Grace has been celebrated as a murderess and as a scheming and jealous "female, fiend and temptress" (Atwood, Afterword 538), an insight into the narrative that she constructs becomes a version that also needs to be analysed. Her life story depicts the characteristic features that are typical to a trauma victim. It abounds in hallucinations, hysteria, fear, dreams, alienation, guilt, and exposure to violence. Her witnessing of the death of a loved one remains a trope in the story.

Trauma always resembles amnesia, which elucidates the inability to remember and is experienced through a lack of registry in the remembrances. *Alias Grace* projects all the inherent symptoms of trauma, particularly in forgetting not merely of

the event in question, but also a whole day of the happening of the event. The attempt to recover the past through the intervention of the psychologist who tries to draw on the theories by interacting with other medical practitioners charts the course of the narrative. However, he, along with the readers, remain baffled at the clarity of the emerging narrative that significantly only omits the particular day – that of the murder. It is noteworthy to take a cue from Atwood that many a time "we tend to remember the awful things done to us and to forget the awful things we did" (Atwood, In Search 212).

The narrative conveys the inherent latency that accompanied the discourse related to the murder as Grace and her life was scrutinised by the public and the media through various assumptions of her notoriety. Grace remained cloaked in her contradictory utterances that were interpreted as guilt. In the truth of the incomprehensibility and inability to understand except through the mode of narration and creation of witnesses, Dr Jordon's endeavour remains conducive for her to confront the day that remains as a memory gap although multiple versions from different perspectives attempt to fill it. The lack of witnesses on the day of the crime makes the enquiry after years of the happening irrelevant as Grace may have rewritten the narrative of her life many times or forgotten much of what happened. The narrator of the life story resurrects Grace "in another time" and 'another space' and tries to recollect from her childhood days (Caruth, *T* 8).

Atwood surmises that "Grace was a storyteller with strong motives to narrate, but also strong motives to withhold" (Atwood, In Search 174). The dilemma that confronts a trauma victim is that she is unaware of what happened and hence hopes to edit her memories and remains alert to her remembrances. She also engages in listening to her story and analysing it and becomes the witness both telling and

listening to the narrative. The failure to comprehend the truth becomes a participatory eventuality wherein the psychologist as well the reader oscillates between determining whether Grace is guilty or not. Grace, according to the lawyer Mackenzie, maybe telling "what she needs to tell, in order to accomplish the desired end" (*AG* 438). The desired end, according to Mackenzie, was to keep Dr Jordon, "the Sultan amused" as Grace was in love with the doctor and was eager for his company (438). The lecherous meaning and the way the lawyer degrades Grace becomes loathsome to Dr Jordon as it only reflects the way women are seen by society.

Trauma is "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, the uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and another intrusive phenomenon" (Caruth, *T* 11). These intrusive flashbacks, dreams and hallucinations that are symptomatic of trauma find expression in the novel as Grace provides a performative discourse through the screams, sleepwalking and talking to herself. Her usual demure and silent manner of sitting in a corner with a quilt stand in contrast with the thoughts that she reveals more to the reader than to Dr Jordon. The reader remains privy to her thoughts and of her editing them before she narrates her story to Dr Jordon and faithfully begins with the "small details of life" that Dr Jordan asks Grace to detail (*AG* 187). The past is retold sequentially beginning with her childhood. Grace's narration reveals her awareness of Dr Simon's motive, hoping to unlock her mind of the faithful day when the Kinnear murders took place. Her amnesia for a day did not have supporters as newspaper reports, poems and magazines seemed to love the murderess in her and celebrate her villainy.

Trauma is built into the narrative of the novel as Grace undergoes traumatic experiences from childhood and dividing the trauma into a pre-traumatic phase is

difficult. The childhood, upbringing and life of Grace merely stand testimony of her being a silent victim of circumstances. If the murder and the conviction are taken as the prime traumatic incident in the narrative, the novel finds Grace subjected to a range of other traumatic incidents from a very young age. The recurrence of traumatic symptoms occurs with the death of the mother, that of her friend Mary, and finally, with the murder of Kinnear and Nancy. Trauma faced during her imprisonment also adds to the burden of understanding the horror and revisits her through dreams and hallucinations. Grace revels in being termed a murderess and reveals the marking of insanity with her statement, "Murderess is a strong word to have attached to you. It has a smell to it, that word – musky and oppressive, like dead flowers in a vase. Sometimes at night, I whisper it over to myself: Murderess, Murderess. It rustles like a taqffeta skirt across the floor" (25).

Repression of "certain traumatic events of the past" as well as her "interpretation of events" construct the life narrative of Grace opines Staels in her article "Intertexts of Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*" (431). The veil of forgetting begins with the casual manner of the narrative wherein the significant memory loss finds expression through visual imagery and diverts attention from the subject. The narrative within Grace paints the flowers that appear as well as disappear in the mind's eye, or at other times, paints the diffusion of the red of the flowers into the blood that stains and perhaps symbolise the return to the day of the murder.

The ritual of violence daily enacted at home with the domestic abuse that the "timid creature", "hesitating and weak and delicate" mother suffered due to the brutality of her father resurrects in the narrative to form the markers in Grace's childhood disrupted with violence. Her mother struggled to manage her household, and it was her mother's sewing and her Aunt Pauline, who helped them manage their

household expenses. Her father's verbal abuse makes it a frightening experience for her with his rambling hoping to "just knock the new baby on the head and shove it into a hole in the cabbage patch, as it would be a good deal happier under the sod than above it. And then he said it made him hungry just to look at it; it would look very nice on a platter with roast potatoes all round an apple in its mouth" (*AG* 126). Grace also confesses to "having a wicked thought" when she thinks of pushing "one or two" of her siblings over the dock so that" there would not be so many to feed, nor so many clothes to wash" (124).

The voyage across the Atlantic to Canada of Grace and her family, along with other immigrants, highlight the misery of the multitude cramped with seasickness and the turmoil of both life and death at close quarters. Grace locates her first painful memory in her mother's death, mid-voyage. The traumatic initiation in the narrative gets highlighted with the first memory of death that remains within Grace. The casual manner in which her mother was wrapped with a bed sheet and buried in the sea becomes a memory that haunted Grace, and she recalls "As soon as the sheet was over her face I had the notion that it was not really my mother under there, it was some other woman; or that my mother had changed, and if I was to take away the sheet now, she would be someone else entirely. It must have been the shock of it that put such things into my head" (140). However, she merely recollects that "the next day went on as before" only without her mother (140). Her paralysis of not understanding death made her feel that it was she who died and not her "mother that had died" (139). Her guilt of surviving her mother's death resonates in the novel.

Violence remains a tormenting memory in Grace's past. The fury of her father after the death of her mother targets Grace and she "was afraid that the fiery red anger" made her want to kill her father (149). Her fury made her wonder if dropping

the heavy iron cooking pot on him "… while he was asleep, it could smash his skull open, and kill him dead". She, in another context in the novel, remarks to Dr Jordon, "if we were all on trial for our thoughts, we would all be hanged" (369).

An analysis of the narrative can divide the traumatic remembrances into two phases -- the phase before the Kinnear murder termed as pre-traumatic. In this phase, Grace is witness to three deaths -- her mother's death, an aborted foetus and also Mary Whitney's death. As an immigrant, a house-maid and a motherless child, Grace finds a friend in Mary, a fellow maidservant. Her happiness with finding a friend, however, is short-lived. Mary, who is betrayed by a gentleman lover, dies after undergoing an abortion. Grace recalls how she had become a witness to the suffering and pain of Mary. Mary chooses not to reveal the gentleman's name, fearing that she may lose her job and Mary's pregnancy is kept a secret. Grace remains a witness to the cries of Mary as she visits a doctor to undergo an abortion. Grace recoils at what she believed was "a most wicked thing" but knew that it was either the baby or both the mother and child as Mary "would certainly have drowned" and hence she could not have "heart to reproach her" (204).

She believes that "it was the doctor that killed her with his knife; him and the gentleman between them. For it is not always the one that strikes the blow, that is the actual murderer; and Mary was done to death by that unknown gentleman, as surely as if he'd taken the knife and plunged it into her body himself (206). She realises that the life of the working-class continues to be silenced and forgotten. Atwood attempts to recover "lost female history" and gives "voices to the silenced woman of the past"(Tolan 222). Mary's death acts as a trigger for grasping the explanation about the 'lost baby' that she overheard her aunt and mother refer to and the gravity of abortion includes, Grace realises, not only the death of the unborn child, but also that of the

disturbed and ‘lost’ mother. Mary’s death resembles and reinforces the death of Grace’s mother, and the narratives and memories converge.

Death becomes a recurrent motif in the novel. The death of Grace’s mother becomes a framework for trauma to thrive. Mary becomes her mother substitute, and with the death of Mary, Grace has her first episode of traumatic experience. Mary is recreated in their novel as an alter ego, a double, and remains with her throughout the narration. During their hypnotic session, even after recognising and transferring the onus of the murder to Mary, we find that Grace on release starts incorporating Mary’s petticoat into a quilt.

Grace realises the depth of how abandoned she feels after Mary dies. Her inability to voice her thoughts to others becomes a reason for suppressing her memories. As she shifts her job and joins at Kinnear’s house as a maid, she befriends the housekeeper Nancy Montgomery who reminds her of Mary. However, on realising that Nancy was considered to be Kinnear’s mistress, Grace withdraws and prefers to see Mary in her dreams and hallucinations..

The theme of betrayal recurs in the narrative first with Mary and then with Nancy. Grace realises with a shock that “She was in a delicate condition. She was in the family way. She was in trouble. I stood there gaping at her as if I'd been kicked in the stomach. Oh no, oh no, I thought. I felt my heart going hard like a hammer. It cannot be” *(AG* 321). The trigger association of trauma returns. Mary was getting resurrected through Nancy. Grace, who remarks that the wages of sin are the same for everyone finds Nancy as guilty as Mary. Grace refuses to view them as victims of a societal class system. Violence, abortion, betrayal and death are the traumatic situations that she encounters since childhood. However, it is not that she is a victim,

but that she is a witness to victimisation that makes it traumatic.

Guilt becomes associated with the witnessing of Mary's death. Trauma revisits her as she finds death being replicated with her being asleep on the floor of the same room while Mary was dying. Grace is unable to bear the shock of waking up to find Mary dead "I fell asleep, and did not wake up until daybreak. And when I did, there was Mary, dead in the bed, with her eyes wide open and staring" (204). The shock of seeing her friend dead reinforces the image of finding her mother dead "with her eyes open and fixed" (139). She feels guilty of surviving.

Guilt becomes an extension of the pain of being abandoned by the dead and also to that of a feeling of inadequacy at surviving their death. She recollects that she had chosen the second-best bed sheet for her mother and had not stayed awake for both her mother and Mary. She unburdens herself of her pain as she narrates her story. She finally can witness the telling of the story to a listener unperturbed by the court, the lawyers and the newspapers who earlier made her story into various narratives. Narrating one's perspective of events, however, proves to facilitate greater acceptance of the pasts and erasing the guilt of surviving Grace carries the burden of the story within her. The essence of traumatic experience is captured through her words:

> When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else. (346)

Shifting the blame is another trope that exists in the novel. Grace's mother is held solely held responsible for getting pregnant. Grace recalls her father's remark, "What are you bringing another brat into this world for, haven't you had enough of that by now, but no you can't stop, another mouth to feed, as if he himself had nothing to do with it at all"(123). Similarly, Mary's death is hushed up by the mistress of the house where she worked with Mary. Mrs Parkinson believed that Grace must have been privy to Mary's clandestine affair and that she surely was hiding the name of the gentleman. When Grace realises that "it is hard to put an end to suspicion once it has begun", she decides to quit her position (230). Mrs Parkinson only asks her to swear by the Bible that she would never reveal the name of the gentleman. The gentleman remains absolved, and the culprits become Mary and Grace. Also in the case of Nancy's murder, there is no reinvestigation and trial, and she remains blamed for her end by the system and society that prevailed then by attributing the murder as retribution for her sins. Kinnear is vindicated. Grace also remarks that Mary and Nancy's death resonate each other "Why should the one be rewarded and the other punished, for the same sin?" (321).

The trauma associated with the murders retains the same complexity that Grace exhibits in portraying multiple versions of the same event. The "not telling" of the actual story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny. Grace has been asked to convert her narrative of the day of murder which she refuses to oblige. It is through the hypnosis that a narrative emerges. The verifiability and the charges of manipulation remain as her hypnotist unknown to others is her acquaintance Jeremiah. The narrative, however, has been retold within Grace innumerable times as she validates each of the plausible narratives that she can afford to tell. Caruth details that in trauma victims, the experience is never understood and never integrated

into consciousness. It is only in the denial of active recollection that trauma exists.

Grace's "collapse of understanding"(Caruth, *T* 7) is by escaping from the unknown and the fearful as hiding under the bed during a thunderstorm and losing consciousness for hours to break the chain of painful suffering. Every episode of fainting recalls emotional disturbance as the brutal beating by her father, at Mary's death and before Nancy's death. The narrative excludes many verifiable details and confronts Grace as guilty of murder or guilty of misplacing her remembrances. Choosing not to remember becomes a defence strategy in a trauma victim. The trauma of witnessing the murder of Nancy and Kinnear or the trauma after committing the murder can both block her memory. Only when the traumatic memory is converted to a narrative will it slowly lose its fierceness and merge with the master narrative.

The violent events that accompanied the murder are presumed to have created a rupture in her thought process, according to Dr Jordon. He believes that suggestion and associative memory can help recall the lost memory. Dr Jordon tries to make her remember by using the strategy of associations to various objects with which he tried to persuade her to recall the forgotten memory.

Hallucinations are symptomatic of trauma. Grace changed the blood-soaked nightdress of Mary and cleaned the room with Agnes, a fellow servant. However, then she hears a voice whisper in her ear "Let me in." Terrified at hearing the voice, Grace decides not to open the window. Later wondering whether what she heard was "Let me out", she opens the window pretending to air the room (207). She believed that Mary's soul was trapped in the room and hoped that it would fly out the window and not remain inside and whisper in her ear. She fears whether it had been too late in opening the window. This auditory hallucination continues intermittently throughout

the novel. It is reminiscent of the night her mother died in the ship, and it was told that that the soul would not be free if the window were shut. She had believed that her mother's soul had been trapped.

The memory of the traumatic experience returns as Grace suddenly confronts the vision of "waking up with Mary in the bed " and "touching her" and finding that Mary was unable to speak (*AG* 209). She recollects "the horror and distress" she would feel and faints (209). Grace wakes up from fainting for over ten hours after to find Mary dead "But I had no memory of anything I said or did during the time I was awake, between the two long sleeps; and this worried me" (209). She on being awake from fainting asks for Grace. She recollects that it was reported that she kept asking where "Grace had gone" and stated that "Grace was lost and had gone into the lake" and insisted on searching for her (208). This juxtaposition of the concept of transference of identities is a prelude to the final episode of transference during hypnosis in the novel. Her inability or unwillingness to let go of Mary could also be causative to her hallucinations and her version to listening to Mary's voices. Dreams, hysteria and hallucination reveal the traumatic manifestation in Grace. Grace had no memory of anything she "said or did during the time" that she was awake (209). However, Mary eclipses the death of her mother and its memory.

It becomes significant that her friendship with Mary becomes a refrain in the novel as Mary appears through voices, through dreams, and at times, Grace could even "hear her breathing" (229). Dr Jordon reiterates that in Grace the episodes of auditory hallucinations are followed "by an episode of fainting, and then by hysterics, mixed with what would appear to have been somnambulism; after which there was a deep and prolonged sleep, and subsequent amnesia" (220). However, Dr Jordon realises that this reconstruction of events has an inherent problem.There were no

witnesses to affirm or contradict Grace's story.

The features of trauma include fear, avoidance, heightened sensitivity to trigger associations, disturbed sleep, hallucinations, hyper vigilance and psychic numbing. Atwood's use of hysteria becomes relevant as it "paradoxically becomes both as a source of power for victimised women who use hysteria's florid physical symptoms to act out their socially conditioned distress and as a hopeless retreat from reality, consigning women to illness and silence" (Darroch 104). The "bad dreams" make her an inmate of the Lunatic Asylum (*AG* 365). "They said they were not dreams at all, Sir. They said I was awake" (365). She keeps "her sewing aside" looks "down at her hands" (365). Trauma reveals in her hysteria at seeing one of the doctors who resembled her tormentor at the asylum.

> And then I see his hand, a hand like a glove, a glove stuffed with raw meat, his hand plunging into the open mouth of his leather bag. It comes out glinting, and I have seen a hand like that before, and then I lift my head and stare him straight In the eye, and my heart clenches and kicks out inside me, and then I begin to scream. Because it's the same doctor, the same one, the very same black-coated doctor with his bagful of shining knives. (32)

Hysteria and hallucinations remain markers of trauma. The "denial of active recollection" (Caruth, *UE* 152) of trauma makes it problematic as such acts only reveal what again bypasses understanding. One of the spells of hallucination conjures the image of standing in the cellar with a candle, and the walls of the cellar constrict space: "standing there with a candle, blocking the stairs that go up; and the cellar walls are all around me, and I know I will never get out" (*AG* 7). Grace describes the restriction and the suffocation in what she claims happened at that particular point

of the past. “This is what I told Dr Jordan when we came to that part of the story” (7). As her narrative progresses, the deliberate lies, misconstructions and forgetting become a blur with her comment “And I certainly hoped that I could forgive, as I myself hoped to be forgiven in future” (268). The question whether Grace is revealing the truth or is conjuring images which manipulate possibilities remain unanswered till the end.

The character of Mary Whitney remains an abstraction in the novel. She is resurrected through the memories of Grace. Dr Jordon locates the tombstone of one Mary Whitney. However, whether Grace’s recollection can be trusted is left to the reader. The ambiguity is retained through his comment that the only person who could vouch for Grace’s story was Mary and she was dead. The tomb did not have any dates engraved. “She could be just a name, a name on a stone, seen here by Grace and used by her in the spinning of her story. She could be an old woman, a wife, a small infant, anyone at all” (451). The suspicion grows in Dr Jordon whether Grace was fabricating the story in order to manipulate the opinion towards “the desired end” (438). The contradiction in the narrative could not reconcile whether Grace was guilty or innocent.

The hallucinations and hysteria phases in Grace convey a psychic breakdown. However, living in the glare of the media and public scrutiny, convicted as an accessory to murder makes life difficult as memories reconstruct the collage of what the world expects from her. Traumatic recollections become a solitary activity as Van der Hart suggests and Grace engages in thinking various possibilities that could make her remember and replace with the real narrative of what happened. Atwood lets the reader notice that Grace chooses not to share specific recollections with the doctor. However, the reader continues being witness to Grace’s thoughts and her perplexities.

The oscillations between a scheming, crafty woman who may be a manipulator to a victim who is aware of the various narratives built on her become problematised with both the doctor and the reader trying to sift the imaginative from the real. The memory that builds a life story that provides even minor details of her life to the doctor is suspect as Grace narrates the story, but circumvents the day of the murder.

Trauma victims find narrating of one's life story helpful in confronting the buried memories. Dreams, visions and hysteria remain signifiers of underlying trauma. Guilt becomes another accessory o traumatic experience as along with the witnessing death of a loved one, the guilt of surviving also coexists. Grace remains incapable of adapting her trauma into the right words. Her mother's death is remembered with the guilt of choosing the second-best bed sheet for her burial in the sea, the guilt of sleeping beside the dying Mary the way she did while her mother died and the guilt of losing the kerchief that belonged to her mother while strangulating Nancy become object fixation to the guilt in her memory. Mary relives in Grace only as a narrative component in the story that is told to Dr Jordon. As she narrates, Grace becomes both the narrator and the listener to her tale. The witnessing that Laub categorises as a coping mechanism to realign the experience takes place and Grace narrates her story. Dr Jordon becomes the first person who listens to her story from her childhood, to her sufferings and her thoughts by letting her speak.

The identity of Grace is slowly constructed through the employment of language that oscillates from the calm and sober control discourse to that of outbursts that betray her traumatic nightmares. Dr Simon realises that Grace has adorned the role of a victim both at the penitentiary as well as at the lunatic asylum. She describes how life in the asylum was where the inmates were showcased to the public. The spectacle had to be celebrated. "Sometimes they would provoke us, especially right

before the visitors were to come. They wanted to show how dangerous we were, but also how well they could control us, as it made them appear more valuable and skilled" (35). Grace agrees that the taunting continued to a crescendo that if the public wants to see a monster, "they ought to be provided with one" (36).

The 'deviant' spaces of the Lunatic asylum, the 'deviant' thoughts of the characters, the 'deviant' dead personages that haunt the narrative world of the living constitute the perplexity that reflects the muddled world of a troubled traumatic past. Grace observes that the asylum was a refuge for many women who found safety within the walls of the asylum. One of the women chose to be at the asylum during winter because the weather outside was cold and she was without shelter. Another had found the asylum to be a refuge from the abuse of her husband. "Another woman had killed her child, and it followed her around everywhere, tugging at her skirt; and sometimes she would pick it up and hug and kiss it, and at other times she would shriek at it, and hit it away with her hands" (35). The matron in the ward was convinced that Grace was "mad as a snake"(35). When asked to repent, Grace only shrieks that she did not commit the murders. Grace always attributed the crime to someone else. Dr Jordan, who begins his pursuit of Grace's memories of her amnesiac day, is unable to continue with his probe to the end. Although he keeps suspecting whether Grace has been creating narratives to amuse herself, he always wants to "know" and "not know"(Caruth, *UE* 3). He is intrigued by Grace and possesses her in his dreams. His narrative has a parallel trauma that he is unable to handle. However, gender becomes problematic for Grace, and it is in this silenced regime that she recreates Mary and Mary's voice returns from the dead.

Cultural repression gets highlighted in the novel with Grace having the identity marker of being an immigrant. Her voice becomes the portrayal of the

'other' in Canada and disowning the crime and fixing it onto the other land reflects the cultural memory that accompanies post-colonialism. Grace's isolation and endurance of remaining silent and watchful become an extension of the cultural repression that the immigrant faces, the domestic housemaid suffer and their stories remain unspoken and unheard. An overview of Grace's life shows a life of penury, grief and alienation from society. The problems of an immigrant doubles with the marginalisation and subjugation of her gender. Grace remains "marked by birth and poverty" (Goldblatt, 275). The attempt to narrate her story becomes a unique adventure with a learned doctor writing down every word she uttered. Grace attempts to make her story interesting so that the doctor is not bored and would continue with his enquiry. At the same time, Grace is a willing participant hoping that her narrative would perhaps reveal her innocence.

Friendship acts as a construct of witnessing. Grace escapes from the troubled childhood to a space where she finds friendship and care. She goes to work at the house of Mr Alderman Parkinson, where she befriends a fellow servant, Mary Whitney. Mary remains a mother substitute for Grace. She reveals her painful remembrance of the "journey in the ship" and about her mother dying and the burial "sinking down the sea among the icebergs" *(AG* 178). Mary becomes a listener to the witnessing of her pain. Grace soon stops hearing of her father and her siblings and has no idea where they were. She spends her "happiest Christmas" with Mary (197), and her first witness is created.

Grace has Jeremiah, the peddler, who she believed sensed her pain and loneliness. There was Jammie Walsh whom she befriended in the Kinnear household who did not frighten her. The wariness that is associated with all the others highlights the lack of trust as well as her marginalisation in society. She could trust only those

who did not have any other friend.

Alienation remains a feature of trauma and reflects in Grace's dreams. Grace dreams about death and also dreams of Mary. She remarks "I have little enough of my own, no belongings, no possessions, no privacy to speak of, and I need to keep something for myself; and in any case, what use would he have for my dreams, after all?" (116). She does not tell Dr Jordon all of what happens in her dreams.

Grace's world shrinks to contain only her memories for her company. She faces social exclusion for being an immigrant, later working at a household resigned to her chores in the house and kitchen remain isolated from the world outside and its interference. The lack of a family, the lack of bonding with her siblings or her father, the memory of her dead mother and her dear friend Mary serve to act as a barrier to further interactions with others. Her resignation to remain contained and submissive finds a conflicting version in her hysteria and insane utterings. Dreams and hallucinations are indicative of her longings of tracing the memory that has been perhaps hidden from her.

