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Decolonized Trauma and Narratology in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*

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Abstract

The theory of decolonized trauma deviates from the western definition of trauma, which is based on occurrence and non-representation. In this regard, this article aims to address how trauma is represented in the novel *The Lowland* of the American-Indian author, Jhumpa Lahiri, by focusing on some narratological concepts such as order, frequency, duration, and focalization theorized by Gerard Genette. The study examines how Lahiri's narrative reconfigures the three aporia of classical trauma theory: representation, repetition, and belatedness. Instead of considering trauma as the depiction that cannot be described, *The Lowland* portrays the psychological trauma of Gauri and Subhash through continuous flashbacks, repetitions, and focalization changes. These methods underscore the fact that memory continues to play its role in the diasporic life and these methods assist the characters to deal with and reconstruct their traumatic pasts. According to the study, applying both focalization by Lahiri provides the characters of immigrants with narrative agency and enables them to represent their experiences of living in a transnational environment and to conceive of new ways of community. Altogether, the article demonstrates that Lahiri employs certain narratological techniques to introduce a decolonized perspective on trauma that breaks the boundaries of the Western trauma theory.

Keywords: Trauma. Narrative. Migration. Postcolonial. *The Lowland*. Gerard Genette

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Introduction

Postcolonial studies regard trauma as a complicated and contradictory experience that not only adversely changes individuals' identities, memories, and life stories, but also invariably creates cross-cultural solidarity among the affected parties. However, the study of postcolonial literary texts through the lens of trauma theory has been questioned due to the theoretical framework's essentialist and largely white Eurocentric assumptions (Visser; Balaev). In fact, during the last two decades, critics have increasingly emphasized its inherent limits and partialities, contending that they fail to address the difficult experiences and painful memories of non-Western individuals and societies (Biti and Zago; Luckhurst; Kim). It is argued that applying such theories to postcolonial narratives risks overlooking the intricacies and complexity of postcolonial identity, as well as ignoring the contributing socio-historical variables in the production of traumatic experiences. The diasporic displacements might be deemed traumatic because they include people's separation from their original homelands (Cohen 2007; Safran1991), a tragic theme of displacement (Nasta 1995: 94), and sentiments of irreparable loss (Said 1978: 173).

Although it violates the definition of traditional trauma in the postcolonial narrative, decolonized trauma is offered as a fresh perspective, since the employment of a theory based on Western interpretation has led to the nuances and aesthetics being overlooked in the post-colonial literature. On the one hand, it is believed that literary writing vividly evokes the benefits of telling one's own story and telling others about your life, which are in line with psychologists' belief in the therapeutic and unifying power of language (Schönfelder 2013: 121); on the other hand, it is highly prone to serve as the primary source of misrepresentation and miscommunication. As a result, while some critics recognize literary writing as an effective medium for bearing witness to traumas, many others condemn fictional works for their fabricated depictions of traumatic experiences (Rogers 2004; Schönfelder 2013).

The fictional works of Indian-American novelist Jhumpa Lahiri have been interpolated into continuing discussions about the purpose and failings of depiction of the pain suffered by Hindi immigrants. Lahiri gives unique insights into the polyhedral dimensions of trauma in her works by addressing its poetics and politics on order of narrative and history. Her award-winning novel *The Lowland*, which

shows the difficult realities of migration and the miseries of a racialized existence in diaspora, is an excellent example of trauma fiction that delves into the complexities of traumatic and posttraumatic psychology.

It recounts two brothers' life, Subhash and Udayan who go on separate ways as Subhash leaves India for the United States to pursue his studies and Udayan joins a rebel group in India, called Naxalite. Udayan marries Gauri, who is widowed after he is killed by the police. Subhash later marries Gauri to protect her and takes her to Rhode Island, where she gives birth to Bella, Udayan's daughter. When Bella is in her teens, her mother leaves them for good, following her own academic dreams, which will have unexpected consequences for all of the characters. The narrative is marked by numerous traumatic events that generate lasting and serious consequences, underscoring the novel's sustained engagement with trauma and its aftermath.