The unknown and the enigmatic remain perplexing similar to traumatic memory and reflect what Caruth terms to be "a collapse of understanding" (*T* 7). Grace has hallucinations and also hears voices. The truth becomes unverifiable as Grace remains the only custodian of the narration of her life story with Mary. Dr Jordon wonders at the auditory hallucinations that Grace narrates. Her episodes of 'not knowing' and her amnesia on the day of murder fall into a pattern wherein Grace may be presumed to be telling the truth. However, the fact remains that there are no witnesses to her past.

The constant shift in points of view adds to the disjointed memories in

reflecting a feeling of uncertainty regarding her guilt. The narration reveals fissures in the past of the protagonist as she tries to relocate her lost memory. Dr Jordon is on the lookout for a triggering factor which would unlock Grace's mind. Her loss of memory is viewed with scepticism, and the world is horrified at Grace -- the cool, unrepentant murderess. Her isolation and her silence, interrupted by her occasional hysteric fits, are drawn with finesse in the narrative. The diffusion of memories into a phantasmal reflects her confusion and her inability to interpret the trauma.

The struggle to remember gives way to the inability to recollect. The day of murder remains elusive even at the end of the revisiting of the past. Dr Jordon asks whether she recalls anything about the cellar where the murder took place. Grace clutches her two hands to the sides of her head. "That is what they wanted me to say. Mr MacKenzie told me I had to say it, to save my own life." MacKenzie was her lawyer. For once, she is trembling. "He said it was not a lie, as that is what must have happened, whether I could remember it or not" *(AG* 368). She retracts what she declared in her 'Confessions' of having dragged Nancy by her hair into the cellar. Grace wanted to believe that she was unable to recall as nothing problematic had happened. She believed memory would otherwise have left a residue as in Plato's wax tablet. She remarks: "On the edge of sleep I thought: It's as if I never existed because the trace of me remains, I have left no marks. And that way, I cannot follow. It is almost the same as being innocent. And then I slept" (398).

Forgetting is a tool to prod remembrances. Traumatic memories in the novel reveal a disposition of the inability to cope with stressful situations. If *Surfacing* reveals the narrator deciding not to attend her mother's funeral, *Alias Grace* reveals the shock of giving a burial in the sea to her dead mother. Withdrawal symptoms include burying the episode and looking for an alternate mother figure as Grace does

in Mary or negating motherhood as in *Surfacing*. Suppression burdens living and the past remains grotesque and unclear. Forgetting becomes a saviour to Grace as the world looks sceptically at her forgetting only the day of the murder. Forgetting in *Alias Grace* becomes both repressed as selective amnesia. The open-ended plot fails to reveal whether Grace is innocent or is feigning innocence. The murderess or the conspiracy that makes her a victim gets a relief when Grace gets a pardon and leaves to lead a life with Jamie Walsh.

Coomi S. Vevaina quotes FR Ankersmith "if one view of the past prevails, there is no view of the past because only multiple plays of perspectives provided by a variety of narrations can enable us to 'see' at all the contours and specificity of each view of the past"(88). Different perspectives and portrayals of Grace are offered within the novel as in a collage. The enigma of multiplicity reflects in the multiple narratives that the novel displays. The contradictions in the narratives are never resolved as each narrative tries to validate itself. The narratives remain as enigmatic as memories. Memories too offer multiple constructs and attempt to approximate truth. Just as no narrative can exactly replicate truth, each of the versions testifies to different versions of the truth. The real remains unknown in its totality.

The multiplicity of remembrances makes narration problematic. The narrative intervenes with other strands of narratives. Grace remembers asking Mac Dermott not to kill Nancy in the room as it would "make the floor all bloody" *(AG* 368). She also remembers the lawyer instructing her to say that she had asked Mac Dermott to take Nancy to the cellar. Grace narrates that she recalls being shot at by McDermott and later saw Mr Kinnear's body lying on the floor; "I was to leave out the parts I could not remember, and especially to leave out the fact that I could not remember them. And I should say what must have happened, according to plausibility, rather than

what I myself could actually recall. So that is what I attempted to do”(415) .

The multiplicity of remembrances also stays in contrast to the forgetting of a fateful day in her life. In her interaction with Dr Jordon, she is also seen to hope that she would be able to recollect the happenings of the day. At other times, however, Grace is seen to manipulate her answers in such a manner that even Dr Jordon wonders if she has cleverly taken from the various newspaper clippings that she reads about herself in the Governor’s house. His suspicion on whether Grace was feigning her amnesia remains unanswered till the end of the novel.

Grace appears to have told one story at the inquest, another one at the trial, and, after her death sentence had been commuted, yet a third. In all three, however, she denied ever having laid a finger on Nancy Montgomery. However, some years later, we have Mrs Moodie's account, which amounts to a confession by Grace, of having done the deed; and this story echoes James McDermott's dying words, just before he was hanged. However, she alters her version on her return from the Asylum.

Alternate versions coexist as Grace recalls her varied testimonies and recalls, “I can remember what I said when arrested, and what Mr Mackenzie the lawyer said I should say, and what I did not say even to him; and what I said at the trial, and what I said afterwards, which was different as well” (342). Grace’s logic explains why she favoured using Mary’s name as she left the scene of the murder and attributes it to the fact that Mary would not mind her using it. Grace believed that Mary often has lent her clothes and similarly, Grace considers it normal to borrow Mary’s name while leaving the scene of murder. Mary once lent her a nightdress for which Grace always felt grateful. On Mary’s death, she returns the favour by dressing the dead Mary

with one of her nightdresses. Grace notices the dresses that Nancy wears, and also takes them with her after the murder although Grace has no recollection of what happened. The ownership of the dresses gets diffused similar to how the names of Mary, Nancy and Grace diffuse into weaving a quilted tapestry of memory that remains different, yet similar.

In his essay 'That is what I told Dr Jordon', Gillian Siddall opines that Grace in telling Dr Jordon her story is consciously constructing it. She tells the reader things which she does not tell the doctor. The negotiation between the psychiatrist and Grace is akin to that between the past and the present. To uncover the missing information, the doctor tries to control the process of remembrance with cues, suggestions and prompts that may trigger an association. According to Siddall, this is thwarted by Grace, and it is Grace who controls and manipulates the storytelling. The conveniently omitted or edited memories constitute the life stories of all. It is to be noted that Kuhn's comment that "characters and happenings that do not slot neatly into the flow of the family narrative are ruthlessly edited out" (231). Kuhn's remark specifically applies to collective memory and the nature of telling a more acceptable story and hiding the real. By borrowing the analogy into the individual narrative and memory parlance, secrets are also seen buried outside narratives deliberately and also unconsciously.

Fiona Tolan comments that "Grace uses multiplicity as a defence against a world that seeks to define and limit her, and the competing texts of the novel reflect the unstable composition of Grace's character" (230). She terms Grace as a collage of discourses. "In a single page she speaks in the past, and present tenses mixes dream with reality, and confuses an apparently factual past with a fantasied alternative future"(230). Grace also functions as the central narrator divulging thoughts that are

withheld from Dr Jordon. “Speaking becomes her release, her escape, and also her defiance of the imposition of silence that she has been placed under for so long” (233). The politics of hysterical discourse runs throughout the novel. Tolan uses feminist theories to discuss quilting as an action as well as a fragmented composition.

The plurality of remembrance has a different dimension with Grace. Her endurance is put to the test with the childhood remembrances --- the death of her mother, the death of her friend and finally the images of the double murder. She finally is neuro-hypnotised in order to determine whether she is guilty. The Neuro-hypnotist Du Pont seems to instil confidence in Grace as she prepares to undergo hypnosis. Dr Jordon realises that Grace looked terrified. Her nervousness ends after the session as if having achieved what she wished to accomplish. The possession of her body by Mary’s soul and that voice that proclaimed that the murders were the action of Mary without the knowledge of Grace found acceptance in the age. Mary, Grace’s dead friend, becomes the culprit and Grace is absolved. However, the doctor delays signing the report and later joins the army and is killed during the war. Grace, after thirty years, finally secures a pardon.

The selectivity of remembrances vies with the multiple versions of the same event that are displayed in the text. “Layers and layers of texts stand between the reader and the people and the events it seeks to represent” (Michael 425). Atwood’s remark that “individual memory, history and the novel are all selective” is worth recalling (Atwood, In Search 175). Her co-accused McDermott’s narrative was different. Newspaper reports are different from the confessions; Moodie’s remarks about Grace are different from how Grace reveals herself in the narrative. There are different notions of Grace being innocent or Grace being cunning. Conveniently,

Grace returns to her "stupid look" (*AG* 45). Grace remarks "But you often imagine things, when you are alone so much" (416).

Grace tries to fill the details of the contradictions offered by the historical parchments arrayed in the novel with her life story. Her narrative said to Dr Jordon does have deliberate omission which Grace confides to the reader. The reader realises that the alterations in her testimonies could be the following of the instructions of her lawyer. The narrative intersperses with declarations like "Perhaps I will tell you lies"(46),"…cannot remember"(369), "I did remember that part of that" (414), "I am asked to leave that out" (46) and "… but I have lost that part of memory"(46). Her narrative becomes an attempt to gather resources from her assimilations as to what happened years ago.

The unreliability of the narrations is heightened with Grace resorting to manipulating her story to make it attractive to Dr Jordon. To keep the psychiatrist happy, Grace manages to pick a topic she thought would interest him. Grace finds relief from the monotony of her thoughts and looks forward to understanding herself through narrating her story to the patient psychologist. Her different versions of the murder also add to the unreliability. Grace tries to continue with her stories believing that it would distract Dr Jordon "from his worries" (169). Again, in another context, Grace reassures Dr Jordon that she would "try hard to remember" the dreams as she wanted to help him "with the trouble" that he was in (282). She adds "Those who have been in trouble themselves are alert to it in others, Sir" (282-283). Dr Jordon realises that he had when he first met her felt "that it was he, and not she, who was under scrutiny" (68). His probe into the mind of Grace is slowly reversed as Grace starts probing into his mind, and he becomes one of the threads that aids Grace quilt the tale.

Her loneliness is amplified as she remarks that “Then I sing a song, just to hear a voice and keep myself company” (37). Time has a residual value for Grace. She locates herself within different paradigms of time. The multiplicity extends to time but shrinks spaces within her to the confines of her dreams. Memories flood Grace’s mind. As she recollects the Kinnear household:

> When I close my eyes I can remember every detail of that house as clear as a picture—the verandah with the flowers, the windows and the white pillars, in the bright sunlight—and I could walk in every room of it blindfolded, though at that moment I had no particular feeling about it and only wanted a drink of water. It is strange to reflect that of all the people in that house, I was the only one of them left alive in six months’ time. (243)

Grace admits that loneliness is a terrible state and that she “would never blame a human creature for feeling lonely” (300).The feeling of being alone and unwanted recurs from her childhood memories. The deep sense of loneliness that she feels is highlighted when she comments to Dr Jordon on McDermott’s insinuation that she lured him into committing the double murders. McDermott had insinuated that Grace had asked him to poison Kinnear. Grace ridicules the narrative by stating that she could have committed the murders by herself as “It would not take any more strength than the adding of a spoonful of sugar”(299). She deliberates on her remembrances, saying perhaps McDermott did not want to be alone in the journey of crime and murder. “And perhaps he wanted me to keep him company on the journey. The road to death is a lonely highway, and longer than it appears, even when it leads straight down from the scaffold, by way of a rope; and it's a dark road, with never any moon shining on it, to light your way” (299).

The buried truth in Grace can only be retrieved through narrating the past. The past to Grace has varied versions. She reads and looks at the different narratives built about her as well as reflects on what may or may not have happened. She remembers in parts or the patches. These remembrances make up her version or versions of the story and are as varied as the quilts she makes. She reflects thus: "But I did not have these fancies about the quilts until after I was already in prison. It is a place where you have a lot of time to think, and no one to tell your thoughts to; and so you tell them to yourself" (186). The patchworks provide a release and are a quintessence of her isolation and predicament. Others construct her identity as in a quilt through merging different patches.

The different narratives written about Grace vie within the scrapbook that the Governess treasured. The reliabilities of the news stories become questionable as Grace declares it as"[a] lot of it is lies" (30). She fumes "They said in the newspaper that I was illiterate, but I could read some even then" (29). The Prison Governor's wife had a collection of books that had pictures of the victims of society through illness, riot or crime. The scrapbook contained the cuttings from the reports on Grace's trial and the details of the double-murder. Grace realises that the world seemed to know more about her than she did. Grace's contention with the doctor remains that with "the lawyers and the judges, and the newspapermen, they seem to know my story better than I do myself. In any case, I can't remember, I can remember other things, but I have lost that part of my memory entirely. They must have told you that" (46). When Grace is shown the scrapbook, she projects the expected behaviour, by expressing her remorse and stated that she was a changed person. Nevertheless, Grace does manage to sneak and go through the scrapbook on her when she is alone in the parlour. Her sarcastic remark that the Governor's wife who seems so

interested in crimes and such stories should perhaps realise that the Bible also contained various crimes which the Governor's wife "should cut them all out and paste them into her scrapbook" (30).This remark summarises how astute Grace was in highlighting the pathos of being an inmate in the penuntiary or the asylum. The inmates were paraded, showcased and demeaned in front of others and led an undignified existence.

The identity of Grace remains constructed by others and Grace wonders "how she can be all of these different things at once?". She was either an "inhuman female demon" or "an innocent victim of a blackguard" or "too ignorant to know to act". She was portrayed as being "fond of animals", "handsome with brilliant complexion", with "blue eyes" or "green", "auburn and also brown hair", "tall and also not above average height", "well and decently dressed", or "robbed a dead woman to be decently dressed". She was either with a "sullen disposition with a quarrelsome temper" or "a good girl with a pliable nature" or "cunning and devious" or "soft in the head and little better than an idiot"(25).

The metaphor of quilting is predominant in the novel wherein the feminine discourse projects. Grace enjoys making intricate patterns with quilting and explains each different quilting pattern to the reader in a very detailed manner. Most of the imagery she weaves is borrowed from Nature and echoes the pattern of victimisation that Grace endures. Grace succeeds to work out the trauma through successful engagements with quilting an intricate act that lets her reflect on her past. She remains silent and only talked to herself. It is a metaphor for the travails of her existence and each chapter is named after a particular pattern. A few examples are 'Jagged Edge', 'Rocky Road', 'Lady of the Lake', 'Pandora's Box' and finally the 'Tree of Paradise' which correlate to the different phases of her life.

"Storytelling is likened to craftwork" in the novel, according to Fiona Tolan (225). The patchwork that Grace crafts tells the tale of lives that are couched in silences that especially reign in the craft of quilting. The auditory sensibilities in the text are awoken with the voices of the dead. Grace poetically describes the flowers, the birds, the thunder, and the gravel. The artist in Grace crafts a contrived narrative that perhaps traps the doctor into a quagmire of sensations that he is unable to handle. His life becomes strained, and his landlady, who is married demands his attention. He is caught in a web of desire, lust and disgust. He can only abscond by spinning a tale of his mother's illness.

The alternate narration through Dr Jordon recreates his dilemma in studying Grace and her life story and relating to the various contradictory narratives that were already in existence through the pieces of evidence in the historical records. He adds to this repertoire the correspondence with the doctor who examined her at the asylum and also had to confront whether their attitude in viewing her as a criminal may have undone her. The quagmire of reactions which mostly have been documented and perhaps read by Grace proves to be another hurdle where Grace can invent a past that suits her. With differing narratives and differing views, Grace manages to ensnare Dr Jordon who can only console himself of the improbability of their marriage by reflecting, "Madness, of course; a perverse fantasy, to marry a suspected murderess. What if he had met her before the murders?" (*AG* 453).

Dr Jordon is unable to extricate himself from the complexities of truth and falsehood in order to explain his thoughts as well as his actions even to himself. Similar to the amnesiac chapter in Grace's life being locked in the cellar, the doctor's dreams remain entwined within the darkness of the night. The narratives of Mary as well as Nancy conjure in the doctor's past and dreams. Being the only son in a

house which had many young servant girls make him a voyeur and his trespasses are reviewed in the confines of his dreams as the secret adventures of a master. His listening to the story of Mary spirals his own suppressed memories into intruding into his dreams and his landlady seduces him and manages to exploit his weakness. Dr Jordon attempts to be objective remains futile as even in his dreams he pursues Grace and her narrative only to realise that "She glides ahead of him, just out of his grasp, turning her head to see if he is still following" (407). His perplexity increases as he finds that he is unable to have an objective view. His personal life becomes a mirror of Grace's struggle to survive.

The trigger for trauma in *Alias Grace* can be presumed to lie in the witnessing of death as also in facing the prospect of isolation. Grace's life in the lunatic asylum for a short period becomes associated only through hysteria and other panic spells in the penitentiary. Her hysteria, hallucination, dreams, fainting spells and amnesia find a correlative in Dr Jordon. Dr Jordon, who tries to unlock the day of the murder from Grace's forgetting, finds his life volatile and diffused. His perceptions are unable to sift dream from reality, falsehood from the truth and the guilty from the innocent. Such binaries cease to exist for Dr Jordon, who finds memories can provide multiple versions where the truth may remain unknown. Laub observes that witnessing and listening "becomes a process that demands retreat". The listening happens in stages as there is a "need to halt and reflect on these memories as they are spoken, to reassert the veracity of the past and to build anew its linkage to, and assimilation into, present-day life" (Caruth, *T* 62).

Juxtaposed to the narrative is the parallel narrative of Dr Jordon, who is the psychologist who acts as a witness to the narration of the story. His inability to cope with her story and his disintegration become another narrative where he needs help.

Dr Jordon's dilemma becomes two-fold -- with his attraction to Grace and his suppressed emotions playing havoc in his life, and in his disintegration as the listener who is unable to cope with his ability to witness getting problematized in his professional life. Grace remains indicted in both the narratives related to the doctor. The scheming and sinister Grace has been declared guilty by the majority in the past as well as now. With the skeleton of only her version of the events patched with the evidence in the parchments, narratives blend to be constructed at different times to lend different meanings.

The violent events that accompanied the murder are presumed to have created a rupture in Grace's thought process, according to Dr Jordon. He believes that suggestion and associative memory can help recall the lost memory. Dr Jordon tries to make her remember by using the strategy of associations to various objects with which he tried to persuade her to recall the forgotten memory. He keeps referring to Thomas Brown's works on associative memory and Herbart's theory of threshold of the unconscious. Dr Jordon oscillates between two pathways that have been offered to him. One where the Dr Samuel Bannerling MD, who examines Grace at the Asylum sums her up as "an accomplished actress and a most practised liar" *(AG* 81). The other with Reverend Verringer, who has been championing Grace's release, finds in Simon's report a chance for securing her pardon. "So she has a history of such lapses!"(220). However, Simon has been unable to decide on the enigma that Grace poses to him.

The triad possibilities that open for contention are the fear of Grace being found guilty, the urge not to know what happened, and finally, the third possibility that looms large in both Dr Jordon and the reader's mind is whether Grace has deftly manipulated a narrative of convenient amnesia on the day of the murder. She once

asks Dr Jordon to bring a radish. Macpherson comments on the associative memory that may make the radish being a "root vegetable" "remind her of the cellar" and "reignite her memory" (71). However, when Dr Jordon asks Grace why she wanted radish, in particular, she comes with a simple explanation that she would prefer a fresh vegetable like a radish that would be a rare treat and could be eaten raw (*AG* 282). Grace easily recognises the pattern of his instigation to make her reveal the day of the murder and happily looks forward to the objects he picks for prompting a recall.

A pattern emerges in the narrative as in a quilt. Grace, observant and with a taste for detail, was excellent at intricate quilting designs. She quilts her story with every thread of varied versions contributing to the exquisite pattern. Grace remains calm and composed as she quilts silently and engrossed in her work. Her narrative of having a history of hysteric outbursts, sleepwalking, dreams and hallucinations all fit a pattern denoting that her amnesia has been a regular feature even before the Kinnear murders. The doctor is not impressed even in their hypnotic session when Grace speaks in Mary's voice as though possessed by her and a clap is heard from the ceiling.

Atwood admits that in *Alias Grace* she has selected from the varied versions of the historic trial that were available. She also admits that "wherever mere hints and outright gaps exist in records", she "felt free to invent"(Afterword 542). The alternate version to history served a reminder for the prospects of forgetting. Paul Ricoeur has in his *Memory History and Forgetting* remarked on the fallibility of history to present the truth. History is merely a record of the remembrances and contains omissions of the forgetting. Grace's suffering as projected in the fictionalised version does not project her as guilty. The difficulty in reassembling and retelling the same story again

and again for thirty long years makes remembrances more of a habit memory or a variable memory that provides a different version every time. Tolan quotes from an interview of Atwood on the using of Nancy's dress for the making quilt that "This is where the patchwork quilt came from; you don't throw things out, you make them into something else" (*AG* 231).

The reluctance to accept death resonates with the theme of Grace resurrecting Mary later in the novel as an internal witness, with whom she could create a make-believe world of discourse. "I thought I saw her move, and I said, Mary, are you pretending? For she sometimes pretended she was dead, behind the sheets in the drying room, to frighten me. But she was not pretending" (204-205). She recreates Mary as a voice, a friend who appears in her dreams. In her imagination, Mary remained alive. But in the world of chaos, multiple narratives, and with the freedom that is afforded to the mad, imagination can certainly run riot. Red peonies become a constant association that foregrounds memories. Peonies become red, blood or bloodied eyes that followed her everywhere. "I watch the peonies out of the corners of my eyes. I know shouldn't be here: it's April, and peonies don't bloom in April. There are three more now right in front of me, growing out of the path itself. Furtively I reach out my hand to touch one. It has a dry feel, and I realize it's made of cloth" (6). Peonies that look like red spots get confused with the bloodstains in her dreams. The dream of the peonies is never shared.

Survival strategy through trauma is best expressed in one of the case studies of Laub. He details the story of an Israeli officer who was separated from his parents at the age of four. His mother had given her photograph to him and asked him to look at it whenever he needed reassurance. Both his parents also promised that they would locate him and take him home after the war was over. The boy believed them, and

whenever he felt insecure, he talked to the photograph. He was, according to Laub, creating an internal witness in order to survive and retain hope. He is shocked at reuniting with his parents, whom he does not recognise. His mother did not resemble the woman in the photograph. The shattering of the internal witness is traumatic, and he starts having nightmares. He dreams of a conveyer belt, and the dreams recreate the horror of feeling trapped. The safety that the photograph afforded is now lost. Years later, only when he talked of his story with his wife, he could manage to overcome the horror and the traumatic dream. His understanding of what happened was revisited while narrating the story to his wife. Another witness had been created. (Caruth *T* 71). Sharing of pain is essential in order to comprehend trauma.

Listening becomes an integral factor in working through trauma. It is only by listening to the trauma and its wounding that there is a hope of overcoming it. Caruth opines that there is the compulsion to tell and be heard:

> There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech. The pressure thus continues unremittingly, and if words are not trustworthy or adequate, the life that is chosen can become the vehicle by which the struggle to tell continues. (*T* 63)

Grace creates the unseen witness Mary to whom she can communicate. Mary was the only friend she had other than perhaps Jeremiah, the peddler. Mary is the witness she creates as she lives in a make-believe world of peace. Her pain, agony and cries rise only at the times where the past trauma engulfs and devastates. Her alienation is complete as she is without family to support her with no friends to talk

to and finally accused of instigating a double murder. The other witness that Grace has is the listener Dr Jordon who tries to correlate to her trauma with the aid of various techniques of prompting the associative memory. Jeremiah, the peddler, becomes the third witness. Jeremiah appears as Dr Jerome DuPont, and perhaps it is his ventriloquism that becomes the voice of Mary who confesses to the murder. Grace is now absolved and is let free. She gains freedom after spending thirty years at the penitentiary.

Remembering in a linear sequence is a voluntary activity. Selections, omissions and editing occur within the course of the narrative. Grace is aware of the multiple versions that are narrated. She has different versions that reflect through dreams, fears, lies and silences. Perhaps the real story can be different from these remembrances. The accepting of the past is negotiated only about the pre-traumatic past that reveals fissures of being witness to violence, betrayal, death, abortion all enacted through the episodic narration of the past and the creation of a witness. The social stratification of society made it impossible for the women like Mary and Nancy to overcome the sexual predators and its aftermath of guilt, betrayal and distress. The memories of both Mary and Nancy remain a burden to Grace as she declares that they have abandoned her as they had let themselves get killed. Grace confesses to herself, "For a long time I could not find it in me to pardon them" (*AG* 531-32).