Concerning the story's events, we propose that the novel's portrayal of trauma transcends standard narrative patterns, facilitating understanding and solidarity among sufferers. In pursuit of the aforementioned argument, decolonized theory of trauma is applied to investigate how the story portrays Gauri, the female protagonist, and her daughter and Subhash as capable of overcoming the negative effects of traumatic memories by chronicling an immutable record of their experiences. To attain this purpose, a hybrid analytical framework based on structuralism is used. In this regard, the study depends on Gérard Genette's theoretical notions on order, frequency, length, mood, and double focalization as recuperation.

Literature Review

With diasporic theme, *The Lowland* has never been short of applause, and has been analyzed in academia in various academic perspectives. A mighty part of the existing literature covers how the novel elucidates issues of identity, alienation, trauma and cultural displacement but little has been done to examine how the narrative structure of the work influences these themes as developed by Lahiri. The paper contributes to the existing body of research and is dedicated to the interaction of the narrative structure and trauma representation.

"Cultural Dissociation and Rebirth in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*" (2017) is an analysis of Subhash, Udayan, and Gauri in terms of their culture with references

to disillusionment of identity and loneliness, trauma, displacement, isolation, and determination as well as guilt. In the article entitled "Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*: A Critical Analysis" (2014), TK Pius observes the methods of narration adopted by Lahiri and her significance in the writing of the post-millennial Indian English literature, where the intricate plots, the multiple narratives, and the pre-determined constructions of narratives influence the character development. "Lowland of Trauma, Marshland of Memory: A Reading of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*" (2021) focuses on the forming power of tragedy on the person and society and demonstrates how Lahiri depicts the work of remembering and forgetting traumatic experiences, especially in relation to the Naxalite movement. "A Critical Peep into Identity Crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*" (2021) by Prem Bahadur Khadka explores how identity changes provide an individual with the feeling of self across fifty years through changing the time and space narration perspectives. Similarly, the article by Dash, "Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*: A study of alienation and identity" (2022) examines the diasporic mindset of the writer and follows the motifs of alienation and cross-cultural estrangement, especially the approach of characters to multinational identities and cultural flexibility.

The majority of the works concur that *The Lowland* is a work that is concerned with identity, displacement, trauma, and alienation. Nevertheless, they are developed differently: Pius and Khadka are concerned with the narrative structure and cross-cultural identity; Majumder is concerned with the communal memory and political situation; Dash foregrounds alienation, using biographical and cross-cultural perspective. Notwithstanding these observations, there is still a lack of research examining the role of narrative form (temporal order, focalization, and repetition) in actively building trauma and memory. Although the texts of the previous literature have been very enriched with what the characters in Lahiri go through, it seldom talks about how it is influenced by the use of narrative techniques. The paper will fill that gap by using Genette narratology and decolonized trauma theory to establish the mediation of the trauma, memory, and diasporic identity through the narrative strategies employed in the novel, including flashbacks, repetition, and double focalization. By so doing it underscores the formal innovation of Lahiri who has made a contribution to the decolonized conceptualization of trauma beyond the

Western paradigms.

Theoretical Background

Trauma is not simply a "mental disease" but a psychic rupture or belated experience rather than pathology. (Luckhurst, 2008: 15). Psychoanalysis views trauma as a type of loss that indicates fixation or obstruction that prevents language from being replaced (Fink 1956: 75). Caruth (2016) bases her concept of trauma on the European-centered definition and adds three aporias: representation, delay, and repetition, all of which highlight the intrinsic inconsistencies of experience and language (2016: 100). However according to post-colonial psychologist Frantz Fanon, trauma that is disregarded Western medical systems. European nations is a result of colonial conditions, in which both the colonized subject's body and mind suffer harm, and the body turns into a prison for the soul (Andermahr 2015: 130).