Grace carries within her a sense of isolation that she finally tries to reconcile by forging bonds within dreams and with her dead companions, Mary and Nancy. The traumatic isolation and silences are overcome through the reconstruction of events, sorting from different versions, admitting the unreliability, but, eventually with forgiving the guilt and pain of surviving the death of others. Grace, finally, includes in her quilt patchwork a piece of coarse cotton from her penitentiary nightdress, the

faded petticoat of Mary and a strip from the dress that she first saw Nancy wearing. The patchwork of memories that she finally owns belong to all the three of them as each of the three stories resonate one another echoing the pain and misery of the hunted and the silenced victim.

The patchwork that Grace finally quilts in the fictional narrative provides a twist by letting Grace continue her secret life by not thinking aloud, and instead of keeping her thoughts to herself. The guilt remains a solitary endeavour holding the thread of her memories. Grace's life finds many gaps which she bypasses to narrate to the listener. Grace is listening to the narration herself and is a witness to the witnessing analysing, forecasting the implications of what is being said and also aware of what should be held back. The demure, sober, yet, watchful Grace never stops surprising Dr Jordon.

Alienation, fear, and a fascination for alternate versions in the course of the storytelling remain characteristics of Grace who experiments not in with quilting motifs but also with constructing the narrative of her life. She borrows from different sources and templates and tries to weave a different story of her own. Atwood uses traumatic memory as a tool to exhibit the pre-traumatic fissures in childhood as well as the need to develop a coping mechanism to deal with the resulting alienation and heightened trauma. It is only by addressing the past and revalidating it with the present traumatic situation that memories are sorted and accepted. Staels' comment in her study of the intertexts in the novel is noteworthy. Grace's dissociation into "Grace Marks, the dominant personality, and Mary Whitney, the secondary personality and the lost part of herself, maybe explained in terms of coping mechanism, disconnecting internally is a means of blocking mental pain" (437). The journey through her memories seeking to restore a memory gap becomes a quest within a multi-routed

labyrinth . Without a definite closure in the novel, the truth remains elusive in the end. Some memories never are located or are best forgotten.

The past reveals not only poverty, immigration, domestic violence, the patriarchal subjugation of women, illness, and death of the mother and physical abuse by father but also a saga of broken relationships with family. The fragmented memories recur through patches of episodic memory. The narrative portrays the shock of witnessing violence, loss and grief as a recurrent motif in the life of the protagonist. Her friend Mary Whitney's tragic death after undergoing abortion remains etched or engraved in the mind of Grace. The blood of Mary smears her psyche as she recalls her dead mother and the violence her mother had to bear. She was guilty of remaining a spectator – a witness to the hurt of others. Witnessing, as Dori Laub says, can absorb the hurt of others and remain numb with trauma.

Alias Grace becomes a traumatic narrative which lists the pain of witnessing the pain of another. The traumatic fixation of dead Mary, a dear friend and a mother substitute of Grace seems to recur in the dreams of Grace and is a constant companion in her lonely life. Dreams, hysteria, hallucinations and the inability to build bonds indicate a traumatic disposition. However, seen from the angle of a historical figure, a notorious convict whose story was confined to the testimonies and the surrounding media glare and literary outpourings, gets a new perspective with Atwood's fictionalised history.

Confronting her memories and in an urge to locate her innocence or circumvent her guilt, the narrative meanders through the possession of a split personality or a fixation of a traumatic experience of Mary in Grace. Her assimilation of Mary's identity while on the run after the murder, her dreams, her auditory

hallucinations of Mary speaking to her remind of trauma that is inherent in her inability to cope with Mary's death. The mother's handkerchief that gets Grace agitated during the hypnosis reveals the engraving of her mother's death in her mind and its intensity. With the loss of the mother's handkerchief, the submerged memory and her childhood interactions remind of bafflement, and it is only on reflection that her guilt of surviving resonates.

Narration in trauma abounds with hesitancies and lack of continuity of thought. Some of the trauma victims, however, vocalise everything other than the trauma event. They provide alternative narratives and create internal witness to whom they narrate. Whether the real Grace is guilty or innocent, traumatised or manipulative remains confined to the pages of history that were known only to her and Atwood replicates the open ending. However, as lessons of how listening to painful incidents can affect a listener become a point of contention, as every reader finds Grace is not a mere story, but the narrative of a complex character whose complexity increase on reflection. In keeping with the postmodern practice, Grace's discourse refuses to "privilege Grace's text over any other source" (Tolan, Feminism 226). However, it is the narrative of Grace that lingers. We see her through the illusion of voices, images and parchments, and she remains an enigma. The contradictions in the story all become irrelevant as the reader finds the intricacies of painful events that could happen to anyone who may be alienated, friendless and broken by life. Memory "hinges on a moment of forgetting" (Rossington, Introduction 6).

As Laub states, there is, "in each survivor, an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know the buried truth in order to be able to live one's life" (63).

Chapter 4

Cascading Memories: *The Stone Angel*

Nobody belongs to us except in memory.

John Updike, *Grandparenting*

Alienated space and hostile environment of the prairie engulfs the lives of the characters in Laurence's Manawaka novels. *The Stone Angel*, the first of the novels, captivates the readers through the indomitable spirit of Hagar Shipley, the protagonist, whose narration of her present predicament is juxtaposed with the vagaries of her past. *The Stone Angel* is one of the acclaimed novels in Canadian fiction and celebrates Hagar as the embodiment of a character who is both terrifying and lovable. Although ageing foregrounds the schema, Hagar rakes up her mind to sift the memories in order to gather the courage to confront the inevitable. Death becomes a resonance in the novel with the cemetery and the blind stone angel signifying the inflexibility of Hagar's convictions and the dilemma it proposes. In her confrontation with her past and the present, Hagar rediscovers her spirited nature to accept challenges and overturn threats into opportunities. 'Gainsay who Dare' which was the family motto becomes relevant when a determined Hagar resolves and dares to change herself.

Eleonor Johnston remarks that Hagar "learns to face death by exploring the errors of the past" (108), Shirley Chew's observation echoes the regard to the past as "an understanding which hindsight affords" (37), and Colin Nicholson observes that

Hagar's "backward glance over main travelled roads is often cantankerous or troubled in other way(s)" (Preface ix). Time, memory and identity are the triad tools that aid the analysis of the novel. The novel has also been viewed from structuralist, feminist and post-colonial perspectives. For instance, Leona M Gom's 'Laurence and the use of Memory', analyses the role of subjective time as memory in the Manawaka novels. The importance of both past and the present in the narration has prolonged memory segments and the reader participates in the fictional past level as well as the present fictional level. She comments on the "highly artificial and contrived use of memory as no trigger mechanism can elicit memories that reveal in a linear manner" (48). She terms it the "disciplining of memory" (49) where the past is recounted deliberately and without interpretation. The article illustrates how the narrative of the present at times mentions characters who make their entry at a later point through the narration of the pasts. Gom rightly comments that the anticipation of the characters is manipulated and maintained by the author more in *The Diviners* than in *The Stone Angel*.

Donna Palmateer Pennee's 'Technologies of Identity: The Language of the Incontinent Body in Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*' highlights the study of class in an invader-settler colony. The colonial paradigm, she observes, validates it as a representational text of history and the formation of Canadian identity. Remnants of the societal conditioning of class difference from a prairie perspective haunt the life narrative of Hagar and become typical of the narration of any aged person who recreates life with nostalgic remembrances (1). On the other hand, literary critic, W.H.New highlights the narrative pattern which alternates between colloquial and formal voices. The linguistic tension mirrors the social tension and highlights the artificial and the natural. The bias of Hagar's memories determines the understanding

of the past as well as the appraisal of the four generations represented in her life story. New also asserts that Hagar takes "Manawaka into her son Marvin's suburban home and then to her multi-cultural hospital in Vancouver" (66). Spaces converge and Hagar recreates in the 'mindscape' a fusion of her sense of belonging.

Constance Rooke in 'A Feminist Reading of *The Stone Angel*' sees the stone angel in the cemetery a monument more catering to her father Jason Currie's pride than to his memory of his wife (27). It foregrounds Hagar's rejection of her mother and reinstates the patriarchal notions and the restrictions imposed by the society. However, the present study focuses on the memory of Hagar whose multiple roles include that of a wife who refused to address the problem in her marriage and that of a mother who hid her tenderness from her sons. Hagar's response to the social stratification and the patriarchal notions reflect in her rebellion and her determination to survive. In a world of men whom she has hurt, she, finally, makes amends by forgiving herself for remembering them and also for harbouring guilt of surviving.

Hagar is a ninety-year-old pensioner who lives with her elder son Marvin and his wife Doris. Hagar has lived her life on her own terms and is fiercely independent. Her life as a child, her marriage, her job as a housekeeper and finally as a sick old woman admitted to a nursing hospital is the schema of the narrative. The narrative charts Hagar's life in chronological order as she enlists her remembrances. The present and the past form parallel narratives as she details the past through episodic memory and a range of associative memory. Reminiscences of the various incidents of the past involve crafting Hagar's storytelling with a chain of episodes that connect both to the past and the present. Hagar drowns in recollecting as she confronts a crisis of having to shift to a hospice. Her elder son, Marvin's entreaty to get her admitted into the nursing home initiates the traumatic episode of Hagar feeling alienated and

abandoned. Hagar rebels and runs away from her home and in doing so runs backwards in time to retrace her past and tries to explain her present predicament.

Fiona Wilson, in a review in *The Times,* observes that the book is "about two characters: an old woman and a young one. Both are Hagar Shipley." Hagar's narrative intersperses the present plight of being aged and ill along with the reminiscences from childhood. Her arthritis and her occasional loss of memory seem to worry her as she faces the ordeal of living with her son and his family in her house that is filled with heirlooms from a proud ancestral past. Her narrative dwells on each of the objects and lets her recall the past wishfully and languish in remembering. Her past details her story from a rebellious spirited child, to a subservient wife immersed in the toil of living, to an independent woman who moves out of Manawaka and who later surprisingly returns for reasons unknown to her husband in his deathbed. Her endeavour to support her husband and her son John remains credulous as she earlier kept away from them, but supports them financially. Hagar's pretence of being aloof, indifferent and haughty breaks down as she reveals through her narration that her mask of indifference does on some occasions reveal a sensitive person who prefers to stay away from being hurt. Closer scrutiny reveals the fissures in her attitude that remain a character flaw. Her inability to let others sense her fear becomes a despairing need that she builds walls even with her husband, children and grandchildren.

The past beckons the world of memories of childhood, youth, marriage and parenting. It is these memories that illuminate Hagar's innate pride and her inability to bind with others. Her fear of close relationships and of betrayal stemming from childhood estrangement of having lost her mother instils in her a fear of being abandoned. Her insecurity heightens as the Minister Mr. Troy arrives to comfort and pray for her. Hagar's spirit remains rebellious at the subtle message of being aged

and nearing the end and she forgets that her body has indeed aged. Her disdain at the religious overtones that seek to offer solace is turned down and instead she takes solace in the past. Salvation to Hagar lies in memories and the narrative begins with a description of the marble stone angel in the cemetery that the Currie family had ordered to be placed on her mother's grave. From the memory of her mother who died when Hagar was born until the ending of the narrative when Hagar waits for her own end, the novel charts a discourse on the significance of memories hoarded within her and its relevance to her predicament.

The fixation with the past determines Hagar's identity which, in turn, is painfully reconstructed by the objects in her house. Her pride in retracing the glory of their ancestry belies her leaving home at the age of eighteen to marry Bram Shipley of whom her father disapproved. Her father, on his death, leaves his fortune to the Manawaka town and it is only the strewn objects that fill the house like the carpet, furniture, a vase and photographs that trace the way to Hagar. While rebuking her father, her house and her ancestral pride by walking out of home, Hagar succumbs to taking the small token of inheritance that the unmentioned objects in the will permit her to inherit. Her pride does not surprisingly come between accepting these tokens. Her "shreds and remnants of years are scattered through her home "visibly in lamps and vases, the needle-point fire bench, the heavy oak chair from the Shipley place, the china cabinet and walnut sideboard from my father's house" (*TSA* 36). She remarks "If I am not somehow contained in them and in this house, something of all change caught and fixed here, eternal enough for my purposes, then I do not know where I am to be found at all" (36).

Humiliation becomes an ordeal to proud Hagar whose failing memory created situations which leaves her to comment, "My head is lowered, as I flee their scrutiny,

but I cannot move, and now I see that in this entire house, mine, there is no concealment. How is it that all these years I fancied violation meant an attack upon the flesh?" (74). The half burnt cigarette stubs and her bedwetting that Doris points out add to her misery. Her daily life becomes an ordeal and she struggles to move around the house and is frightened whether she becomes a burden to her son. Fiercely independent and critical of weakness in others, Hagar remains sensitive and critical of her own frailties, lack of assurance and blotches of memory gaps that she is forced to confess. Forgetting to her becomes her humiliation.

"Now I am rampant with memory. I don't often indulge in this, or not so very often, anyway. Some people will tell you that the old live in the past – that's nonsense" (5). However, Hagar betrays herself in these words as she negates living in the past. It is the past that soothes her from the pains of the present. She indulges I n reminiscences with her memories narrate merging the past and the present to figure associations that lead her to her sojourn with her memories. The trigger for her remembrances to cascade happens when faced with the threat of shifting to a nursing home. Hagar, who is old and ailing, finds her life sandwiched between her home and the hospital visits. But as she ages, Hagar senses the insecurity and feels marginalised within her own home. She realises when Doris keeps entering her room just as the nurses do at the hospital that "Privacy is a privilege not granted to the aged or the young" (6).

Death becomes a trope and a recurrent motif in the novel. The memory of her mother becomes part of the larger narrative because of the hurt and insecurity that accompanied the motherless Hagar. Her fear as a child, her apprehensions, and her alienation reflect even in her remembrances as Hagar narrates her past. Hagar's reluctance to pretend to be their mother, denial of resembling her, distancing from

both Dan and her mother become a barrier to relationships in her life. Inability to pretend becomes one of the constructs that reveal the adamancy of Hagar's convictions. The inflexibility makes Hagar choose to distance from others and remain an observer and a mute witness to happenings around her. She remains a spectator when Matt assumes the role of their mother while her brother Dan was dying and was in a delirious state. Her pain at witnessing remains muted as she comments, "But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize. To play at being her – it was beyond me" (25). It also points to the anguish of surviving while the other dies.

It is a similar reluctance to confront her guilt of surviving that leads Hagar to pretend to be strong when her husband Bram dies. Death reiterates Hagar's guilt at surviving and connects the death of her husband Bram to add to her anguish. Every death Hagar witnesses marks her pain only in retrospect. The narrative displays how hindsight reveals to Hagar the discomfiture of surviving the death of a loved one. Love remains distant to Hagar. Her mother is only replicated as an approximation of her feeble and weak younger brother Dan. It is a similar discomfort that she recollects with Bram as her memories reveal her humiliation at his failure to recognise her. Moreover, Hagar is shattered when Bram mistakes her for his first wife, Clara. The fact that he "didn't say a word" but "blanked and looked away" (172) makes Hagar suppress the hurt and pain. She recalls that in spite of being unable to explain why she went to spend time with Bram in his dying moments, she realises on hindsight how far she had run away from him. It was John who cried after returning home from the funeral. Hagar confronted a pang of guilt that she should have perhaps stayed in Bram's room and she "reproached" herself that she "hadn't wakened" (183). Bram

had died in his sleep and her guilt at surviving reinstates itself. The deaths of her mother, her brother and of her husband leave her nursing guilt at both surviving their deaths and over her self-implicated ramification in their deaths.

However, her younger son John's death assumes a centrality of a painful experience that she is unable to neither expunge nor suppress. Hagar's lament "And then he died. My son died" sums up the agony of Hagar witnessing John's death (242). Hagar realises that her "tears had been locked too long" and she had been "transformed to stone and never wept at all" (243). Hagar becomes the stone angel who is unable to grieve. "All night long, I had only one thought – I'd so many things to say to him, so many things to put to rights. He hadn't waited to hear" remains her grief (243). The guilt of surviving intensifies with enduring the death of her son John and his death becomes the vortex for her memories to continually lament.

Laurence in a letter to her publisher Jack McClelland comments that Hagar's "adherence to the conventional proprieties and her withholding of love have damaged all the people most closely associated with her. She has always wanted for herself an independence, which she has been unwilling to grant to others" (The Letters). Hagar locates the painful memory of her complexity and is forced to endure her pain, guilt and anguish at surviving John's death. The pathos pervade her recollections as it Hagar wonders that John may have died either due to the accident or perhaps if he had gone to war *(TSA* 244). However, her guilt remains within her as she tries to absolve her role as she does to the memory of the deaths of her mother, Dan, Matt, Bram and John.

The guilt of surviving and witnessing pain and death remains a memory that Hagar masks within what she projects as her dominant insensitive nature. Her

memories, however, echo a traumatised cry and act as a refrain in the narrative as she laments the death of her son John. The other deaths, that of her mother and that of her husband Bram and brother Matt find mention in the narrative as she blames herself for ridiculing them. Her insecurity, alienation, and pride determine a defensive stance of not committing totally to relationships. The stone angel in the cemetery symbolises Hagar who is doubly blind as she is unable to see the truth of her alienation as well as recognize her role in creating the alienation. "What do I care now what people say? I cared too long. Oh, my lost men. No, I will not think of that" (6). Hagar continues to think about her lost men as she recognises, she cares for them and has never forgotten them. She has to endure, however, the pain of remembering them.

Hagar's life story becomes instrumental in highlighting the proud and haughty woman who steered away from revealing her mind to others. Her spirited exchanges and her arrogant denial during childhood make way to stoic resilience and endurance that she exhibits after getting married to Bram. Her marriage which was more of an act of proving her independence in front of her father becomes an act that severs her ties with her family and father in particular. Hagar had never realised the implications of rebelling against her father and not listening to his counsel. Hagar remains wishful as her son John is born hoping that he was the grandchild of whom her father would have been proud. Bram's drinking and ill-mannered habits and disdain to others become a source of irritation to Hagar and the marriage connects only with the sharing the detestation of the other's upbringing and habits.

Parenting becomes a problematic concern for Hagar as she reflects over the upbringing of her children. She recalls her own father who used to whip her brothers if they were found doing wrong and the firm hand with which he punished them and

the advice he gave to rectify their mistakes becomes a series of memories that continue to haunt her. She recollects an incident when her father explains to her that when he hits her with a ruler, it hurts him just as much as it hurts her. Hagar never really understood that to correct an erring child was essential and it is now on reassessing her life and reviewing that she realises that she has ignored some critical lessons that her father taught her. Her father's disapproval of her relationship with Bram makes Hagar decide to get married to Bran and it was more of an act of proving that she dared to stand up against him. Hagar's father remains the figure she paints as a strict, overbearing firm and a typical businessman. She respected him while he acted as a foil to her mother, who she believed was frail, meek and subservient. It is this meekness that she detested in her brothers Dan and Matt. Hagar exhibits traits of pride and strength that remain a direct contrast to the qualities of meekness and frailty that she attributes to her mother. She mentions that her brothers took after their mother and calls them "inspirited" (7).

Hagar's inability to pretend extends to the inability to comprehend. John, with his adventurous streak and domineering nature, becomes a perfect foil to Marvin and Hagar continues to find fault with the subservient attitude of Marvin even after John's death. Hagar's independence and her decision to stand up to her father and break away from her family becomes, unconsciously, a source of comparison of the attitude of rebellion and obedience that her sons exhibited. John had a similar rebellious attitude like Hagar, but on hindsight, Hagar recalls John's remark "Marv was your boy, but you never saw that, did you?" (237). Hagar's determination to work and struggle for her family stands in contrast to the frivolous life that John led. Her memories also act as a reminder of how John was different:

I left him sitting in the darkness by himself, teetering back on his chair, his

> hands clasped behind his head. The darkness never bothered him, even as a child. It let him think, he used to say. I wasn't like that, ever. For me, it teemed with phantoms, soul-parasites with feathery fingers, the voices of trolls, and pale inconstant fires like the flicker of an eye. But I never let him, or anyone, know that. (205)

Hagar, confesses was unable to open her fears to even John whom she adored. Hagar also recalls that John kept alluding to her inability to recognize the truth.

Hagar's quest for her vexations gathers further associative memories that conjure visions of the past. Hagar's memories remain problematic as her vision has remained clouded, biased and judgemental. Categorising people she meets into the binaries -- either as meek and subservient, or as strong-willed and arrogant become a habit. Arrogance to her is an offshoot of confidence, rebellion and an assertion of independence. Her life narrative makes her aware that her attraction to Bram was because of his disdain towards social pretentions, and her adoration of John was due to his rebellious nature. It is as Hagar rightly points out "I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched" (292).

Retrospection reveals alternate versions of the past. The traumatic memory about John's death concerned her inability to respect the choices he made in his life. John's relationship with Arlene was to Hagar a mirror of her own past. Blind to the faults of others, Hagar had rushed into a relationship with Bram and married him, despite her father's caution. Hagar points out that both John and Arlene do not have jobs and John realises that deep down Hagar always will be critical of Arlene as she was Lottie's daughter. Lottie was Hagar's friend at school of whom Hagar's father

had disapproved. Although Lottie was married to a banker and was now living what Hagar could term a respectable life, Hagar refused to let go of the past social stratification and in turn clung on to her majestic ancestral past in spite of marrying into the Shipley family and moving into the plains. John and Arlene's relationship becomes a contentious subject between Hagar and John. John and Arlene stop coming to Bram's house when Hagar visits and John continues with his reckless drinking. John and Arlene die in an accident while driving a van on the railway track as a result of a wager. Hagar, who revolted and fiercely claimed her independence from her father, had deliberately denied John the freedom to make choices in his life.

Associative memory becomes a technique that Laurence uses to finesse as the figure of a nurse in the Nursing Home conjures up in her memory the day Marvin was born in the hospital. The desire of her father to have a son who was not meek becomes a prompt for wishing her father would meet her son. Surprisingly, she confesses that Marvin never was the son who would have enamoured her father. Marvin had failed to impress Hagar who hated his meek mannerism and obliging nature. "Perhaps he didn't feel as though Marvin were really his grandson. I almost felt that way myself, to tell the truth, only with me it was even more. I almost felt as though Marvin weren't my son" (62). Marvin leaves for the war and on return works at a logging camp. Hagar realises that she has never inquired about him and was never concerned about him. She had never tried to know him as she admits reluctantly, " I wanted to ask him, then, where he had walked in those days, and what he had been forced to look upon. I wanted to tell him I'd sit quietly and listen. But I couldn't very well, not at that late date. He wouldn't have said, anyway. It seemed to me that Marvin was the unknown soldier, the one whose name you never

knew" (182).

In contrast to her relationship with Marvin is her bonding with her younger son John. Hagar ignores her son Marvin but pampers John. She believes that John was the son that her father was looking for. "But Jason Currie never saw my second son or knew at all that the sort of boy he'd wanted had waited a generation to appear" (64). She spies the streak of independence in John and his disregard for others opinion. His daredevil acts continue to distress her, but she tolerates his explanation. Hagar taunts Marvin that John would never have consigned his mother to the Nursing home. John is recreated through the nostalgic memories of Hagar.

Hagar's introspection reveals her alienation and insecurity had been masked by her pride. Pride was her Achilles heel and her folly. Her reluctance to accept authority makes her steer away from every relation that curbed her independence. Hagar, however, recognizes that she bore a resemblance to her father with her "hawkish nose and stare that could meet anyone's without blinking an eyelash" (8). Her life of conforming to the will of her father continued to college. When after the finishing school, she declared her interest to become a teacher, her father instead asked her to keep accounts of his store, play hostess to events and talk to his guests. Finally, she dared to challenge her father when she rebelled against his dictating her life by breaking free and marrying Bram.

Pride blinds Hagar who remains defensive of revealing her emotions and projects an insensitivity that she deliberately practises. Hagar deliberately ridicules her father who brings to her suitors and instead decides to leave home to marry Bram, a drunkard and a person of ill repute. He was fourteen years older and was a widower

with two daughters. Her rebellion against her father for daring to dictate to her remains a testimony to her need for independence and freedom. However, Hagar's ideal is shattered as her marriage introduces her to poverty, disdain and ridicule in Manawaka. Bram remains adamant in refusing to change his behaviour, especially his ill-mannered ways which Hagar had hoped to rectify. Hagar is left with only a choice to salvage her pride, by maintaining a clean house, bringing up her kids and managing to survive with Bram's drinking and irresponsible behaviour. Her relationship with Bram was founded on the physical attraction that they had for each other. She remembers the moments when she never admitted to her husband how much he attracted her.

Indifference becomes a construct that cloaks Hagar's emotions. It is through immersing herself in doing the daily chores of the household that Hagar avoids expressing her alienation although she remains sensitive to hurting both her father and her husband. It is when she comes across Bram pleading for items from her father's shop that she is mortified. Hagar decides to walk away from her marriage and the instinctive decision echoes the way in which she walked into the marriage years back. Hagar who always used to take care of not to be seen with Bram decides to walk up to him and leads him away with her head held high. The act of confronting the unpleasant becomes a precursor to leaving Manawaka.

It is illuminating that confronting the unpleasant was never easy for Hagar unless it was to make a personal statement. Hagar's mortification at confronting tiny chicks on the roadside while going to school becomes a reminder of the sensitivity that she masks. The tiny "chicks, feeble, foodless, bloodied and mutilated, prisoned by the weight of broken shells all around them, were trying to crawl like little worms, their half-mouths opened uselessly among the garbage" (27). Lottie, her friend, was

the only one who took a stick and crushed them dead. Hagar realised that Lottie had saved them from a worse kind of suffering. Hagar admits she could never have done what Lottie had done. She realised that it was not cruelty but kindness to ease the pain and lead them to death.

Death becomes a motif running through the novel and the killing of the chicks connects to this framework in the narrative. The death of the chicks, however, reveals another aspect of Hagar. Hager is not as unfeeling as she pretends. Even though Hagar voices against pretence, she leads a life without revealing her inner fears and turbulences and takes care not to betray herself. Matt meekly submits to death and it irritates Hagar as she finds it "harder to bear than his death, even. Why hadn't he writhed, cursed, at least grappled with the thing?" (60).

The portrayal of Hagar as a strong and bold woman stands in contrast to the old and ailing Hagar who struggles to cope with life. Hagar absolves herself of the death of her mother, but her doubts recur, however, when later she wonders "what she'd been like, that docile woman, and wonder at her weakness and my awful strength. Father didn't hold it against me that it had happened so" (59). Her doubt whether her father may hold her responsible for her mother's death points to guilt that Hagar never admits to feeling. Her mother's death is attributed to her ill-health and not to any complication arising from the childbirth. However, her father remained estranged from her even after Matt's death and left the majority of his estate to the Manawaka town. All she inherited was amongst the furniture and carpets was a "knobbled jug of blue and milky glass" that was her mother's and an oval frame of a portrait of her mother (59).

Insecurity becomes a construct that heightens with age. The physical ailments

acquire emotional correlation and the coping mechanism of dealing with such distressing situations is put to the test. Her humiliation is complete as she is unable recall some of the instances that point to her failings. Hagar sweeps the inconvenient memory gaps aside. Her movements get restricted with age and more than her arthritic pain, Hagar is hurt by her fall. Hagar who never cried even on John's death finds tears flowing

> Then, terribly, I perceive the tears, my own they must be although they have sprung so unbidden, I feel they are like the incontinent wetness of the infirm. Trickling, they taunt down my face, down the powdery soft folds of loose skin. They are no tears of mine, in front of her. I dismiss them, blaspheme against them – let them be gone. But I have not spoken, and they are still there. 'Marv!' she calls. 'Mar-Vin!' (31)

Insecurity becomes a plaguing doubt when Hagar suspects that Marvin and his wife plan to sell her house. Her distrust of Doris stems from her suspicion that he and Marvin may want Hagar dead in order to inherit the house.

> My house, perhaps. Or just to have me away, so she can sleep through the night without disturbance. When I think this way, I make myself ill. The nausea has begun to scorch my gullet, as though I'd swallowed lighted coal-oil. I shouldn't be smoking in the night. It plays havoc with my digestion. Where's my purse ashtray that Marvin gave me? That was an odd gift from him, now I come to think of it, for he detests my smoking. (163)

Hagar assesses the money that her son may have to spend on her and declares that she owns the house. Hagar forgets that she has transferred it to Marvin years back.

Personal space becomes a contentious issue as far as Hagar is concerned. The

insecurity that she feels makes her view every action of her Marvin and Doris with suspicion. She is alert even when engaging in a casual conversation with them and "watch their faces", wondering about "a questioning look pass between them" or doubting whether she was imagining so (34). Her suspicions heighten when a casual conversation about the purchase of flat rewinds to: "Now I see the reason for the spread table. Am I a calf, to be fattened? Oh, had I known I would not have eaten a bite of her damnable walnuts and icing. 'You'll never sell this house, Marvin. It's my house. It's my house, Doris. Mine'" (35).

The house determines Hagar's identity and Hagar who feels betrayed and abandoned by the death of her mother, her husband and her son John is terrified that she is being sent to the nursing home because she is aged and unable to defend her rights. She wonders, "How can I leave my house, my things? It's means – it's means of you – oh, what a thing to do" (76). And her perplexity and dilemma increase as she admits -- "I am no longer certain of my rights. What is right and what rights have I? Can I obtain legal advice against a son? How would I go about it? A name from the telephone directory? It has been so long since I dealt with that kind of thing" (76). Insecurity, intruding into personal space and betrayal collude to distress Hagar who is devastated to be taken by Doris and Marvin to the nursing home on a pretext of an evening drive. She just can't understand how anybody would "be overjoyed to talk with strangers just because they happen to be old" (99).

Fear becomes an extension of her insecurity and she takes refuge in her memories. The hospital and its milieu act as a prompt and an associative memory as she remembers Marvin's birth at the Manawaka hospital. She wonders, "If Marvin hadn't been alive that day, I wonder where I'd be now? I'd have got to some old folks home a slight sooner; I expect. That's a thought" (101). Hagar realises the futility of

rebelling and the travails of ageing that have left her a dependent. However, on meeting an inmate Mrs Steiner who befriends her and welcomes her, Hagar instinctively recoils and is determined that she would not be staying at the nursing home. Her agony of being old becomes her undoing and Hagar mistakes a stranger she spies in the summer house to be her dead husband Bram. "If I speak to him, slowly, so as not to startle, will he turn to me with such a look of recognition that I hardly dare hope for it, and speak my name?" (106) The past and present become muddled with age and Hagar is unable, at times, to disentangle the memories. The character of Hagar becomes representative of human frailty.

Accommodating to alternatives and accepting changes become a new experience for Hagar. The alternate space of the Nursing Home finally becomes a consolation as Hagar realises that she is terminally ill. The acceptance of her illness becomes a revision of her earlier judgement of Marvin and Doris and Hagar admits that "what's going to happen can't be delayed indefinitely" (282). Marvin does not realise the transformation in Hagar as he makes arrangement to shift Hagar from the dormitory to a semi-permanent room. Hagar belatedly realises that she has got accustomed to the dormitory which earlier she despised. Hagar feels disappointed and feels "betraying tears" which she tries to hide. She, however, agrees to move to the room stating "I know it can't be avoided. It's not his fault. I did tell him I wanted to move. Yet I can't help feeling impatience with him. He couldn't see that a person might grow accustomed to a place. He'd never think a person might change her mind. Oh no – that would never do. He hasn't a scrap of imagination" (283). Her words belie her conviction. She notices the young nurse and comments "You're a nice girl. You're lucky, to be young." Hagar accepts her age and is able to be happy seeing another person's youth. The nurse softens the hurt by saying "Maybe you're

the lucky one." as "you've had those years. Nothing can take them away". The pain of survival returns and the years become a "mixed blessing" (284). It is only when the nurse ties a bed jacket to Hagar to keep her away from wandering in the night that Hagar finds it a humiliating experience.

The nursing home becomes the space where she works through her past traumatic experiences and tries to accommodate others into her world. The nursing home offers "for a moment the illusion of privacy" (255). The first night she spends in the dormitory becomes a revelation to Hagar when she is unable to recall talking in her sleep. The patient next to her enquires whether her husband's name was John and Hagar is shocked that she cannot recollect having slept. She remembers the commotion in the dormitory and her irritation with the voices in the night. It is to be noted that the past with its long-term memory acquires clarity and the episodes become real to her while her present with her problematic short-term memory becomes a source for her humiliations that forgetting showers on her. Hagar's old age becomes sketchy as her actions continue to be narrated to her by others. Doris at home and the nurses and hospital inmates fill the gaps of her void or point out to her misremembrances.

Fear becomes an accessory to alienation and Hagar rediscovers her isolation amidst the crowd in the dormitory of the Nursing Home. But as she gets accustomed to it, she discovers the unfamiliar space that she now inhabits.

> If you shut your eyes after looking at a strong light, you see shreds of azure or carlet across the black. The voices are like that, remembered fragments painted on shadow. I'm not as frightened by them as I was before. Now I know where they come from. The murmurs from further beds are too vague

> to be deciphered. But the nearby ones – I can put names to those. I go over and over the names in my mind, to see if I can remember. Mrs Reilly. Mrs Dobereiner. Mrs Jardine. I can't recall that woman's Christian name. I'm sure she told me. Ida? Elvira? Her husband's name is Tom, and they homesteaded at Freehold. I can't sleep. I'm blurred, but the pain won't let me sleep. (274)

Hagar confronts the darkness of the night and the voices in the dormitory and gains insight to confront the memories lurking in the past that had been instrumental in heightening her fear of relating to others. The nursing home transforms into an acceptable space.

It is illuminating to borrow from one of the Fortunoff Video Archive interviews an incident that Laub details to explain 'The impossibility of Telling'. The alienated self and low self-esteem become instrumental in the victims adopting strategies that help mask their fragility. She narrates the case of a Holocaust survivor who believed that she was someone who never knew feelings of love. The victim had been unable to bond with others as she could perceive only hatred and disdain from the people around her. She however engaged herself in looking after the terminally sick and the old. She believed she never could take good care as she was trapped in her own world which lacked love. Her memories consisted of many traumatic events. She had been a teenager in wartime when she had lost most of her family, been witness to burning alive of her close relatives, and also the choking of death of a baby who "cried too loudly". She had also participated in hunting down and killing local collaborators towards the end of a war. When a seventeen-year-old German was captured and she was asked to take revenge, she surprised everyone by bandaging his arm and turning him over to the POW. She could only say "How could I kill him—he looked into my face and I looked into his" (Laub 64-65).

Similarly, Hagar discovers an unknown dimension of her character which befriends, consoles and helps Sandra Wong, the eleven-year-old with whom she shares her semi-private room. She consoles Sandra, who is terrified of undergoing an appendectomy. In helping Sandra , Hagar atones for the guilt of remaining distant and unsympathetic to others. Hagar always felt chained to her pride and never was free in building relationships and was always afraid that she would be hurt. Hagar resembles the Holocaust survivor who was burdened by a guilt she was afraid to overcome.

The pain, limits of endurance, and the ability to revel in the closeted memories bind and forge new horizons for Hagar's understanding. The pain of remembrances helps endure physical pain that torments the ailing in the nursing home. It is at the dormitory that Hagar who first is irritated with her lack of privacy and with being forced to live amongst strangers finds a drastic change in her perception of living and in facing death. Hagar realises that Mrs Dobeinner's irritating songs in German was an entreaty to die and that Elva Jardiner's chatter, inquisitive behaviour and her unsolicited helping underplayed the physical illness that may not be curable. Hagar eavesdrops on the tender love that Elva shares with her husband Tom, a regular visitor to the nursing home and remains witness to Elva crying after Tom goes home. Elva's pretence of being better reminds the joy of consoling Tom and of enduring her pain. Mrs Reilly whose obesity makes every movement painful, Elva's gaiety to help others as she awaits further operations and remains unmindful of the outcome, Mrs Dobennier whose songs connect but fail to communicate reveal to Hagar a world of the terminally ill who are recouped but are waiting for their end. It is the memories and the narratives that the inmates share that bridges their isolation and the islands they haunt and make Hagar realise that deep down she has found

connecting with others gratifying. Her revelation of her pain to Lees about her pain regarding John's death becomes a turning point as Hagar stops building walls to isolate her from others.

The narrative highlights how Hagar transforms from exhibiting indifference to expressing her emotions with strangers and her fellow inmates at the Nursing home. As she shares her past with a stranger at the cannery, Lees, and with her fellow inmates, Hagar reflects on why she has held back all these years. Hagar is more forthcoming with her revelations with her inmates as she declares that her husband Bram had been 'Strong as a horse. He had a beard black as the ace of spades. He was a handsome man, a handsome man" (*TSA* 272). It is noteworthy that Hagar never voiced her feelings to Bram when he was alive. The way she revealed herself to strangers, her fellow inmates, was a new experience to Hagar. "Haven't you ever given a hand to anyone in your time? It's your turn now. Try to look at it that way. It's your due" (276). The nurse's remark on her futile attempts at being independent makes Hagar reflect on her life. The only incident that she recollects is when she helped Dan with his spelling. But Dan always spoke as if it was he who helped her. Little Hagar decided that helping was unnecessary as "it's unfair not to get the credit for what you've done" (276). Hagar's restraint in voicing her feelings stem from such casual incidents in her childhood as she prefers to steer clear from getting hurt.

Religion becomes one of the frameworks in the novel and extends to act as a foil to Hagar's quest for truth within herself and in relation to others. The character of Mr Troy, the Minister, becomes a referential with prayers, confession and atonement all propelling an inclination to denote the nearing of the end or death. The nursing home remains a construct that testifies to the hospice or the attention that the terminally ill deserve to ease the pain of illness and to foster the realisation

of the approaching end. Hagar accepts her past as she reflects on her life as the Minister Mr Troy visits her to pray for her. Hagar tells him to sing a psalm that extols all people on earth to come and sing to the Lord and rejoice. She realises that she wanted to rejoice at the beauty and joy of living but had always held back. Hagar is miserable as she realises it was her folly of not speaking the truth that made her life seem so hollow.

> How is it I never could? I know, I know. How long have I known? Or have I always known, in some far crevice of my heart, some cave too deeply buried, too concealed? Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances – oh, proper to whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth? (292)

Ageing corrodes the veneer of independence and pride that Hagar projects and reveals the emotional scaring that she belatedly discovers. In narrating the sequence of events from childhood to present, memory rewinds to locate the moments that are retained as traces and connecting them. The narration reveals the shattering of the enigmatic Hagar into a feeble, frightened aged woman who attempts to clasp at the dregs of dignity and mask her humiliation. Her awareness of her ill health and her acceptance of her frailties finally prompts her to reconcile and endure her shifting to the Nursing home.

Hagar's innate inability to concern herself with others' happiness is reviewed and addressed while at the nursing home. Her tryst with the past resolves many issues that she has had with Marvin and Doris. She recognizes the fact that she merely tolerated them and never concerned herself with their life. Marvin's remark "She's a

holy terror,' he says. She realises that he loves her. "Listening, I feel it is more than I could now reasonably have expected out of life, for he has spoken with such anger and such tenderness" (304,305). Her physical pain makes her helpless s and Hagar reveals her fear to Marvin "I'm – frightened. Marvin, I'm so frightened" (303). Hagar, who never has been open in her life with anyone, finds herself revealing her fears to her son. She also is apologetic and adds "'You've not been cranky, Marvin. You've been good to me, always. A better son than John.' The dead don't bear a grudge nor seek a blessing. The dead don't rest uneasy. Only the living. Marvin, looking at me from anxious elderly eyes, believes me. It doesn't occur to him that a person in my place would ever lie" (304). Her lie remains an atonement for ignoring and avoiding Marvin all her life. She realises she was a mother who never loved him nor expressed her love to her son. "Suddenly I'm furious at my pride and pretence, at his obtuseness" (277).

Insensitivity acts as a camouflage to the hurt and insecurity that remains with Hagar. Hagar's pretence of being unaffected evolves as a survival strategy. Her projected disdain reveals to be superficial as her memories rake up incidents of hurting others many decades later. For instance, Hagar recollects an incident which hurt her father-- when she blurts out unthinkingly in front of his customer that there are insects in the sack of raisins that he kept in the shop. Again, she senses her brother Matt's hurt as she refuses to wear her mother's shawl to comfort Dan in his delirium. She hurts Matt again as she leaves for her finishing school while Matt becomes a helping hand to their father in their shop. Her instinct is proved right as she later gathers from Aunt Dolly that all Matt wanted was to leave Manawaka and he had saved every penny while at school dreaming that one day he would leave. Her annoying silences, her candid remarks, her pointed reappraisals or rebuke, her

indifference and her pride become a mask for her own hurt and her acknowledgement of hurting others.

Amidst the nostalgia and the urge to slip into the yesteryears, Hagar seeks to obliterate the present and the ignominy of ageing. Her present predicament act as an interlude jarring Hagar from her reminiscences. In tracing her life story, Hagar illuminates the inadequacies and frailties that her psyche hides beneath the veneer of arrogance and pride. Terrified of being betrayed, terrified at being a silent spectator to others sufferings, Hagar chooses to stay away from even her grandchildren. Hagar gifts Tina, her granddaughter, her sapphire ring and soon regrets her impulse wondering whether they would value it and the joy of giving was new to Hagar. When her grandson Steven visits the nursing home, Hagar guesses that he has visited her in keeping with his mother Doris' instructions. She realises that she would have been happier in case he had visited her on his own accord. "'Of course not,' he says. 'I just thought I'd drop in and see how you were'" (294). Hagar senses his annoyance and accepts his lie with the sad realisation of the remorse for having withheld communicating with him.

> What does he know of me? Not a blessed thing. I'm choked with it now, the incommunicable years, everything that happened and was spoken or not spoken. I want to tell him. Someone should know. This is what I think. Someone really ought to know these things. But where would I begin, and what does it matter to him, anyway? It might be worse. At least he recalls a pleasant thing. 'I remember,' I say. 'You were a little monkey, always snooping in my purse. (296)

She also regrets that she has never revealed her affection for the people around her for

whom she cared. She has always avoided situations wherein her emotions would be visible and instead, she hid and retreated to her cocoon.

Regret remains a spillover of her understanding of her past actions and the implications on the present. The discourse of her upbringing and that of her children remain problematized as Hagar seeks to confide only to herself and the reader. The alienation and the citadel that she builds around herself serve to resurrect the pain, guilt, doubt, fear, humiliation and insecurity that governed her since childhood. Her failure in relating to others that she locates in her strategy for survival remains an eye- opener as she realises that her survival strategy can only be complete with understanding herself and others. Memories and the quest within it become instrumental in creating this edifice of understanding herself, ability to accept the present and forgive others as well as her. Her strategy which rested on exorcising the fear of surviving gives way to the acceptance of not surviving. Hagar refreshes, refines and reviews her memories to gain an understanding of her actions and responses.

The stone angel remains symbolic of the legacy of history and the pride of an ancestral glory and bestows a sense of belonging. The stone angel which is blinded in both eyes is myopic to the life of the Metis—the Tonnerres, that of the stratified society of Manawaka. Family names become just as important to Hagar as was to her father. Hagar recalls that he used to scrutinise and edit the list of their school friends who were invited to the party at home in keeping with the social acceptance of the parents. Hagar's inadequacy at understanding her father leads to rebel against his dictatorial attitude. Yet, it is Hagar who seeks assurance of the details of John's friends at school. Her approval and disapproval of John's friends arise from the accepted social hierarchy. Societal pressures corrupt Hagar and she realizes her fall

from grace only when she confronts her reflection in the mirror which cannot hide her poverty. Bram's ill-manners along with a disdain for others approval makes her face that there was never going to be a change for the better. The downfall is complete when she leaves Manawaka as she leaves Bram and she attempts to 'unbelong'.

Belonging becomes essential for Hagar and it is only when she is assured of her personal space and freedom that she is able to be reassured. Her memories implicate the need to belong and reveal the deep-rooted sense of alienation that was inherent in her character. She recollects Mr. Oakley's house where she worked as a housekeeper and had a room of her own. Her life had been content with discharging her duties and looking after John whom she had taken along. It was her personal space which her employer allotted that made her work diligently. Bram's house after the marriage had also given her an impetus to work and she scrubbed it clean and it became her home. But on return to Manawaka when Bram was ill, she kept referring to their home as Shipley place and even on his death, it remained so. John and Arlene made her feel distant and she kept away conscious not to interfere, unsure of her room, unsure of being wanted.

The amputation of the past denotes the habit that Hagar cultivates. Hagar's response to any intimidation was to run away either into marriage or out of it or into the abandoned building in the coast. However, spaces connect across time and the nursing home also turns into her cocoon as long as she feels safe and unthreatened. Hagar's refusal to confront remains a trope that finally Hagar corrects. Memories aid her to decipher her life story and she confronts the most difficult task of relating to others and to face her own death. Moving to a new place to Hagar was the greatest excitement as she believed that "you carry nothing with you – all is cancelled from

before, or causterized, and you begin again and nothing will go wrong this time" (155). Her above declaration when she moves to the Old Cannery implies the suppression of the past and its hurt that she hopes to achieve. The intensity of her fear of confinement into the Nursing home had made her board a bus to 'Shadow Point' near the coast after encashing her pension cheque.

Witnessing her narrative helps Hagar bridge her past to the present and her remembrances recall the wound, the pain and the scars of witnessing the suffering of others. She also realises that she refrains from trying to help others to ease their pain and is content to remain a mute spectator. The doubt lingered in her whether they accepted her survival and was happy or had they wanted their mother to survive.

Memories resurrect "the gathering of the wounded" in the Nursing Home as the inmates relate their memories of painful reminiscences as also the moments of joy that their memories resurrect for them as they narrate their remembrances at times to themselves and at other times amongst themselves or with their nurses the caregivers (Erikson, 187). Erikson's observation of how a community of strangers come together and bridge a fellowship as they are linked by similar traumatic experience is poignant here. The past becomes the binding element that lends credence to their narrative and also in creating their identity amongst fellow inmates. The Nursing Home, however, becomes the platform that permits Hagar to think and act unlike herself. She helps Sandra in the act of kindness that is considered an anathema to her character. Her coping with her guilt over the death of her son John becomes an extension of introspection of her memories that reveal an overzealous affection that was blind to his faults and a causative of his tragic end. Hagar's pride, her innate inability to confess her fear of rejection or abandonment becomes crucial in moulding her life vision. Her revised survival strategy absorbs the lessons that she

learns from introspecting her own life and that of others.

Ageing, illness and pain become a binding agent among the inmates at the Nursing Home. Mourning connects Hagar to Bram's first wife Clara and also to Murray Lees. The little gold ring set with seed pearls that Hagar locates in the Shipley house had a wreath woven from the hair of Bram's son. Hagar realises how pained Clara, Bram's first wife, would have been "to fashion such a patient wreath and keep it hidden" (*TSA* 193-194). It is only through her memories that Hagar perceives the agony of surviving and witnessing the pain of another. Again, Hagar finds her guilt mirrored in the narrative that Murray Lees tells of the tragic death of his son. Hagar offers consolation "I had a son," I say, "and lost him." "Well," he says abruptly, "then you know" (234). As he reveals his guilt and keeps wondering at the multitude of reasons that may have conspired to his son's tragic death, Hagar manages to console "No one's to blame" (234). The pain of survival binds them into silence. The revelation of listening to another's story becomes crucial in the narrative. Hagar has witnessed death and is now at the juncture of facing her own death. But in listening to a stranger's story and offering comfort, Hagar breaks down the barricade that she has built around herself. She is able to be a witness and listen to the pain of another in order to help the survivor live again. She now is ready to come to terms with her own closeted pain and hurt that she needs to narrate to overcome her nightmares and survive.

Guilt becomes a construct that plays with the feeling of fear and betrayal and extends the implication of the inability to adapt to the societal moorings and instead become aloof and social isolates. Fear translates into building citadels around her and is mirrored in Lees whose agony and guilt of feeling responsible for the death of son. The escape that they chart is by keeping to themselves and pretending to be

strong. Hagar listens to the tragic story of Lees and his anguish at the inability to cope with the loss of his son. The death of Bran and John also focuses on the guilt that she nurses of being responsible for their deaths. She believes she could have avoided it perhaps by staying awake with Bram or by not interfering in John's life. As she witnesses her story through her remembrances, she finally realises the impact of the past, and the pain that has remained within her as well as her avoidance of such situations that may resemble an earlier trauma. Her silence and her alienation are masked by pride which she wields with finesse. Forgetting or forgiving becomes an ordeal when it applies to appease one's guilt.

Hagar steers life as a rebel against her domineering wealthy father and marries against his dictates. However, surprisingly, she meekly submits to the travails of an ordinary home in Manawaka with the upbringing of her sons and toils with poverty. She shatters her world of passivity as she walks out with her younger son away from Manawaka and takes the job of a housekeeper at the Oakleys. However, she returns to Manawaka on hearing of her husband being ill and dying and then again to be with her younger son whom she adored. Death acts as a trope to her narrative that churns the vortex of her memory and connects every death as a reminder of yet another painful memory. The series of painful events arranges within her life narrative when at the age of ninety she revisits her life and meanders through her remembrances, dwelling on her favourite son John, who soon doubles up as a painful reminder of her failure as a mother and her guilt of perhaps being the cause agent of his ruthless disregard to rules leading to his accidental death. Hagar, the person, is subsumed by the guilt of Hagar, the parent and her revisiting the past and acknowledging her guilt and pain becomes the edifice of her tryst with memories. Hagar reconciles her memories acknowledges her frailties her pride as

the prime obstacle in her fragmented and torn psyche hidden beneath the dainty house that she lives and rekindles the urge to retain her dignity and pride when torn by physical illness and mental strain of shifting to a nursing home. Spaces shrink to accommodate the shrinking vistas and Hagar gathers courage and sheds her fear to face death on her own. Her duel with her ghosts of the past is finally over.

Running away becomes a chosen act of rebellion and a statement against patriarchal overbearing. Hagar's life story becomes an attempt to retrace her life and conquer her fear of death, darkness and void. The veil of adamancy and pride mask her vulnerability and her pretence to remain indifferent finally shatters. Humiliation becomes a reality as aging ruthlessly reveals the frailties of her physical self as well as her emotional turmoil. The narration reveals the hitherto underplayed truths that Hagar refuses to confront. Independence becomes a central concern and her dependence on others assurances belie her sense of pride. The inability to reveal her dependence becomes a flaw that hinders meaningful relationships. Her childhood memories reconstruct the insecurity of being a motherless child and highlight the trope of witnessing death and harbouring the guilt of surviving. Hagar remains isolated and unable to reach out and confess her inadequacy and fear of being hurt again. Her complexity in the deaths of her loved ones becomes a repressed memory that she attempts to ignore. Her urge to flee from being sent to the Nursing home and be abandoned suddenly alters and Hagar "rejoice(s) to be captured, taken alive" (252). Physical pain becomes a reality that Hagar can no longer ignore. It is her world of memories that enable her to revalidate her life and embrace the choice of letting go of the past.

Memory plays truant with Hagar and beguiles her into living in a fusion of both the past and the present. Finally, she is able to sort her past into a narrative that

lends insight into her present predicament and decide to survive. Her nostalgic remembrances finally give way to rejoicing of the present and claim an eagerness to carve a space in the nursing home and connect with others. The need to forget and forgive becomes more of a prescriptive want. The unbidden remembrances reveal events that point to the guilt of surviving. The death of her mother, brother, husband and son need to be revisited and laid to rest. Her narrative reveals the inability both to forget and to forgive. Hagar's life becomes a testimony to her pride where she holds back herself and remains alienated from her friends, her siblings and her family. Her grandchildren too are never close to her. She keeps her feelings and her emotions away from the world's glare and pretends to be strong. Her mask of pretence slips when confronted with the frailties of ageing. Her abhorrence on being dependent on others stems from her childhood defence strategy of not letting anyone know of her pain. She preferred suffering alone and took pride in clinging on to the ancestral glory of the proud clan of Curries. Her remembrances trace back to the pride and struggle of her ancestors and it was this that gave her the strength to carry on with her solitary struggle. Social exclusion was opted by her at a very young age when she decided to conform to the conditioning that society demanded of her. The musings of Hagar while observing two children building sandcastles on the beachside bring about the cascade of memories. Her past is reconstructed through the patches of memory she retains and imagines as is evident as she sums up her nostalgia as follows:

> Better to let them go. Yet how I wish that I might have watched them longer, seen their certain quick movements, their liveliness, the way their limbs caught the sun, making the slight hairs shine. I was too far away to see that actually, or to smell the dusty summer on them, the sun-drawn sweat and

> sweet grass smell that children have in the warm weather. I'm only remembering those things from years ago. (190)

Forgetting to remember becomes a priority as Hagar realises that she has missed the present by living in the past. She learns to let go of the past in order to survive.

The narrative begins with her childhood and locates the pain and alienation as well as the guilt of surviving reinstates with every death that she witnessed. Her inability to forget and forgive herself is finally thwarted as she shares her story and listens to a similar painful loss of another person. "Pride was my wilderness and the demons that led me there was fear" declares Hagar (292). She had never wanted to reflect on her life until she battles against her battered body, which, when she ages is "inspirited" (7). Ridiculing herself, Hagar is forced to reflect on her past to escape the humiliation of the present. However, in immersing in her recollections, she reassesses her past and her understanding.

Narratives shape the sharing of the painful memories and create an internal witness who listens to the life story. The amalgam of the past finally leads Hagar to realise the importance of confronting pain and the inevitable death and extends one's perception to include others, including strangers. The Nursing home becomes the enactment of the discovery of the depths to which Hagar could still relate. Her zeal and enthusiasm to help and the ability to laugh in spite of her pain eclipse the Hagar who earlier was only focussed on self-preservation. Hagar reveals as a caring individual which perhaps she already was. Her memories resurrect the observations of the pain that others felt and this reveals the sensitivity of Hagar that she had deftly hidden all along. The tryst with memories succeeds in enabling Hagar to face her pain, face life as well as death. The past helps Hagar heal her present and could now

reflect on the happy moments and dare to confront the unknown. Her diffidence is relegated to the past as she exclaims "Again the needle, and I'm greedy for it now, and thrust out my arm before she's even ready" (297).

Memories plague Hagar in terms of the trope of death, the guilt of surviving, alienation, betrayal and fear. The heightening of her alienation happens in the nursing home, which becomes the space that shrinks to accommodate her. Her endeavour to cope becomes problematized with her running away, her capture and her ordeal in adjusting to the new environment. Her narrative encompasses her life into the contours of her mindscape and the nostalgic remembrances reveal the tension of maladjustments. Guilt remains a silent partner to gnaw when her memories recall her dead parents, her husband and her beloved son. It remains a reflection of suppression of memories of surviving than the acceptance of a wrongdoing.

The narrative, however, reveals the haphazard selection of incidents in the past as it arranges into a life story. The narrated past which surprisingly is remembered chronologically does not indicate gaps and, thereby, point to the aligning of memories to create a plausible, logical narrative that is convincing both to self and others. The inherent forgetting and remembrances remain problematized as the life narrative weaves by highlighting the memories that remain markers of a turbulent childhood and seeks the assistance of the remnants to help retrace the past. As the narrative links different episodes and offers a totality of life experience, meanings alter and understanding deepens — the past aids to heal the scars that hurt in the present turmoil of living. Ageing for Hagar, interestingly, makes memories clearer and they create difficulty in coping with painful events and devising a survival strategy. It is only by reviewing the past, through a first-person narrative, that the internal witness who listens and tries to assimilate the flux of

events into meaningful evidence is able to survive. By reclaiming memories and confronting the painful events of the past, Hagar gathers insight into the pain of others as well as to their surviving strategies. Lees with his narration, the Nursing Home as the space for sharing pain becomes instrumental in freeing Hagar from self-inflicted alienation, isolation and inability to relate to others. Hagar transforms to accept and forgive self and others. It is noteworthy that Hagar's transformation occurs primarily as a learning outcome of observing the pain and survival cues of others and with narrating the painful life story to her.

The ending of the narrative reinforces Hagar who pretends to be fearless and proud even after confronting the saga of her memories of pain, fear, alienation and betrayal through revisiting her memories. She clutches at her pride which is a mask to hide her fear and confides to the reader,

> I'll drink from this glass, or spill it, just as I choose. I'll not countenance anyone else's holding it for me. And yet if she were in my place, I'd think her daft, and push her hands away, certain I could hold it for her better. I wrest from her the glass, full of water to be had for the taking. I hold it in my own hands. There. There. And then……(308)

Hagar's clutching at the glass of water replicates the paths of her seeking the reassurance of memories and the past to assuage the present. However, Hagar remains the embodiment of the vain yet endearing old woman who realises the vexations of the lost time; lost life as well as the life that she has let slips in the past. Every moment reminds of multitude moments that remain embedded in her memories.

Laurence's portrayal of Hagar highlights the plight of every aged person

caught in the turbulence of an insecure childhood. The web of pretence of being haughty, aloof, indifferent and independent helps to mask Hagar's pain, hurt, the guilt of survival and deep-rooted feeling of alienation. Ageing and illness become instrumental in revealing humiliating instances of fright, sadness and pleading not to be left alone. Hagar seeks refuge in her memories as she fears that loneliness could be a precursor to abandonment. Drowning in reminiscences, Hagar discovers the suppressed feelings of guilt and complexity that act as a breach to her interpersonal relationships. Her failure to reveal her hurt, her fear and her doubts remain detrimental to social interactions and understanding.

The Stone Angel, as a memory narrative, reveals suppressed and volatile childhood remembrances that distort the understanding and the responses in Hagar's life. Solitude becomes an accessory and the past becomes the escape route from the problematic present. Guilt and hurt become ingrained in the memories and remain markers of an alienated and insecure childhood. The novel lets the memories sort themselves into pain, fear of betrayal, guilt, alienation and insecurity along with the refrain of witnessing the death of the loved ones and resonate a traumatic experience. It is only in engaging with memories, assembling and assessing them that Hagar is able to accept her fear and forgive herself. The twin narrative structure of the past and the present collaborate to provide insight into the world of memories and address her alienation. The pretence of being arrogant and vain reveal a psyche that is guilt-ridden with witnessing the death of others. As part of a defence strategy, Hagar buries her fear and transforms into a haughty woman who attempts to mask her inner-self from others even when aged and terminally ill. In confronting the past, the protagonist succeeds in unmasking her pain, erasing her guilt and learns to forgive herself and face her problematic present with ease. Hagar's acceptance gets

exemplified with her admission; “I lie in my cocoon. I am woven around with threads, held tightly, and youngsters come and jab their pins into me. Then the tight threads loosen. There. That’s better. Now I can breathe” (306).

Chapter 5

Memoryscapes: *The Diviners*

My destination is no longer a place, rather a new way of seeing.

Marcel Proust

The Diviners marks the zenith of Margaret Laurence's oeuvre, and ensure her uncontested place in Canadian literature. The novel reveals the mastery of her compositional techniques which draw its inspiration from visual frames of 'snapshots' and' memorybank' movies. The narrative springs from the memories of the forty-seven-year-old protagonist, Morag Gunn. Triggered by a few photographs, Morag's past is evoked, and gets interrogated and assessed. Morag finds her past with its passivity embroiled in the land of Manawaka from which she escapes to the University and later carves a career as a writer. Her struggles of being a single mother accentuate her trials and tribulations. However, the narrative locates the trials of not only Morag, but also her foster parents and her daughter Pique. Morag's alienation is echoed by the lives and trials of her Metis schoolmate and father of her daughter, Jules Tonnerre, and that of her friends Dan MacRaith, Royland, Eva Winkler and Fan. The traumatic resonances of these trials connect the characters and merge this memory saga into a cohesive narrative. The novel is divided into five sections which in turn highlight the personal trajectory in the life of Morag – 'River of Now and Then', 'The Nuisance grounds', 'Halls of Sion', 'Rites of Passage' and 'The Diviners'. The novel has been received as an excemplary narrative of self-exploration, of divining, of unmasking identity, of growth of an artist and a testimony

to mother-child relations. Place-bound identity also figures as one of the thematic concerns as the novel portrays Manawaka experience entrenched with the prairie landscape and its culture. Space, time and identity remain paradigms that organise the memorabilia integral to the narrative.

For instance, the Canadian literary critic, David Staines critiques Morag Gunn, as highlighting the "centrality of the past to the artist's understanding of her own position in the flux of time" (3). However, myth-making is seen as Laurence's forte according to Nora Foster Stowel, the biographer and a critic of Laurence. In an article 'A town of the mind', Stowel compares Laurence's Neepawa with her fictional Manawaka and observes that in transforming the ordinary Neepawa into the magical and extraordinary world of Manawaka, Laurence, succeeds in mythologising her hometown through her fiction and her non-fiction (192). In 'Women and the Masks', Stovels comments on the use of masks in the works of Laurence. Stovels argues that the Canadian heroines in Laurence's work embody her voice and masquerade as Laurence's self. Masks act as concealment, depersonalisation, and objects of ritualization (Mask 155-174). Extending the argument to the social and cultural discourses of Manawaka, *The Diviners* can be seen as an attempt to look behind. the masks and concealment to divine the truth. Stovels in also remarks that as a kuntlesrroman *The Diviners* might be tilted 'A Portrait of an Artist as a Middle Aged Mother', for mothering her baby and her books are both important to Morag. Her daughter leaving her "shocks Morag out of her literary paralysis" (Passage 104).

On the other hand, critics see the quest for self-knowledge as a schema in Laurence's novels. In her article 'The Quest of the Diviners', Eleanor Johnston highlights Royland whose quest for divining of the Evangelical religion is given up for divining water. His zeal for religious pursuits drives his wife to suicide and he

becomes she states a “water-witch” (112). Cathy N Davidson terms the novel as a “feminist epic” (13) and explores Morag’s development as an artist ageing as a woman in a supportive as well as hostile environment. The novel culminates with the evolution of the protagonist as one of the diviners.

On the other hand, critic Mary Jean Green sees the novel as an exposition of the mother-daughter relationship. The trajectory of both Morag and Pique, she opines, springs from the understanding of the past and its acceptance (46-49). Another interesting commentary is that of Gayle Green, who addresses memory as a means to liberation and explores it at the level of narrative form. Green comments that all writers “draw on the past, mine it as a quarry” (291). She also terms memory treacherous and comments that it is the self-doubt that makes Morag play the memorybank movies in mind.

However, the present study attempts to view the novel both as a quest into the world of memories and as an exploration of the understanding of the past and its residual meaning in the present. It confronts the memory gaps and the fillers in the narrative that remain questionable and attempts to derive a re-revised narrative of the past. *The Diviners* reveals the epic story of the protagonist through episodic narrations wherein she revises, revisits, accepts and modifies her attitudes to the past. In this reconciliation with the past, it is primarily the pain of alienation and of being orphaned that stands out. A broken home and her childhood remembrances serve to heighten her isolation at the foster home and in her relationships with her adoptive parents.

Along with suppression, she locates the false narratives that she invents to provide her with an acceptable background of a home and a family. The house in the

photographs becomes the harbinger of memories which she revises with each narration. The memory reconstructions happen when her daughter Pique leaves their home, leaving a letter for Morag. Pique's departure becomes the trigger for the flooding of memories. Pique's running away from home echoes Morag's escape to the University and her relief in getting away from her hometown Manawaka. Her remembrances, however, detail her adoptive parents, Prin and Christie Logan. Morag's house stinks as Christie stacks their home with various oddities from the town disposal area which was then known as 'Nuisance Grounds'. The albums, books, plates and mementoes that he collected were the memories that others had thrown out. Unlike memories that never arrange themselves in a linear order, photographs as well as storytelling, for her, are arranged chronologically.

Morag's journey from the small town of Manawaka reflects autobiographical strains and echoes Laurence's life. The story depicts the journey through the memories of Morag, who suddenly confronts her daughter leaving home to search for her native roots. She also faces the marginalisation of her foster parents, Christie and Prin, through her narrative. She revises her narrative and on reflection acknowledges her falsified and invented memories. She revalidates them as well as learns from how others handled their respective struggles. However, it is only at the critical juncture when her daughter rejects her by leaving home, that Morag's reassessment of her life and past gets triggered, and she reflects on her own mother.

However, this reflection is problematised when the image of her mother is overlapped by the image of her foster mother. The revision of all her narratives becomes necessitated. In creating the character of Morag Gunn, Laurence exemplifies how an alter ego of a writer works in the profession of writing itself. Morag's writing

becomes a coping strategy she devises to shed her alienation and her sense of 'not belonging'.

Morag Gunn, the writer- protagonist, details her life story by creating her world of memories referred here in terms of 'memoryscape'. The outerscape highlights the significance of Manawaka and its landscape as an integral backdrop to the narrative. The river, the nuisance grounds, the town, the Hill street, the Wachakwa river, the church and the school foreground the memories. Although the locales shift to Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver, Ontario and London, Manawaka remains the centre of the schema. Manawaka becomes every other land, just as life at Manawaka remains the determining factor in her life elsewhere too. Memories abound and create the impressions that need to be validated, revised and divined for the significance in the narrative of her life. Their veracity of being false or real adds another dimension of enquiry as to why they present themselves. How they are provided with a space in understanding the inner workings, frailties and fluidity of the mind also remains definitive in the narrative.

Photographs act as time capsules that retain traces of the past, both real and invented. On closer scrutiny, the loss of her parents, and her feeling of being abandoned and betrayed accompanied by the guilt of living emerge as a suppressed indication of the first traumatic memory. It is interesting to note that Morag suddenly ridicules the narrative by exclaiming "And that is the end of the totally invented memories" (*TD* 9). Morag tries to locate the rationale for the sudden longing to know her parents of whom she knew only through the photographs. She realises she now was ten years older than her mother "was when she died–and she would seem so young … so inexperienced" in case they met (9).

The unreliability of memories gets exposed as Morag locates associative memories which were missing in earlier narratives: “I recall looking at the pictures, these pictures, over and over again, each time imagining I remembered a little more” (8). For Morag, the memory bank movies that occur in the guise of “a new season of the old films” reveal that “they had been refilmed, a scene deleted here, another added there” (23). Her memories reflect imagined associations as she realises that nshe connects her kitchen with a smell of “sour milk and stale bread” -- a smell that was imagined (4). “There was, however, no sour milk or stale bread here–it must be all in the head, emanating from the emptiness of the place” (5). Her imagination now extends to the old photographs that she held and drew narratives of the past from them. However carelessly she tossed them, she realises that the “photographs from the past never agreed to get lost” (5). The photographs lie scattered about in her house, often lying hidden in places where they were dumped, and yet manage to reappear from their secret abode. The unknown past becomes evident as Morag details her impressions from the very sketchy remembrances of her parents. She wishes for forgiveness for having forgotten them as she remembers their deaths and not their lives.

As her past unravels to her, the death of her parents provides the framework for a recurrent motif of a terrible loss that remains unexplained for little Morag. As the memory stops recollecting and years remain blank, Morag seems to confront the gaps that continue to elude even after many years. She acknowledges that her detailing of the photographs always drew comparisons of her mother, who does not yell at the kids like Prin, her foster mother. She remembers “composing this interpretation, in Christie and Prin’s house” (7). She attributes safety to the house where she lived with her parents by declaring that she was not afraid of the few

spiders and ants which lived in a cupboard and stated that “nothing terrible” can happen there (8). She wonders whether anything terrible did happen. Resistance becomes another extension of her encounters with painful events and running away becomes a strategy for excluding painful memories.

The memoryscape becomes a canvas to the markers of the reminiscences through visual and audio imagery. The snapshots and memorybank movies provide the visual extravaganza in terms of the ability to pause, reflect, rewind and zoom onto various aspects contained within the frames. The snaps are the remnants of her infancy and depict her parents and the house where she was born. Each snap tells her an episode with the background, the sepia picture, the characters, the dog and the gate detailing the narrative. Morag too is a part of the narrative where she is in her mother’s lap or as a prankster swinging on the gate. The photographs, the snapshots and the memory bank movies provide the vistas to the yesterworld that Morag scrutinises for locating a sense of belonging. Places matter to her as she constructs the narrative woven around the brick building, the two-storied house and the creaking gate. The trees, the shadows and the figures of her parents remain an endeavour to make the images frozen in time to come alive.

However, in attempting to reframe the past into a more detailed narrative, she acknowledges that most of her memories surprisingly acquire more clarity with time, and this makes her doubt her narrative. These narratives act as a sort of a prosthetic memory for Morag and hence she holds on to them. Each narrative lead to the next imprinted episode and the chain of events are visualised. Morag’s remembrances become a catalyst for shedding her frustrations of lost or bleak childhood and are reclaimed as an act of confronting her memory of being orphaned at the age of five. Storytelling retains its structure of chronologically arranged snapshots and movie

banks interspersed with the present anxiety about her daughter. As Morag seeks to locate her identity from her memories, she confesses “I keep the snapshots not for what they show, but for what is hidden in them” (6). Morag thus creates in herself an internal witness who analyses the visions, revisions and the replay of the events in her life.

The narrative captivates both Morag and the reader through the narrative device of using imagery that foregrounds the fusion of the past and the present. Imagery abounds with not only the river flowing outside her home at McConnell’s Landing, but the descriptions of the buildings, characters, homes, and milieu both at Manawaka and elsewhere. The auditory element of memory gets highlighted through the performative discourses of Christie. His bonding with Morag exists on account of his ability to fill little Morag’s world with colours, stories, legends and folklore. His storytelling derives from a range of sources -- from the books that he collects from the garbage, from the tale he spins by looking at the garbage he collects from each house and from his rejoinder to the cynicism of his detractors in the town. His innate ability to create the fantasy world for Morag and his ability to fill her world with nostalgia, with its legends and folklore become the nurturing platform for Morag the writer. Her classmate and a Metis, Jules adds his perspective of the legends and Morag gets different versions of the same event. Books of history provide Morag with the third perspective. The multiple differing perspectives awe Morag to imagine all of them and recreate them at will.

The songs that intersperse the narrative provide the key factor that highlights the auditory element in the novel. Jules and Pique craft their songs that become a testimony to their trauma. It becomes a mode of acknowledgement of the world’s apathy in listening to them and hence they sing to themselves and reveal their pain

and suffering, hopes and dreams. Morag recognises the pain that Jules lets go through singing a song he composed. Morag and Pique remain quiet as the song reflects the agony of the tragic death of his sister. However, it is through singing that Jules is able to overcome the trauma of the tragedy of his sister being burnt to death. Morag finds her pain intensifies as she is a witness both to the burning of the shack, the deaths of Jules' sister and her kids and to the revisiting of the death of Jules' sister through the songs.

The novel remains a replica of the contours of the mindscape and reflects the chasms, the fault lines and the fissures of the sparks of pain within her psyche. The reflections and her memories expose the survival strategy of the protagonist by the therapeutic narration of the story of her past. *The Diviners*, Laurence's masterpiece, begins poetically describing the river that "flowed both ways" which quintessentially signifies the past and the present (3). In the course of the narrative, the protagonist tries to make sense of the collection of episodic memories that floods her mind. Features of trauma like the feeling of alienation, fear, doubt, suppression of memories, distortion of memory and the motif of witnessing painful incidents recur in the novel. Witnessing the cries of other people or the pain of others becomes another set of memory etched in Morag's mind. These aspects of memory resonate with traumatic or painful events in the life of Morag and other characters.

Although Morag relies on memory to enact as a support in her life, the past becomes problematic as she faces the pangs of guilt of surviving. Death of her parents remains painful as guilt remains ingrained in Morag and she is mystified at their death. "She knows they are dead. She knows what dead means. She has seen dead gophers, run over by cars or shot, their guts redly squashed out on the road" (13). She gathers that her parents died of infantile paralysis, a disease that generally affects

children and cannot help wondering — “If it was the infantile, though, why them and not her? She is the kid around here” (14). The guilt that she nurses becomes a recurrent motif in Morag’s life and accompanies every narrative that signifies death. When Prin once reveals that she had a stillborn – a boy strangled on the cord-- little Morag starts crying as death terrifies her. Violence too terrifies her as she recollects their neighbour, Gus Winkler hitting his son Vernon with a stick and Christie and she remain mute spectators and the incident haunts her. Christie slowly draws Morag into accepting their home by his construct of a virtual world of characters from folklore, and from linking it to the world of Megan. He narrates stories about her ancestors, who migrated to Manawaka. Creativity beckons Morag, and she starts writing poems. Although Christie’s performative discourse allows Morag to spend time with him, she continues to cling on to the photographs of her dead parents and their memory. They remain the sole evidence from her past.

The guilt of surviving becomes a refrain in Morag’s memories, along with being witness to the trauma of abortion. For instance, Christie, while narrating stories, mentions burying a foetus in the Nuisance grounds. “It was a newborn baby. Wrapped in newspapers, but it fell out. Dead, of course. Hadn’t gone its full term. It was that small, like a skinned rabbit” (62). The mother later got married and Christie keeps the secret to himself and refuses to divulge details. The suppression of the abortion remains unknown to the town except for Morag who associates burying of secrets and lives in the nuisance grounds. Yet another disturbing memory from her schooldays was of her friend Eva who discovers that she was pregnant. Frantic and terrified of her father Gus, Eva manages to abort the foetus “that night with a partly straightened-out wire clothes hanger” (123). Christie drives Eva to the hospital as she bleeds and her mother, Mrs Winkler realises the truth. Morag wonders whether

Eva felt guilty at surviving. Morag believes that Christie would have buried the foetus in the Nuisance grounds which she terms the “unofficial cemetery” (124). It may be surmised that death, loss, secret lives and ‘guilt of surviving’ create in Morag a world that remains hidden within the layers of memory.

Death becomes a construct that unconsciously connects Morag to Prin, Eva and Christie. Her embittered pain of being reduced to a helpless victim at her parents' death is replicated in their lives through the painful experience of Prin’s stillborn, Eva’s abortion and foetus that Christie finds dumped in the garbage. The identification of the hurt, pain and the similarities of their helplessness makes Morag recoil from all the three. Death becomes a topic that terrifies Morag, although she does not yet understand the implications of the trauma that the trio experienced.

Death becomes a repertoire in the novel and is associated with grief, pain and loss. However, death heightens the traumatic intensity of Morag, who as a reporter in ‘Manawaka Banner’, the local daily, covers the story of the burning of a shack of Tolleneres. Jules sister, Piquette and her two kids are charred to death in the shack that is reduced to “twisted shapeless blackened metal” (128). It is much later that the realisation that they were inside the burnt shack dawns to those who silently watch the horrifying sight. Witnessing of the pain of another can add to the trauma and this becomes evident as Morag notices Lazarus, Piquette’s father, who looks past her and his face blank “portraying nothing”. Lazarus and his mumble ““They’re mine, there, them” ere mine dere, dem” (129) as he slowly tries to recover the charred bodies from the burnt shack horrifies Morag. She starts vomiting on to the snow and on return “Without warning, taking herself by surprise, she puts her head down on the desk and cries in a way she does not remember ever having done before, as though pain were

the prime condition of human life" (130). To Morag, all the deaths implicate the guilt of surviving, the helplessness and suffering of witnessing.

Witnessing death becomes a critical trope as Morag visits Jules on his death bed. His death brings back the memories of her childhood and the death of her parents. Jules' death becomes a testimony of pain and his isolation and alienation become representative of the exclusion of the Metis and the denial of their dignity by the rest of the society. Their folk music was mangled to suit the fancies of the city-folk and the Metis were reduced to mere spectacles. The costumes and the antics that accompanied their performances as musicians in the cities made them objects of an othering gaze. Jules dies of throat cancer and his miserable end makes Morag realise the futility of running away from pain and humiliation that he bore while in Manawaka. She understands the anguish of a culture that is rooted in poverty, exclusion, alienation, humiliation and isolation and realises that the pain from the songs that he writes, reflects in the lyrics which the world does not bother to listen. The songs and the singing become a life force that sustains the bond with the rest of the clan, and the pain reflects through singing, through listening and through feeling. The livid experiences that emerge in the performative discourses and texts transcend cultural hegemony, and Morag's attempts to question it remains futile. The temptation to submerge the narrative within a framework that dispels the humiliation that the Metis face in the present acts as a prompt to narrate the colourful past of their ancestors and remain in contrast to the sketchy remembrances of the immediate past. The present remains an extension of an ordeal unable to assimilate the narrative into a cohesive whole.

The resonances of poverty, alienation and marginalisation that Morag associates with Jules reappear when Morag reflects on the life and death of Prin. The

sight of the obese Prin lying in a state of vegetation awaiting death at the hospital surprisingly releases memories of affection, care and concern that Prin had bestowed on her. Morag realises that although she always used to listen to the stories Christie narrated, she had never acknowledged Prin's presence in the house. Morag had spent her time in her small room upstairs. It is when Prin lies in the hospital that Morag realises how much she misses the hulk-- her mother -- she never bothered to know. Prin's death provides recognition of the suppressed affection and bonding for Prin that Morag had buried deep within her. Burial retains its cultural significance as Prin is buried in the churchyard. Morag recollects the varied instances of humiliation and abhorrence that Prin had to suffer on her visit on Sunday to the church. Her social exclusion had slowly induced Prin to stop visiting the church. Significantly, Christie remarks that it would have been better to bury her in the 'Nuisance Grounds'. Morag takes the old man's arm as they prepare to go to the graveyard. Death does not erase the ignominy suffered during a lifetime.

Witnessing Christie lying on his deathbed becomes a traumatic event for Morag. Christie was to Morag the one "who told tales, who divined with the garbage, who ranted in his sorrow like the skirling of the pipes in a pibroch" (322). Guilt intensifies as she is unable to bear seeing him even unable to speak and makes her regret that she "didn't come back before" (322).

> He wants to speak desperately, but cannot. His mouth opens, and he strains. No words come. His eyes are filled with such pain and such knowing that Morag can scarcely endure the sight of them. What emerges from his mouth, then, is a squawk, a hoarse unverbal croaking like a bullfrog. He turns away from her, but not before she sees the shame in his eyes, at being thus diminished before her. (322)

Christie remains a father figure to her -- a truth that Morag realises too late. She finds all her memories collapsing into the pain that she sees in his eyes. She unburdens herself by stating “you have been a father to me" (323). Earlier, when she first goes to the hospital, she feels “alien, apologetic” as she asks “to see Mr Christie, my – my stepfather” (323). The hesitation in mentioning the relationship gives way later to a wholehearted acceptance as she shares her thoughts with him. She acknowledges her bonding with him as she wants to stay with him.

Guilt resonates with facing the death of a loved one and echoes all the other deaths, loss and grief that Morag had faced in her life. Home, as well as Manawaka, is infused with guilt-ridden memories. Morag regrets not taking Pique to Manawaka and realises that she unconsciously terms Christie’s house as her home. She realises that the affection that Christie and Prin bestowed on her was the real memory she had and sadly that was the memory she kept trying to erase. Her rejection of Christie and Prin and her running away from Manawaka belies the intensity with which her memories of Christie reverberate. She recalls the fascinating tales that Christie used to narrate to her and his sharp observation skills that help to spin tales from the garbage. Atwood, in her ‘Afterword’ to *The Diviners*, calls Christie “the garbage collector, seer, and teller of stories” (389).

This is a belated realisation for Morag, and it underlines the fact that most of her precious memories are made up of Christie and Prin and the rest of her memories were all part of the fiction that she created for herself. Her sense of alienation after being orphaned remains a barrier to building relationships and she always was frightened of being abandoned. She wonders “What did I ever see about you, Christie, until it was too late? I told my child tales about you, but never took her to

see you. I made a legend out of you, while the living you was there alone in that mouldering house" (*TD* 337). Her guilt heightens as her understanding deepens.

The assortment of memories plagues Morag on her visit to Prin at the hospital and is instrumental in looking at her past anew. Morag returns to the home on Hill Street, climbs the stair to her old room and descents into the vortex of memories.

> The tiny room is huge with ghosts. Ghosts of people and of tales. Morag, a child, a girl, a young woman. Christie ranting the old ironic battle cry. Clowny Macpherson. Piper Gunn who led his people to bravery. Gunner Gunn, who once, unbelievably, had life as Colin Gunn, her father. Rider Tonnerre, the talesman, the talisman. They are all here tonight. Who has been real and who imagined? (322)

Her revisiting the house conjures the memories of her childhood that she had misplaced. She was now able to accept the Christies and recall her growing up in the sheltered home that she never realised was hers. She always had held back and felt that she never belonged. Her acceptance of Christie and Prin as parents makes her aware of their unconditional love. It was she who had rejected their care, love and had been ashamed of them. Morag realises how hurt they must have been as she left Manawaka and her guilt resurfaces.

Humiliation becomes an extension of the marginalisation of both individuals and communities. It is the school which becomes the space that cultivates divide among the students. Small children who are groomed in the social conditioning of the times unwittingly create spaces that exclude few children from friendships. The slow realisation of Morag of her long skirts, of that of Eva and the neat short skirts of the rest of the kids, become a painful memory that reveals her impoverishment. The

humiliation and the indignities that Morag senses spiral to insinuate Christie for being responsible for her ridicule. She blames his job as a town scavenger and prefers to associate with her dead parents for a sense of reassurance of a better status. Her distancing from the Christies colludes with her need for reassurance through the familial photographs of her parents. Morag tries to negate her surroundings and her foster parents. Christie remains silent, and he remains a witness to the pain he caused Morag. Morag too witnesses his pain and his silence.

Humiliation becomes a routine for the Christies whose life in the fringes of society was obscured by Gus Winkler, their neighbour and the Metis or the half-breed who live down the hillside. This marginalisation was a part of their life and even little Morag noticed the way people treated Prin at church and the humiliating remarks that the other women make when they see Prin. Morag becomes conscious of the stench of garbage that seemed to emanate from their house. The fear of rebuke, the awareness of the stigma of poverty that is inevitably visible becomes a source of alienation that creates either rebellious behaviour like in Jules and Morag or the stoic subservience as in Eva. Jules used to disappear for days from school and go hunting with his father. Both he and Morag did not allow the rest of the children to bully them.

Alienation extends to Prin as Morag recalls the way the town and its womenfolk treated Prin. Morag reflects that Prin realised that she never belonged to the town of Manawaka and her identity was that of the wife of the town scavenger. The exclusion of Prin extended to Morag. She too remained the scavenger's daughter despite later cultivating a socially accepted behaviour and dressing well and working as a helper in Simlow's Ladies Wear at Manawaka. Despite distancing from Prin, Morag continued to remain unaccepted by the people of Manawaka. Morag pined for

her parents although she had forgotten them. Manawaka becomes the culprit and the place unbearable for Morag. Her admission at the University of Winnipeg charts the escape route from what the social anthropologist Connerton terms as the “humiliated silences” (67) that accompanied daily living. Her opportunity of studying at the university was an answer to her perpetual problem of living in disgrace. However, she finally manages to return to Manawaka as atonement for never recognising the kind gesture of Christie and Prin in adopting her.

Morag confronts her memories of Prin and Christie and feels guilty for not returning to Manawaka earlier and taking care of them when they were old and ill. Her guilt intensifies for not remembering her parents; for choosing to ignore Christie and Prin --her foster parents; for escaping from the bondages and burdens in Manawaka and for attempting to erase memories as unwanted. Morag realises that she has always treasured the memories and it was hence that the photographs never got lost. Her guilt shadows her relation with Jules, who always remains an outsider and a wanderer. Morag feels guilty at enduring her marriage with Brooke Skelton, her professor at the University, as one where she succumbed to the temptation of escaping her situation of poverty, identity crisis and need to erase her past and enter a world where she could create her identity.

However, Morag takes care of Prin, Christie and Jules as they lie dying and comes to terms with the memories, its perplexities and its anxieties that remain with her. She recognises that all the three loved to give happiness to others and never asked for anything in return. She bears the pain of their death and her loss by recognising that she has an outlet through her writings. Her narrative reflects many casual encounters and close bonding with storytelling in Christie’s household as

mesmerising and aiding to her creativity. She realises that her writing was initiated with the colourful caricature and narratives of folklore that Christie shared with her.

Pain becomes a construct that defines the lives of the marginalised at Manawaka. Prin, in her deathbed, remains a distant figure who lived in a world cocooned by a sense of ignorance. Her illness had reached a state where every movement pained her and death was imminent. Taking care of Prin at home becomes a massive problem and the hospital becomes a refuge. Morag had been in Prin's house-- closeted with memories of Prin in the room—when she realises that it was her home too. Prin remained distant even in her death and the guilt of not having acknowledged Prin remains as a constant reminder in Morag. She realises the agony of a mother as she reflects on her daughter Pique's strained relationship with her. Pique's pain reverberates in her memory "Pique, her long black hair spread over the hospital pillow, her face turned away from Morag, her voice low and fierce. Can't you see I despise you? Can't you see I want you to go away? You aren't my mother. I haven't got a mother" (81).

Fear of feeling unwanted and unaccepted remains ingrained in Morag as also her fear of being betrayed and abandoned by the people she loved. Her memories of a troubled childhood reflect in all her relationships. Her marriage to Brooke Skelton, her Professor at the University who was fourteen years her senior, was interspersed with self-doubt. Her lack of assurance had made her accept the dictates of her husband and made her resort to break her ties with Manawaka—the place to which she attributed all her failings. Brooke found it an intrigue that Morag did not have a past narrative. She reflects on her evasiveness of not telling Brooke about her childhood with Prin and Christie as she was wary of being rejected by him. Her intensity in her need to erase Manawaka and its memories is rightly captured in her

assurance: “Brooke–I am happy, with you. And anything else–Manawaka and that–it’s over. It doesn’t exist. It’s unimportant” (161). She wanted desperately to obliterate her association with Manawaka which to her was the storehouse of her memories, the milieu of the enactment of her memory bank movies and the backdrop of her pain, humiliation and seclusion.

However, Morag soon becomes a witness to Brookes’ nightmares which revealed trauma in childhood. Brooke tried half-heartedly to tell Morag his story but soon clams up. All that Brooke revealed was a sketchy past of his life with his parents in India. Morag realises that Brooke will never be able to free himself from his nightmares unless he tells his story. Morag realises that each person has a unique set of memories and even she and Brooke own two different sets of memories about their time together. Thoughts remain mutually exclusive and communication broken.

Shared memories become a possibility as Morag engages in a relationship with her artist friend Dan MacRaith. Morag finds it surprising that she can share sketches of her past with him. She tells him about Brooke, Jules and Pique. She tells him about Christie and Manawaka. He too speaks about his wife Bridget whom he refers to as Birdie. When Dan decides to return to his home town in Crombruach, Morag once goes on his insistence to visit him “just once–just to see” and takes Pique along with her. She yields to his insistence to visit him at Crombruach as he is torn between wanting to return and wanting to stay. He remarks “Then you’d understand both things–my need of the place, the geographical place, the sea and the shore, and also why I have to get away, and did even before I ever met you. Now it’s a hundred per cent worse, because I want to come down here and see you, and I also feel more guilty about leaving–well, leaving all of them up there” (312).

However, on visiting him, Morag realises that seeing her with her daughter is as startling to him as much as her seeing him with his wife. Although both of them were aware of the existence of Birdie and Pique, it nevertheless had remained confined to the shadows and had been unformed traces of images. “No longer can Bridie be a fantasy woman. She has become, in this instant, real to Morag. Her drawn, tense, determined face will now forevermore come between Morag and McRaith” (315). She realises that now that the images have become real, that Dan is at peace with Birdie and she with Pique. She recognises that she becomes agitated and engages in her memory musings either when Pique is ill or when Pique is not at home. The depth of her bonding with Pique becomes clear. She realises that she always had taken care never to hurt Pique while indulging any relationship with men. She realises that Dan locates his identity through Birdie “whom he has known all his life as she has known him” (318). She relocates the mother in her and the implications of being responsible for another life. The make-believe world that she shared with Dan is willingly forfeited and exists as an accepted memory devoid of pain.

Salvation becomes a construct in the novel, as Morag finds that she finally can sleep alone in the house filled with salvaged garbage. The house that stinks gets erased as the house filled with the oddities brings forth fond memories and not loathing. The loss of Prin was the trigger that set many memories to be altered and renegotiated, and Morag realised that she has always missed Prin. She realises that she has never acknowledged her affection for Prin and Christie and instead was uncaring and aloof which sadly, she realises, they knew. The salvaged memories play a vital role in moulding her persona.

Accepting the painful memories becomes a coping strategy against painful experiences for Morag. However, acceptance gets mediated through sleep which acts as a distancing element from memories and reality when confronted with incomprehensive incidents as in the case of little Morag. Morag is burdened with confusion as she is not allowed to visit upstairs where her parents were sick and were in bed. All she wants is to get away from the grim-faced doctor who visits her parents and her alienation begins with learning not to "trust anyone who smiles" (12). Little Morag "stares unblinking, like fledgeling birds when they fall out of their nests and just stare" (14). The imagery captures her helplessness and she hope to conquer it through sleep.

However, sleep becomes problematic for Brooke, who finds that his dreams become the chains of traumatic remembrances and negating them an act of denial. Morag realises her husband Brooke remained chained to his past as he chose to be mute and suppress his nightmares. He preferred to erase his memories by not thinking or speaking about them. At the same time, he was eager to marry Morag, who to him seemed did not have a past. Past becomes a construct that equates with pain for Brooke. His academic pursuits act as an unburdening of the alienation and pain and his immersion in his career acts as a barrier to memories. Dreams, however, intervene without his consent and become the alternate space for traumatic memories to inhabit.

Similarly, songs become the alternative space that the Metis create to narrate their pain and estrangement with others. The songs that Jules composes about Lazarus, his father, and about his sister Piquette's death by fire remain a testimony to narrating both the ordeals of the Metis as well as reflecting the pain of their tragic lives. The pain, the isolation, the neglect and the alienation are assimilated in the lyrics. The tragic lives and death are appropriated to the songs that Jules sings for

Morag and Pique. The songs create a platform for witnessing the painful narrative, which is shared with Pique and Morag. Unlike Brooke who suppresses his tormenting memories, Jules confronts his tragic narrative through his songs.

The songs are interspersed in the narrative and appended as a separate section titled 'Album'. The ballads resurrect the legendary battle and reflect the pain of the natives who are overthrown from their land by the settlers. The memories of the dead reverberate in the wind and the prairies:

They say the dead don't always die;

They say the truth outlived the lie

The night wind calls their voices there,

The Metis men, like Jules Tonnerre. (375)

Again, in the song about Lazarus, Jules captures his father's loneliness, his tragic life and his exclusion of being a Metis:

Lazarus was what they called a halfbreed:

Half a man was what the town would say.

What made him walk so slow, well, they didn't care to know—

It was easier by far to look away. (377)

Again 'Piquette's song' laments the tragedy of the fire that charred his sister and her kids and reveals the alienation that every Metis family had to bear. Jules' agony reveals his trauma in not knowing the pain that his sister had to bear both in life as well as in death.

My sister's eyes

Fire and snow—

What they were telling

You'll never know. (380)

Pique's song, on the other hand, captivates the quest of Pique in her endeavour to reclaim her identity. Her appraisal of her Native culture, of the dreams, of the home she "never knowed":

There's a valley holds my name, now I know

In the tales they used to tell it seemed so low

There's a valley way down there

I used to dream it like a prayer

And my father's, they lived there long ago. (381)

The songs reflect the auditory element of memories that reverberate in the land of the ancient communities. By interspersing with the modern instrument of a camera and photographs, the delineation of Manawaka includes all the inhabitants and evoke their story through both the visual and auditory portrayal. The songs of the Metis occupy an alternative space for the collective memory, anguish and deprivation of their traumatic memories and the cultural resilience and acceptance.

As Morag learns to let go of Pique and stop interfering in her daughter's life, she realises that she is swarmed by memories of her yesteryears which continue to be validated. As she arranges her memories retracing her life and editing them as she would do her novel, she realises that many are altered in closer introspection. The

present helps to make sense of the narratives that she has kept collecting about her past. The past stays as a constant reminder of her own decisions in life and her scant regard to her foster parents. Piques going to Manawaka bought back memories that revealed how much the place meant to her. Pique returns and remarks having met a middle-aged woman weeding around the graves of Christie and Prin and remarks that she had been happy to know that Morag had a daughter. Morag, recognise that it was her friend Eva that Pique had chanced to see. Morag painfully recollects the abortion that Eva underwent, her isolation and the knowledge that Eva could never be able to be a mother. The narrative is transformed as Morag realises that she is listening to the story of Eva's survival. When Pique points out that Morag is crying, she merely is unable to explain. The memories recede and the divide between the past and the present loom large. Morag learns her lesson to let go of the pitfalls in life and bear the pain to survive as she recreates her past and amasses it as different episodes linked by a continuum. She notices how others have moved on with their lives and have endured pain, loss and humiliation. She learns it from Christie, Prin, Jules, Eva, Fan and Dan.

Morag survives by incorporating the lessons that the retelling of her story helped her realise. When Pique decides to visit her uncle Jacques at the Tollere farm, Morag decides not to interfere. Pique decides to help them run the farm by helping with the kids. The orphaned kids of Jules' sister and other kids have been given shelter at the farm. Morag realises that Pique needs to follow her instinct and make her own decisions. As Morag finally tries understanding Pique and this is accelerated with listening to Pique sing the song that she composed. Pique through the song, claims her Metis identity of her father and reflects its culture. Morag understands that her daughter's quest for her identity has begun and she needs to find it herself.

> Then silence. Pique could not speak until Morag did, and Morag could not speak for a while. The hurts unwittingly inflicted upon Pique by her mother, by circumstances–Morag had agonized over these often enough, almost as though, if she imagined them sufficiently, they would prove to have been unreal after all. But they were not unreal. Yet Pique was not assigning any blame–that was not what it was all about. And Pique's journey, although at this point it might feel to her unique, was not unique. Morag reached out and took Pique's hand, holding it lightly. (360)

The multiplicity of memories and selective nature of memories become problematic for her. Morag arranges her life experience into different compartments. She becomes frustrated as sorting of memories like sorting of garbage is not an easy task. "I make boxes for myself," she tells Ella, "and then I get furious when I find I'm inside one. Do you think it'll be a lifelong pattern?" (152). Her memories, at times, enslave her. The characters of the stories she listened to, the characters that she wrote about, the people she interacted with in her life, including her family and friends vie for space in her narratives. She observes different worlds that her characters inhabit -- the make-believe world that she had created of her parents, that of her schoolmates which was representative of the stratified society of Manawaka, and the excluded and diminished world of the Christies, the Winklers and that of the 'half breeds', the Metis, inhabit. The writer-artist Morag interrogates cultural tropes like family, region, nativity, identity, humanism, art, religion, colonialism and friendship. The recreation of the world of childhood portrays the social tapestry, divisions and aspirations of the residents of Manawaka—the socially accepted who live on the hilltop, the marginalised who live on the hillside and the excluded Metis who live down the hill.

Her world of writing opens up the possibility of escaping from these rigid stratifications of Manawaka. However, she soon realises that despite severing ties with Manawaka, her childhood, her upbringing and her memories follow her. She continues feeling alienated and being unsure of herself. The remembrances of Morag relive her alienation, misery and loss that she experienced in her childhood. The memories of her parents remained distant, whereas that of her foster parents, she tries to forget. Devoid of the memories and denying them even to her daughter, Pique, Morag realises that she has erred in protecting her daughter from her past. Mere financial security, schooling, dresses and photographs -- all become a deliberate yet futile attempt to provide happiness for her daughter. Piques' relationship with her father Jules proves to be an eye-opener for Morag as she always feels alienated by close relationships that everyone around her seems to share.

Insecurity becomes a prime construct portraying the helplessness of both Morag and Pique. The past and its turbulences continue to haunt Morag as her daughter Pique faces taunts at school. Morag is reminded of the hurt and anguish at school that both Jules and she faced in Manawaka. In her urge to erase her daughter's suffering, she wonders "How to spare one's children at least some kinds of pain?" (344). Pique, however, rejects her interventions. Morag again witnesses Pique suffering alone as she silently absorbs the news of Jukes' death. Pique's alienation becomes a painful reminder of Morag's childhood filled with insecurity. Morag sees a reflection of herself in Pique and this makes her exclaim once on the inability to maintain relationships. Pique, like her father Jules, resorts to draft songs and it is then that Morag realises that her daughter wanted a different space that would help her grow and be independent. She is reminded of her desperation to be away from Manawaka, from Prin and Christie her refusal to return to Manawaka. Her need to

obliterate Manawaka in her discourse with her life while at the University and later while with her husband, her settling down at McConnell's Landing, an equally remote town, finds parallels with Pique's life. Pique too is uprooted from Vancouver to Ontario and her childhood holds the memories of her mother and the 'absences-filled' memory of the father. She connects to Jules through the stories that Morag narrates and on the rare occasion when he visits them. Significantly, Morag remarks that perhaps "never having had an ever-present father myself, I managed to deny her one too" (49).

Storytelling in *The Diviners* reverberates with the characterisation of Christie through the memories of Morag. Christie's garbage-telling reveals the lives of many Manawaka inhabitants that remained unknown to others. His creative humour and sarcasm conjoin to paint for little Morag the habits of people, the extravaganza, the thrift, the odd behaviours that determine the garbage they dispose of their homes. He hints at a foetus being thrown out with the garbage that made him privy to a secret that he chose never to reveal. From tales of garbage to heroic tales of the ancestral warriors, Christie managed to infuse fun, frolic, songs and dramatics and ushers Morag into a world of make-believe and helped her adapt to her new home after being orphaned.

Closer scrutiny of the narrative reveals the need to chart the escape route from a perceived stifling and restrictive condition that connect the similarities in the lives of the mother and the daughter. Storytelling retains its therapeutic value in the novel as the different characters try to use it not merely to detail the past, but also to draft their ancestral past as the history of the land. Narrating the legends help accrue a sense of pride with the recollections of the heroic tales and retelling of the distant memories remaining in stark contrast to their present toil and their undignified living.

Salvaging pride becomes a construct that aids survival of these fallen heroes. Her attempt to narrate acts as a pointer to relocate herself and weave a narrative that places her within a probable context in time and space. In the process to negate and escape the reminders of the past, Morag finally relocates to an equally rustic plain, "with many of the same characteristics", in McConnell's Landing in Ontario (290). Morag denies herself the opportunity to talk about her past and take Pique to see Prin and Christie as well as to Manawaka. As Morag reviews her memories, she stumbles on the similarities of her life at Manawaka, and she realises that she has attempted to recreate the land, its culture and its stories which perhaps were instrumental in her becoming a writer.

Places and childhood memories get entangled and remain so even as we age. Morag cautions Dan who rejects his father's proposal to run his family ranch. Dan wants to build one himself and establish his independence. Morag realises that Dan too is running away from his land in search of his own identity. She shares her realisation that places are never erased and explains to him that running away from Manawaka never helped her as it "inhabits her, as once she inhabited it" (185). Empowered with education and achieving a socially acclaimed position of acceptance Morag finds that little changes within her as she remains the isolated little girl pining for her parents, creating a make-believe world and recreating the familiar old Manawaka unconsciously far away in the new land that she settles. She realises her life had been built on fear of not being accepted. From her childhood, as her remembrances affirm, Morag has grown trying to protect herself. She had experienced rejection with her creative talent at school and she had never felt that she belonged at the Christies. Although she had attempted to project an image of being independent and confident, her forsaken memories of Manawaka kept

returning. Finally, she realises that it was the memory and its outpourings of the place where she spent her formative years that crafted her world vision.

The death of Jules becomes a touchstone as far as Morag is concerned. Her relationship with Jules, their affinities and the divide merge to approximate their relationship as one where both try to let the other free. Freedom becomes a critical element as both Morag and Jules hope to break the restraint and the enslavement of Manawaka. The nomadic life of Jules across the cities become a vantage for reclaiming the dignity that is missing in Manawaka. Marginalised and excluded from the ordinariness of community living, they both choose to differ with their streak of charting a separate path for themselves away from Manawaka. Both rely on leaving Manawaka as a solution to freedom and happiness. Their journey and quest remain futile as Manawaka and its society reappear in the guise of different city folk. For Jules, invisibility becomes a reward in cities, but dignity remains a mirage.

On the other hand, Morag gets married, seeks divorce, brings up her daughter as a single parent and builds a career in writing. The changing social positions in Morag's life negotiate and parallel a journey that attempts to break away from the past of social shackles of power hegemony and stratification and embrace the egalitarian social consciousness that she aspired. However, when finally, she is acknowledged a notable writer and reclaims her dignity, her past towers as being instrumental in the making of her. Her life stands in contrast to Jules who remains hunted, hounded and ridiculed for making his choice to circumvent his cultural pride to become a singer in a pub in the city. His life remains a testimony of the pain, suffering and more profound knowledge to having a value system that remains intact to the Native culture which the world chooses to ignore.

The trope of the church, the nuisance grounds, the garment shop and the bookstore as interactive public spaces become significant to Morag. The church signifies the unification of the ideal brotherhood but becomes a space that determines Morag's exclusion. The nuisance ground or the town dump yard becomes a central testimony of the cause of her exclusion as she was the daughter of the town scavenger. The garment store and the bookshop remain platforms that help Morag to overcome her inherent alienation and bridge with society. Her observation skills, social etiquette, hardworking nature, and ability to build a few but lasting friendships remain a support system for her grooming to be a writer. Her innate determination to survive and bring up her daughter become instrumental in moulding her skills in building a career in writing. Her zeal connects with the totality of her life experience, which she draws from her memories.

It is noteworthy that Morag arranges for the pipers to play music at Christie's burial in recognition of the 'brave clan of the Christie' and as a tribute to the life devoted to the cleansing of the town. Christie's death in the hospital makes her reflect on how he was reduced to the world outside the conscience of Manawaka and belonged to the nuisance ground where he buried the town's discards and the unwanted. She painfully realises that none at Manawaka knew Christie although he "lived nearly all his life" (324) in Manawaka. Christie's gift of spinning narratives from sorting rubbish or waste discarded from homes reminds her of the innate joy of listening to storytelling and creativity. She recognises the pains that both Prin and Christie took to make her comfortable in their house. Christie's philosophic rendering on studies, on living, on scavenging, on the war, and Prin makes her realise how much of her childhood revolved around these two figures. Christie's distaste in letting her see him at his worst moments make Morag realise how much she adored his

storytelling, his antics and his performative discourses. He had been a link to her parents, and he had been a friend of her father and this had made him special.

The novel examines the implications of remembrances and forgetting in the lives portrayed in the novel. The discourse incorporates and foregrounds both selection and omissions of happenings in the past in the struggle to recreate a meaningful narrative. The dynamics of selfhood gets problematised with the erosion of confidence and fear of rejection. In detailing Christie and his performative discourses, the author succeeds in creating the ambience for Morag to grow in a world of colours, imagination and fantasy. She borrows pride from her ancestral past and the differing narratives that remain colourful recounts of ancestral heroes and their conflicts contradict historical pages taught in schools and remain master plots flexible to differing views furthering primarily the need to have a colourful and vibrant dignified past to quell the vagaries of the present.

The title of the novel *The Diviners* evokes the plurality of divining in the narrative. Laurence had once stated in a Public lecture "Royland is the point of reference. He divines for water. Morag as a writer, Christie with his tales, Jules Tonnerre, Pique to a smaller degree, they're diviners in the sense that they're searching for their personal truth" (qtd. in Johnston 113). It would be interesting to extend the term 'diviners' in terms of their memory narrative and consider it as a survival strategy. Divining extends the survival strategy of the characters at a critical moment in their life. The crisis triggers an introspection that seeks meanings from the world of the hitherto unknown or unrecognised or forgotten aspects of one's life and helps him divine coping mechanism that aids survival. There is Morag who is divining to reconstruct her self-identity, her neighbour Royland is a water-diviner and Christie divines the truth beneath the lives, pain and sufferings of the inhabitants in

Manawaka and similarly so do other characters create their own survival trope through divining.

For instance, Royland, who is a friend that Morag admires for his innate ability to divine water, confronts a day when he realises his intuitive power of divining water has been lost. His endeavours and success at divining earlier extended from his selflessness to serve the society and he was always aware that he might one day cease to divine water. Morag realises that it is the realistic appraisal of his ability and its limitation that permits him to face the future. The acceptance of the inability to divine becomes Royland's survival trope.

Morag is a witness to a strange bonding that her friend Fan shares with a snake. Fan, the dancer, adapts many manoeuvres to survive and be independent. She is unable to compete with the youngsters and decides to extend her career by dancing with a snake coiled around her arms. This special event finally ends with the aged, and sick snake found dead. However, when she realises that with her pet snake dead, her age would no longer be conducive to a career in dancing, and she shifts to her sister's home. It is the acceptance of what can be termed inevitable that becomes a revised survival strategy.

Moreover, there is Christie who divines truth from the garbage the town throws out. His divining from garbage and the narratives he conjures becomes a survival trope for both facing the marginalised life he leads as well as keeping his traumatic memories of the war he fought at bay. Acceptance of his ridiculing remains his strength. Christie's understanding of Morag and her alienation springs from his erasure of the narrative of the traumatic episode in his life. He chooses to remain the scavenger living in the outskirts and prefers the ignominy of the nuisance grounds.

His modifying the legends quells Morag's feeling of rootlessness and fear and becomes his offering of a survival trope to Morag.

Another offering of a survival trope that Christie extends to Morag is in infusing a sense of pride in her father. Christie narrates that he was petrified with shock at the blast in the bunkers during the capture of Boulon wood and details how he was indebted to Morag's father for saving and consoling him. He exclaims, "Your dad saved my life that one time" (72). However, Christie's retelling of the story of the blast in the bunkers during the war, his fright and her father saving him remains a false narrative which Prin who in her deathbed unwittingly reveals. She realises that it was her father who had been terrified of the blast and Christie was traumatised seeing her father s pain. "That Colin," Prin says. "He never done that for my Christie. Saved him, like. Or maybe he done it. I dunno. He was a boy, just a boy, and that scared. Poor lamb. The poor lamb. He would cry, and Christie would hold him. Sh-sh. There, there. It's all right now. He's all right now, that Colin. Ain't he?" (167). Christie had been a victim of the horrors of war that he had witnessed. Christie was later reduced to a mere spectator to others' pain as his dormant trauma reinstated his inability to help them annul it. Laub's testimony of witnessing another's pain becomes significant here. Christie's narrations become his personal anguish in reliving the event. He is both the victim and the witness.

Unlike Christie who seeks to scavenge for the town as an activity that keeps the horrors of the war at bay, Brooke, Morag's husband, circumvents his personal childhood traumatic memory with his involvement in his career and academic pursuits. His lack of friends, his egoistical nature and his inability to appreciate his wife, Morag, become the wall that he builds to enslave himself from being hurt. However, his nightmares become the revelation of his pain and trauma and Morag

slowly learns the story of his childhood in India, his parents, his guilt and his bafflement at his persisting memory of a land obscured during the daytime. Morag is able to witness the pain and hurt and the cry of the child in him for his Minoo, an Indian maid, who fondled him as a child. This memory makes him long for the Ayyah as well as suppresses the memory of a forbidden pleasure he felt at that time. His remarriage after obtaining a divorce from Morag and his subsequent visit to Morag with his wife becomes an extension of his need to pretend to be unhurt. His hurt manifests itself in behaviour to Morag for her infidelity and conceiving Jules's child out of wedlock. His trust and his aloneness cannot be concealed and his survival through the crisis happens with his remarriage. Denial becomes his survival trope and pretence a key element.

An impoverished childhood and a life interspersed with an intimidating and violent father, abortion and the afterlife become a marginalised memory for Eva. It, however, prompts Eva to rise above her traumatic circumstances by cultivating remembrances with all the pleasant occurrences that she remembers. Gratitude becomes her survival trope for the small portions of happiness that interspersed her life. Eva is grateful to Prin for the gift of sweets and lovingly takes care of Prin when she becomes bedridden. In contrast, Morag is reminded of her own ingratitude as she refused to acknowledge Prin and her affection for her. Eva, who once in a while, was given lozenges by Prin was thankful, whereas Morag who was given a home-- a shelter -- by Prin never bothered to take care.

Prin's survival, in contrast, lies in her realisation of the disgust the inhabitants of Manawaka had towards her as she was the town scavenger's wife. Her adoration of Christie and Morag continues with her whimsical musings on the past and nostalgic memories of Morag as a child. Even when informed of Morag's marriage, Prin

giggles remembering Morag's childhood and wonders how her little Morag could be getting married. The figure of Prin bedridden with Christie at the hospital bedside shatters Morag's world of illusion. Memories remain Prin's survival trope even when confined to the bed or the rocking chair in their house stacked with oddities. Prin's survival after having the stillborn happens with caring for Morag and even understanding Morag's rejection without complaints. Guilt becomes Morag's acknowledgement.

Jules remains to create his survival strategy by reaffirming his traditional role of the hunter and the marginalised native, ridiculing society and its norms, but succumbing to circumvent his traditional singing into a job at a pub in order to live. Jules creates his survival strategy through nomadic life and taking care not to hurt others. His acknowledgement of having been a negative element in Morag's life in particular returns as he recognises in Morag a kindred spirit of being abandoned and rejected by all. Pique becomes a connecting link between them and his return to Morag is the maximum he offers in the relationship. His songs remain a survival trope and identity mark. The pain gets vocalised in the songs and therein lies acceptance.

Acceptance becomes anathema to Morag's artist friend Dan who is unable to break away from routine and maintain a relationship with Morag. The bonding that they share underplays the demands of their familial responsibilities. His life remains bound to the familiar place, familiar house in Crombruach and familiar reassurance of predictability of his family members. He finally realises that his identity gets accentuated in the presence of his family. Familiarity in terms of place, home and family becomes his survival trope.

On the other hand, Pique's survival gets linked to her search for roots. Her decision to locate her familial ancestry tracks her to Manawaka and the Galloping Mountains. The Galloping Mountains is the land of the First Nations ancestors and her father's Metis people. Pique's journey to Manawaka extends her experience beyond the stories narrated by Morag. It enriches her wanderlust by accepting her native Metis heritage and its culture. The life and outlook that define Native living become the survival strategy that she redesigns through her songs. Her ability to translate her vision into her songs reverberate that of Jules, her father. Her decision to join her uncle to take care of her cousins becomes an extension of reaching out to the world of her father and the native identity that she seeks to reclaim.

Amassing strength from varied survival strategies that others exhibit, Morag remains a witness to the pain of others as well as their surviving. Her fear of abandonment reiterates her insecurity with her parents, with Manawaka, with Jules, with Brooke and finally with Pique. Her narrative implicates her in forsaking her bonding with Manawaka and the love of Christie and Prin bestowed on her. It is through her retrospection that she accepts her foster parents and help absolve herself of the guilt she nursed at abandoning them. The assimilation of painful incidents that have accumulated in the memories of Morag and her revisiting of them help her to acknowledge and accommodate the pain. Her survival strategy which constituted of escaping from the land where she spent her childhood gets revised and she learns from the lives of others that survival is possible by acknowledging what happened and accommodating the pain as a life experience. Her painful memories reveal the death of a loved one and of witnessing it and the guilt of survival as constant grief that stays within her. The reiteration of the death motif as well as of the fear of being abandoned becomes critical in her resorting to a life of flight from all the circumstances that

could impinge her independence. Her independence becomes the criteria for closeting her memories. The longer the distance she travels away from Manawaka, she realises she has unconsciously come closer to Manawaka by recollecting more of her life spent there.

The various events of her life converge to chart a map wherein she re-evaluates her past. She evaluates the lives of the others in retrospection and notices the trials and tribulations they had gone through and still survived. Cultural tropes and social conditioning become factors that determine lives. She fathoms the change in perception on account of social conditioning and realizes the real value of relationships. She divines with her skills of writing that she has developed by observing lives around her. Morag converts the painful memories and the falsified ones into her real memories. This sorting of her life happens at the juncture of a painful trigger when she faces her daughter and is unable to feel accepted by her. Her pain reflects the pain of many whom she has known.

Her revision of her memories gives her a summation of the struggles in her life and why they were problematic to her. She analyses that it was in her clinging to the false narrative of a make-believe world through the photographs that she constructed her identity. She ignored the contributions of the people who moulded her life and creativity, gave her the freedom to discover herself by leaving to study at the university and later for becoming a writer. All become irrelevant as she fathoms her bonding with her childhood, with her foster parents, and with Manawaka. It is noteworthy that Morag recognises her survivor instinct in her letter to her friend at college, Ella “I’m a survivor, just as you are” (271).

The recognition that her identity does reflect the narratives spun in the confines of their house in the fringes of Manawaka become central to her understanding. Her creativity and her understanding of struggles emerge from her observations of people and manners around her. She re-evaluated life through consoling figures from myth and legend as the conflicts in life become a routine. She reflects, analyses and reassesses her responses when faced with a conflict and ensures that by adapting or accommodating a new perspective she is able to survive. Her decision to leave for the University, to get married, to seek divorce, to be a single parent, to become a writer, to return to Manawaka and to let Pique seek her own identity reflects her survival instinct. Morag acknowledges the need to revise her memories to include all those who have contributed to her thinking, attitude and life vision. She revises to accept and acknowledge her daughter's need to find herself. The mirroring of herself in her daughter becomes a catapult that springs her back in time not to the mother in the photograph who was merely a construct in her narrative, but to her foster mother Prin whose care and concern was underplayed and unacknowledged.

The Diviners is a novel where memory becomes a vista to the narrative. The memories of Morag take her through her recollections to conjure her life story and validate it with the chisel of truth. On finding her narrative deficient in providing her foster parents with a role of significance in her life, she revises the narrative of her past. The story of the death of her parents and the feeling of being abandoned in a foster home gets belittled through engaging with memories. Her narrative locates her memories and her affection with her foster parents, and she realises they have moulded her and her suppression of their role is rooted in her guilt of surviving. The narrative acts as an enquiry into the travails of childhood, death of parents, alienation

and single parenting and highlights the inability to address the insecurity that neither time nor space manages to dislocate. The insecurity remains an inadequacy to relate to the past, the present and the future.

Memories help to relocate the missing narratives of one's life and reaffirm the possibilities of healing one's scars. In narrating the stories of their lives, the protagonist reveals suppression, forgetting, false memories, alienation, fear and uncertainty. These markers necessitate the need to indulge in analysing one's remembrances, sorting them and accepting or overcoming them. Memories reveal narratives of other characters, which in turn, supplement versions adding or at times offering alternative perspectives. Societal bindings, relationships and attitudes are, at times, hampered by such painful memories. It is not only individual lives that are problematised because of dealing with trauma or a painful incident, but also their social ability to live and accept society remains disrupted.

An interesting article which highlights the lost languages is detailed by Lyall H. Powers in' Long Journey home'. Morag has lost her Scottish moorings, McRaith has lost his Gaelic, Logan echoes the mythical Gaelic, Brooke has lost his Minnoo and her Hindi, Jules who has lost both Cree and French. However, it has to be highlighted that unlike languages, memories in the novel refuse to get lost and on the other hand, reiterate their presence. Like Hagar in The Stone Angel, Morag locates in her vulnerabilities, sources of traumatic resonances. Her trauma at being orphaned becomes the beginning of the disarray of memories. Pretence becomes a key feature, and soon she fails to distinguish the real from the invented. The memories build up a counter-narrative, and she never adjusts to her foster home. It is by weaving the narrative of her past and acknowledging its inconsistencies that the self-appraisal and self-worth are validated and a new identity is crafted. In the negotiation of the past

with the present, Morag transforms into a caring individual who cares for her friends and her daughter. She realises she was once a daughter herself and repents on her apathy to her parents.

Traumatic instances do not spring forth hallucinations, hysteria or dreams in Morag. She has suppressed her memories by distributing another narration of herself within the world of the photographs. But with her witnessing the deaths in her life and the witnessing of the humiliation in the lives of the people close to her makes her sensitive to the ills of the society and provides her with the material to tell her stories. Her memories help her banish the fears that she has when her daughter leaves home. The features of trauma -- alienation, fear and inability to maintain relationships -- become a destructive force in Morag's life. Reliving her thoughts and replaying them in her mind becomes stifling and her surviving strategy is by narrating her stories about herself and writing about other fictional characters.

Her writings continue to divine the mirage from the real; sift memories—real from the invented; and transfer them into a platform that extends through spaces and time. Her memories continue to provide strength, direct her and engage her in inspiring others. She stops feeling alienated and can accommodate the narratives of everyone into the epical memorybank of her reflections. She incorporates not only her world but also the world of Prin, Christie and Jules. Morag learns from her friend Royland that the world of the diviner remains instinctive and short-lived. She learns the lesson to sort her memories to divine their meanings and garner both the true and false remembrances into a mosaic of a narrative.

The attempt to narrate the past and its vistas into a harmonious blend remains as a struggle that confronts Morag the person as well as Morag the writer. The

hegemonic centrality of memory narratives in our cultural discourses testify to the stratification, and the bonding with the land heightens as we descend the social ladder. The stories emerge in the oral tradition to justify the freedom from ownership and the flexibility from confinement within a tiny space called home. It is significant to observe the Metis reinvent their traditional art forms into performative discourses foregrounding their songs and oral storytelling. The transformation in their cultural and social spaces remains an attempt to dilute the marginalisation within their native space of Manawaka. In an attempt to integrate cultural texts and discourses, Morag weighs each of the narratives and realises that each one creates a kindred spirit who longs for the veracity of the truth.

Memory acts as a lens to the narrative by providing the templates of photographs, movies and songs. The narrative explores the individual memory of Morag as well as the collective memory of the Metis as a construct of estrangement with society. Society remains fragmented when memories are reconstructed and they refuse to voice and merge into a single narrative. Manawaka belies its complex social tapestry when Morag attempts to address the past, revise and refine her understanding of the past. Morag devises her survival strategy by being able to confront, accept and forgive one's own deviant response to painful memories. The characters of Christie, Logan, Prin, Lazarus, Jules and Pique remain etched in our memory along with the multitude of painful stories that trace the agony of living, forgetting, absences and secret lives that remain untold. Morag's memories can be classified as those that concern living and those that implicate death. The life of the ordinary people of Manawaka is portrayed with a subtlety and finesse that haunts the reader. It is not only the lives of the marginalised that are detailed, but also the lives of the people who live in the Manawaka town. The sense of superiority or apathy of the Manawaka

inhabitants is offered as a contrast. The right-wrong dichotomy that rules the town seems to fade in the lives of the marginalised as they attempt to release the memories of the past and seek an equitable society elsewhere. Memories refuse to get reduced to insignificance and appear as nightmares or altered memories. The futility of obliterating pain, suffering and loss become a refrain that finally bestows the need to confront the hidden memories and to forgive and redeem the future.

The narration of the past becomes a therapeutic tool that helps incorporate multiple viewpoints and vantage observations on life — the voices of the past guide Morag to survive her present predicament. Morag explores her multiple roles as daughter, wife, mother, friend and writer to divine her survival strategy in being witness to other's pain and their survival strategies. In narrating her own past and its varied versions, she revalidates her turbulent past into a survivor's story. In her empathy to other's pain and in her incorporation into her own painful memory, she becomes the witness along with the reader who finally is able to assimilate her past and connect with the present and look forward to the future. Laurence rightly reframes it in the novel in her quintessential style by offering a new perspective "Look ahead into the past, and back into the future, until there is silence" (*TD* 370).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Trauma and memory in literature have been the focus of on-going research which primarily is based on a host of theoretical approaches which cut across disciplines. They assumed greater attention with the arrival of Holocaust studies and war testimonials, which rely on a whole spectrum of traumatic memory, still relevant as they evoke the continuing and repeated malaise of social exclusion and marginalization of communities all over the world. By extending the enquiry to individual fictional protagonists of the select works analysed here, the worldviews fragmented by traumatic and painful events they endure are revealed. The thesis attempts to highlight that trauma and pain can be a wider crisis than envisaged. The social inhibitors present in the interpersonal relations work in silent and myriad ways in these characters. Silences, false narratives, pretence and lack of confidence become the virtual reality that they construct to come to terms with their various traumas. In this make-believe world that they inhabit, skewed memories and distorted narratives of the past play a vital role. The past is selectively construed and burdened by forgotten or half-remembered multiple remembrances. The bearing of the burden falls on the victims who carry their secrets by forgetting or trying to forget.

Susannah Radstone rightly observes that memory "means different things and is understood in different ways at different times" (2). The need to narrate one's story in order to survive happens only by reordering the past, rewriting it and reclaiming it. The fragility and multiplicity of memories, as well as the selectivity of remembrances, along with the lure of the forgetting one's pain, construct one's remembrances to create what Locke mentions as the *memore* or the identity of the person. The painful

memories resolve only in confrontation, arrived through hindsight, by creating a witness in oneself. The process involves listening to the events of one's life at three levels —of what happened to oneself, of what happened to others, and what happened to the narrative as it is selected from the repertoire of memory. It is to be noted that by then, much of the totality of their experience would have vanished, leaving only residues or traces of the past. The overwriting, smudges, and clear images require revalidations in order to make sense as the memories carry their logic for their imprinting and subsequent retrieval. Only by forgiving oneself for the guilt of surviving and forgetting the pain, can the impetus to survive come to the fore.

Both Atwood and Laurence have used memory as a tool for exposition of plot and delineation of character as we have seen in the novels chosen for the study. The protagonists reveal their isolation and quest for identity, negotiating with buried or lost memories and, at times, falsified memories, which highlight the travails of remembrance and forgetting. The range of the world of memories portrayed and its nuances are vital to the schema of plot construction. *Surfacing* reveals false memory and suppression, *Alias Grace* exhibits amnesia, *The Stone Angel* revels in nostalgia and *The Diviners* sort the real from the invented memories. Memory is presented as a palimpsest and as layered in *Surfacing*, as multiple remembrances in *Alias Grace*, as musings in *The Stone Angel* and as visual entreaty in *The Diviners*.

Surviving through trauma and painful events happens in the novels of both Atwood and Laurence through a fusion of memories and memory gaps. Photographs, albums or memorybank movies help retrace the past in *Surfacing* and *The Diviners*. The associative memories play truant in all the four novels as the past relives through a range of nostalgic or disturbing relapses that the authors craft in the narrative. If the dam, the bottle-house and the mother’s coat reinstate the past in *Surfacing*, it is the

peonies and the voices that reiterate the past in *Alias Grace*. On the other hand, *The Stone Angel* revolves around the need to cling on to remembrances and eulogise the past, while in *The Diviners*, the past becomes an entanglement that running away seeks to erase.

Forgetting also plays a crucial role where the memory gap determines the lost past and, in a way, a loss of identity. A closer look at memory as a narrative tool participates in the broader engagement with memory studies as to how the remembrances and the gaps coexist and enable a constant negotiation, and project differing perspectives subject to time and space. The link between the protagonist and her memories form a narrative world that both Atwood and Laurence inhabit. Remembrances reveal 'memory sites' through unlocking episodic narrations and reconstructing selves. Memories help relocate the missing narratives in one's life and reaffirm the possibilities of healing one's scars. Several remembrances of painful incidents remain buried in the past and, in reclaiming them, aid in recreating one's identity. Societal bindings, relationships and attitudes are, at times, hampered by such painful memories. Dealing with trauma or a painful incident problematises individual lives and disrupts their social ability to live and accept society.

Remembrances help locate misrememberances, replace memories and accept memory gaps. However, there are multiple identities that each protagonists nurse – that of an artist in *Surfacing*, a convict in *Alias Grace*, a housekeeper in *The Stone Angel* and a writer in *The Diviners*. Their identities also reveal interesting dichotomies, as the daughter of a scientist living in isolation in an island in *Surfacing*; as an immigrant who remains alienated all her life in *Alias Grace*; as the daughter of a settler-businessman who realises her gender was a hurdle in claiming her father's affection in *The Stone Angel*; and as an orphan who refuses to acknowledge the care

of the foster parents in *The Diviners*. Maternal identity also reflects in all the novels and the mother-child relationship extends the dimension of painful memories. Loss and death of loved ones become crucial in depicting the insecure childhood, suffering and anguish that accompany the recollections.

The lives of these four protagonists spill outside their individual roles into the societal obligations they need to perform. Closer scrutiny of the social lives of the characters as indicated through their reminiscences and their forgetting makes the portrayal complete. They become daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, employees and friends. They also carve their lives in relation to others by extending their scarred psyche to their multiple roles as well. Memories become the foundation stone for survival and their importance lies in the fact that even in the case of dealing with forgotten or suppressed trauma, memories and the narratives that string the past become crucial in overcoming fear, alienation, inability to trust, hallucination, fear of victimisation and disoriented behaviour. Life and living get ruptured due to underlying trauma and it is through narration that the past defines the present. Narration involves selection, omission, review and editing of memories. A conscious appraisal of false memories or problematic memories aids in constructing a convincing narrative of one's life. The narrative becomes an active witness as the narration is reflected upon and revalidated.

Both Atwood's *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace* follow this pattern wherein, a tryst with memory reveals many other episodes with traumatic overtones. These fissures in the coping mechanisms need to be addressed first, renegotiated, remembered and accepted before dealing with the trigger that caused the breakdown. A holistic view of one's childhood and upbringing often reveal alienation, fear and mistrust as traits

acquired over time. Closer scrutiny reveals the buried episodes that are perhaps instrumental in creating such impairment or a predisposition to the wounding of the self or other. The recognition of the trauma can be "glimpses of flickering images" that occur "unbidden" or deliberately by scrutinising the past (Leslie 178).

The defence or coping mechanism in confronting painful situations becomes problematic in the lives of the protagonists. *Surfacing* searches for the narrator's missing or lost father, *Alias Grace* for the lost memories, *The Stone Angel* for lost time, and *The Diviners* for the lost place of belonging. The memories are triggered with the missing father in *Surfacing*, the murder in *Alias Grace*, the nursing home in *The Stone Angel* and the running away of the daughter in *The Diviners*. The lake, the quilt, the stone angel and the river become the harbingers of memory and the past. If in *Surfacing* the lake helps the narrator to dive and locate the past, it is the quilt motifs that help Grace craft her memories into the tapestry of a convincing narrative. The blind Stone Angel in the cemetery mirrors Hagar, who in her isolation, fails to consider or accept an alternate interpretation of her past. The river in *The Diviners* flows through the narrative connecting the past to the present.

Caruth's theory on trauma elaborate on belatedness, the enigma of a traumatic event, the denial of active recollection, the inherent latency, the collapse of understanding, re-experiencing them in the "form of intrusive thoughts, nightmares, or flashbacks" (*T* 152). Trauma as a solitary activity becomes the framework that fits both *Surfacing* and *Alias Grace*. *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* exhibit the suppression and misremembrances or invented memories that collude to resist the understanding of the past. All the four novels exhibit features of traumatic memories like fear, alienation, guilt, lack of friendships and insecurity that remain markers of insecure childhoods.

Witnessing extends to the reader who remains privy to the thoughts of the narrator as reflected in the edited narratives, allowing him/her to absorb the secret asides, voicings of doubts and also the knowledge that they are primarily "invented memories" (*TD* 9). Hallucinations, dreams, and mirages conjure the alternate world that reflects reinstatements of replicated images through visual (as in all the four novels) and auditory means (as Mary's voice in *Alias Grace*). In *The Diviners*, land becomes an embodiment of a memoryscape reflecting the fissures, chasms and passivity; the vastness of the prairie contrasts with the minuscule individual and her alienation.

Annette Kuhn's elaboration on how secrets remain embedded in narratives is illustrated with the ruthless editing involved in selecting remembrances. The novels reveal the protagonist transformed into witnesses by listening, validating, and reframing their narrative into a totality of the past without gaps. *The Diviners* and *The Stone Angel* use a parallel chronological past that suggests the deliberate authorial intrusion in depicting the past. Memories reflect linear arrangement that can only be possible on revising. Moreover, emotional scarring, isolation, violence, loss and alienation endanger coping strategies and act as a dysfunction of defence mechanisms in the individual. Lack of capability to incorporate the implication of a painful event and its scars can be addressed only through an introspection of the past and resolution of the conflicts. The belatedness in knowing and confronting the hitherto elusive memory becomes typical of trauma.

Atwood in her reply to questions vide mail (Appendix ii) opines that it is through narration that the traumatic victims can overcome the dilemma imposed by a distressing memory. She elaborates that although many may be open to the idea of narrating and re-narrating the traumatic events to themselves, their life stories are

attempts to retrieve and decode the enigmatic event from a state of "collapse of understanding" (*T* 7). On the other hand, there may be others who prefer not to address such painful memory. Acknowledging the impact of traumatic memory in the lives of the victims who remain unsure about the disruptions in adaptability and nurse a heightened sensitivity in interacting with others, the study of the novels reveals a redressal of memories. Coping strategies evolve with confronting, accepting and reframing of past into their narrative discourse.

Denial of being a victim manifests in the above novels and when faced with an identity crisis, the reframed memory and its understanding enable identity resolution. The final reconciliation of identity shaped by residual memories evoked through narration, transforms the victim into a participatory and creative ex-victim, who reflects Atwood's final victim position of empowered survival. The evolution of the empowered protagonists, in terms of inner quests into the world of memories, enables them to reconcile their inner and outer selves. The transformation of the narrator from being a social recluse and hesitant to communicate with others to being someone able to gather the courage to accept relationships becomes significant.

The study reveals the painful scars buried in the past that retain the power to dislodge the coping capacity of the protagonist in facing similar painful situations. The trigger associations spring forth the varied painful resonances that claim their space in the narrative. As the memories rearrange themselves, the gaps confront the protagonist either as multiple remembrances of the same event or as a void that refuses to reveal. Sorting remembrances become a revelation to the protagonist in all the novels as they contain traits of traumatic or painful pasts that belie the ability to accommodate negative experiences of a similar kind. Alienation, guilt, betrayal, pain and loss become constructs that convey the fissures in the psyche. The scarred

childhood with its alienation or rebellious attitude remains detrimental to the insecurity that accompanies trauma.

The unnamed narrator forgives self and others in *Surfacing*, whereas Grace accepts her freedom to marry, have a family and forgive others including her husband, Walsh. Similarly, Hagar in *The Stone Angel* and Morag in *The Diviners* finally decide to forgive self and reinvent memories that accept the idiosyncrasies of others whom they had criticised earlier. The guilt of surviving the death of loved ones connect all the novels to a framework that has witnessing death as a prime instigator for a predisposition to suffering and sensitivity to painful memories. Death becomes a trope in all the novels and highlights the pain of witnessing the death of others and nursing the guilt of survival.

Although forgiving self and others become a resolution after the engagement with memories, forgetting remains problematic in each of the novels. The characters revel in accepting and acknowledging the painful pasts and accommodate them in the life narrative. The narration of the life story using visual and auditory mechanisms like photographs and songs becomes cathartic in cleansing the traumatic memory. The unreliability of memories gets exposed in the novels with the vision of the drowning which the narrator claims to have happened before she was born {in *Surfacing*); in the multiplicity of memories of the same incident that destabilize our understanding of events (in *Alias Grace*); and in what Morag claims later as invented memories (in *The Diviners*). The novels of Atwood remain testimonies to the trauma of forgetting. On the other hand, the novels of Laurence depict the agony of remembering.

The learning or crafting of the survival strategies becomes an extension of observing the lives of others like Lees and in the Nursing home as in *The Stone Angel*

and through divining coping strategies of others whom Morag observes in *The Diviners*. The self-imposed exile in *Surfacing* and the self-imposed immersion in the silent quilting of Alias Grace remain manifestation of the struggle within to extricate the memory gap and impress the registry of a past event in its allotted space. The "collapse of understanding", "knowing" and "not knowing" in "another time" and "another space" remains an unconscious revelation of an event hitherto unknown. They aid to locate painful events that the traces reveal, through injuries they hide, or the pain of others that they witness.

Traumatic initiation in childhood remains as scars that prompt acute anxiety in interacting with others. Atwood's novels become the testimony to the trauma of forgetting, while Laurence's novels depict the agony of remembering. It is only by addressing the markers of the predisposition to trauma, that narrating, scrutinising and reframing the past help to work through traumatic memories. The intricate play of memory and forgetting illuminate and problematise by foregrounding it with traumatic overtones in the narrative disclose. The lurking alienation and insecurity reflects in the fissures of the psyche and endangers the bastions of defence strategies of self-preservation. The covert manifestations of false remembrances subsume the past into a quagmire of possibilities.

Meanings change, past and present collude, and memories get distorted and, at times, get deliberately manipulated. In both Atwood and Laurence, the portrayal of the women protagonists reflects engagement in the quest for identity, forged while trying to erase their sense of alienation from others, and in their attempt to accept their selves. However, in the exposition of the storyline, each character grapples for a firm hold as the past ravages and intrudes into the present, or the present slips into the yesteryears. The fusion of the past with the present becomes the memories that remain

in a state of constant flux. The novels use memory as a narrative tool as well as a route to healing. The truth remains enigmatic and retrospection only releases guilt and results in, at times, a deliberate encroachment into the past. Reordering, reframing, and undoing memories become the trajectory or schema that enables surviving and healing.

Laurence's novels are like a whirlpool which drags the characters into its deep dark chasm. Hagar immerses herself in the past recollections and prefers to dwell in the reminiscences of her youth, determined to hold onto her dignity and hide her insecurity behind a cloak of pride. Atwood's novels, on the other hand, are like getting lost in the kaleidoscope mirage, with the coloured patterns that keep changing and memories that keep altering.

Laurence's mode of presenting and accommodating remembrances is reflective and linear and stands in contrast to Atwood's fragmented narrative that accommodates multiple versions of the past. Atwood's narrative is about surviving the past. Laurence's narrative is about surviving the present ordeal that the protagonists face. Atwood's protagonists forget to escape from their pasts while Laurence's protagonists engage in remembrances to escape from the present.

Laurence's novels portray women who struggle to live for their family. Their ties with the family and the land they grew up in become a parallel narrative. Both Hagar in *The Stone Angel* and Morag in *The Diviners* remain constrained in a world determined by patriarchy. The alienation within the family that Hagar and Morag face is atoned for after negotiating with memories which help them locate the opportunities that made them survivors. On the other hand, Atwood's novels reveal women who are misused, unloved and seen as a burden, even by the family. The

unnamed narrator in *Surfacing*, and Grace in *Alias Grace*, along with the other minor characters, remain silent and suffer in isolation.

Laurence's protagonists, both in *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, overcome the burdens of the past. They succeed in coping with their present dilemma by accommodating their traumatic and painful memories of the past which they discover when they resort to accommodating the perspectives and lives of others into their own lives. On the other hand, Atwood's protagonists locate or seek to locate the buried traumatic memory that remains as a mirage, unknown as the present event, acting as a trigger to unleash the past. Solitude and abandonment become the escape route they chart to prevent their trauma from subduing them. However, the tryst with their memories reveals the void and they confront their traumatic memory, to finally accommodate it within the revised narrative. *Surfacing* reveals the abortion and the faked marriage, while *Alias Grace* conjures a hypnotic session that succeeds in absolving Grace from the guilt of murder. Traumatic reiterations are finally confronted, and the narratives reformulated, as both of them battle their pain silently and away from the glare of others. If Surfacing finds the narrator seeking isolation in the forest in a quest to redeem the past, Grace immerses herself in her quilting to accommodate and reframe her understanding of both the past and present.

Atwood's novels have portrayed the lurking trauma of unknown events which have percolated into the recesses of the mind, inducing a collapse of identity. Laurence's protagonists, however, project a painful traumatic event closeted within their memory as a line of defence— a coping strategy that has been cultivated as a habit. The susceptibility to distress that the characters harbour are conveniently viewed from a perspective that shifts the blame onto others. Instead of accepting their flaws or recognizing their implications, the protagonists in Laurence's novels revel in

pointing to other's flaws and ridiculing them as in *The Stone Angel*, or become evasive in scrutinising their flaws until jeopardised into a situation where the narrative itself exposes them. The memory resurrects a narrative that contains a life story wherein they remain as mere witnesses to events that unfold. As the narrative progresses, the projected perception of others and self transforms and necessitates a revision of understandings which is grudgingly accepted. The acknowledgment of an altered past becomes a problematic construct that the protagonists face. It is not merely the events in their life that they monitor, but the understanding of how they perceived earlier that is validated. The past alters with such scrutiny and the narrative recalls, implicating a new understanding which revises the survival strategies. The lacunae of what they had devised as self-preservation are now altered to include a holistic view. This objectivity is ensured only by the narration and creation of the internal witness, who along with the reader, redefines the patches of memory that is retrieved at particular junctures in the narrative. The crisis which acts as a trigger to narrating the past provides the impetus for such a revision. Closer scrutiny of memories enables a greater understanding and revision of life vision wherein frailties are acknowledged and accepted.

The selectivity of memories remains problematised as the truth persists as a construct of what is retained in mind. Memory constructs the version that defines the perception of truth. In retelling the life story, the therapeutic notion of revisiting and redefining life events become an appropriation of perceived truth. Memory, time, space and identity remain fluctuating constructs that retain their fluidity on retrospection. However, it is this fluidity that colours the life experience which divines strategies to survive. In the quest to survive, a re-visitation of memories helps by highlighting the reasons behind specific actions and inactions. It is only by

creating an internal witness that such mediations and fine-tuning of perceptions become possible.

The novels depict varying binaries: of the Settler- Native in *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, the Canadian- American in *Surfacing*, and the Canadian-Immigrant in *Alias Grace*. Memories depict and differentiate the protagonists in their identity creation from these perspectives as well. The differing viewpoints of this dichotomy can be studied using memory theories foregrounded against the Native cultural ethos that permeate the novels. Forgetting remains a significant area that can locate multiple variations of narratives that coexist as in Julian Barnes' *The Sense of an Ending*. Another area that can provide scope for further research is to look at memorials, photographs, and memory sites that provide the background and the framework for the narrative by looking through the lens of trauma or memory theories.

Surviving becomes a sort of empowerment in all the novels. Painful memories are accepted, negotiated and accommodated. Survival becomes possible only by telling one's tale. The acceptance of remaining a witness to the pain of others adds to dilute the pain of loss, ageing, forgetting and remembering. The world of an unsuccessful artist in *Surfacing*, a convict whose innocence is doubted by history in *Alias Grace*, a proud and haughty, aged woman in *The Stone Angel* and that of a successful writer in *The Diviners* remain endearing to the unsuspecting reader, who becomes yet another witness to the traumatic narrations and episodes that find resonances in their life as well. The stories provide the way out of abysmal depths that a traumatic incident can lead one to, alter one's world, while also providing insights to overcome it by confronting the past, reviewing its narratives, selecting, omitting, accepting and eventually relegating it as a learning experience.

Memory studies and its interdisciplinary approach provides the vantage point to discern the contribution of literary works to understand life, its travails, complexities, fissured interpersonal relationships, social exclusion, insecurity, pattern of persisting alienation, inability to cope with recurrent painful experiences, and the final blaming of the self, so as to survive the death of a loved one. The painful rendering recreates the loss of parents or witnessing death or suffering of others, and reiterate a return to initial painful experience that resonates through other similar events separated by time. The charting of the narration highlights similar events and provides connective factors that use associative memory to echo previous pain that has never been addressed or confronted or known. The reader who becomes an exclusive witness listens to the life narrative of the protagonists and participates in the cleansing of an agony that has remained silent for long. The reading experience transforms the reader to become a witness to a traumatic memory of the character.

The reader's understanding deepens along with the portrayal of a character whose memory and narration become the vista for developing coping strategies that aid in survival. The engagement with memory and understanding of differing traumatic narratives provide the locus for developing an insight into strained relations and fragmented life visions that have become characteristic of the present age. Empathy and understanding can help to listen and recognise symptoms of withdrawal and insecurity in others and attempt to alleviate the forces that reiterate their isolation. Trauma remains a social malaise and splintered selves reflect the multiple identities that suppress and camouflage the real for the fictitious. Memory holds the onus of the problem with fractured remembrances, guilt and loss becoming constructs that connect the social isolates. Life narratives become therapeutic endeavours as memory sorts, reframes, and reinvents to accept the gaps as well as the multiplicity of

remembrances. The participative reader, acting as the silent witness, reframes the understanding of life and its multiple hues. Witnessing of a traumatic incident through listening or reading helps the reader to develop his own coping strategies and deepen the understanding of the vagaries of memories.

The above study reiterates the nuances of engaging memories to build characters, sort lives and survive painful and traumatic experiences. Both Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence infuse the magical fictional world they create, by interspersing the narratives with both remembrances and forgetting. Narratives emerge from the repertoire of such traces of memory and reveal the travails of life that the characters endure. The fictional worlds that the authors create in the novels craft characters who resemble the real world outside. Sorting the real world from the fictional, the real remembrances from the false ones, and the forgetting from the pretences, become an ordeal that every reader learns as problematic. Insights through reading deepen the vistas of experiences that we can muster in our struggle to survive through pain, hurt and loss.

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APPENDIX i

Transcript of the audio recording of the face-to-face interview with Margaret Atwood on 21st January 2016 at the Jaipur Literature Festival held at Diggi Palace, Jaipur.

---- MAYA NAIR

MN: Your novels deal with memory and its nuances. Could you please speak about them?

Margaret Atwood: Most useful are Handmaid's *Tale, p*ossibly, *Alias Grace* where memory of the narrator is very selective….. That is, she remembers some things but does not tell. We do not actually know what she remembers. And the task of the psychologist is to try — he tries to but he never does discover that. *Surfacing* is good. In *Blind Assassin* she remembers everything. She is not telling..

MN: The past and the present negotiate in each of your books.

Atwood: That is so with the novel as a form unless it is a mystery novel. But even a mystery novel does have suppressed things. So detective stories are not usually concerned with the childhood of the detective. We don't know what young Sherlock Holmes was like when he was seven. We don't know about Mummy Holmes and Daddy Holmes. You are never told anything about them. That is not what the story is about, but in a novel other than detective story it tells about the past of the story teller -- the person who is telling you the story. There are some interesting experiments. People are now writing about narrators who lost their memories—that are a different kind of challenge. So, when any character in a story, you know them in several ways. You know them through what they say, what they do, what other people say about them, and what other people do in relation to them. And that is true of every story.

MN: There is trauma in *Alias Grace* and *Surfacing*. Can alienation from society lead to empowerment as it happens to the narrators of these novels? In *Surfacing* the character descends into a primordial memory.

Atwood: Emancipation happens by reintegrating. Every novel in a way is Dante's *Inferno*. You descend, but then you come back again. Unless the novelist kills everybody off at the end.

MN: Thank you for your valuable time.

APPENDIX ii

Gmail maya raju <maya.n.raju@gmail.com>

Additional Questions related to earlier Interview

Lucia Cino <lucia@owtoad.com> Mon, Jun 26, 2017 at 11:34 PM
To: maya raju <maya.n.raju@gmail.com>

Dear Maya,

Please see below Margaret's answers to your questions in red.

With best wishes,
Lucia

1. How would you define trauma in a narrative?

There are many different kinds of trauma, from the individual and personal (bad childhood, horrible marriage, domestic violence, sexual abuse, loss of a beloved, betrayal by a beloved, accidents, fires, early death of parents, mental illness, etc.) to the broadly political (war, civil war, riots of all kinds, terrorist events, purges, concentration camps, sent to Siberia, orphaned by war, famine, totalitarianism). A fictional narrative can contain any one, or indeed more. The recent novel by Arundhati Roy, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, contains many of both kinds.

2. Do you consider trauma as intensely personal or regenerative?

Why are those opposed? Maybe rephrase as "intensely personal" -- the experience of it is of course always personal -- trauma of whatever kind happens to individuals. Then: "Can it be regenerative?"
Yes, but it is not necessarily so.

3. Do you consider *Surfacing* Yes and *Alias Grace* to be Trauma narratives? Yes

But so is Cat's Eye and so is The Handmaid's Tale -- one personal, the other broadly political.

4. Can Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners* be seen as trauma narratives?

Less so, but A Jest of God is more so.

5. Do you believe one can work through trauma?

Yes but it's not inevitable. And a scar is a scar.

6. Does retrospective narration act in a therapeutic manner to trauma victims? Is forgetting worse than remembering?

People who work with trauma victims say that the first step is to listen to the story -- if the person can indeed bear to tell the story Some cannot

As for forgetting vs remembering -- this is an individual matter that can't be handled by a third person Each trauma survivor must work through the bad past in his or her own way, and some don't

[Quoted text hidden]