Using Fanon's conceptions of "insidious trauma" and "postcolonial syndrome", Craps (2013) provides a further and fresh paradigm for the decolonized trauma that relates to it as continuous and daily "traumatizing violence" (Rothber 2008: 226). To end western hegemony and promote the globalization of trauma, some have claimed that the concept of trauma should be altered from Western to non-Western. According to Andermahr (2015), the fundamental driving force behind this change is through "paradigm development", examination of trauma theory using postcolonial experiences and literature as a topic (2015: 130). The deconstruction technique used in the definition of Western trauma, which reveals the impossibility of meaning and representation, has been one of the most significant issues raised by decolonized trauma theory. Most academics are concerned with the trauma theory's deconstructive approach to narrative when it comes to the idea of decolonizing trauma. Narrative in trauma defies Caruth's description since it is a means of treatment and rehabilitation and is effective for identifying the real codes and causes of trauma.

Even if the language of trauma is incredibly complex and difficult to grasp, the narrative of trauma must be relevant and intelligible in order to aid in healing trauma. Herman (1994) argues in Trauma and Recovery that story is useful and helpful in helping trauma victims recover. The account is orderly, thorough, oral, orientated in time and historical context (1994: 177). Narrative also has a significant impact on

erasing trauma because it communicates the horrific memories and gives the listener a valuable lesson. Moreover, trauma narrative accelerates memory and freezes time, so "Narrative memory is not passively endured, but a speech act on the narrator's part, a verbal act that eliminates the painful memory, provides the recalled events structure and time, develops better control over their recollection, and aids in the survivor's self-reconstruction" (Luckhurst 2008; Brison 1999).

The three aporia of Caruth is therefore precluded from recounting trauma memories through language and time. The trauma story is developed in certain social and historical settings; therefore, representation calls for new approaches with a wider perspective. The story of the decolonized trauma may be understood and analyzed in this regard using Gérard Genette's narrative language. By a methodical analysis of the narrative structure and representation, he aimed to better comprehend the definition of the term "narrative" in the narrative discourse. Luckhurst demonstrates how Genette uses hindsight, reflection, and delay to dynamically move the plot to the "ultimate recovery of quiet" by taking into account the narrative of trauma and healing (Genette 1983: 90).

Genette (1983) distinguishes himself from other narratologists by emphasizing the function that time plays in narrative. He claims that the story is made up of a number of episodes that the narrator delivers to the audience in a particular order. The two times of the signifier and the signified of each narrative work are really "the amount of time of reading the narrative text and the amount of time of the events of the tale" (1983: 33). Taking the concept of trauma in narrative into account, Genette (1983) finally develops "a taxonomy of these time slippages: analepsis (movements backwards), prolepsis (anticipations), ellipsis (edits that speed narrative time), and so on" (Luckhurst 2008: 83), which unlike Caruth's aporia, can aid in the investigation of postcolonial elements that contribute to trauma portrayal.

The anguish and disorder of the narrative temporality are referenced by Caruth's triple aporia of representation, repetition, and belatedness. Analyzing the first narrative characteristic associated with time allows us to discern a connection between order's temporal function and Caruth's tardiness in the analeptic structure of the story. The fragmented recurrences observed in duration and the construction of the narrative frequency, which seems to be non-repetitive, also reveal a relationship

between the other two narrative aspects of time, duration and frequency, that is reminiscent of Caruth's aporia of repetition. Also, the division of the many moods makes a paradoxical relationship with the narrative's postcolonial voice, suggesting a partnership indicative of Caruth's aporia of representation between Genette's two non-temporal qualities, mood, and voice. Double focalization, in addition, harmonizes the narrator's and character's voices. The double focalization employs free indirect speech to eliminate the gap between the narrator and the characters. In fact, there is a kind of solidarity between the writer and the narrator and even the reader for making communication, which recovers the trauma by narrating.

Order of Analepsis and Anticipation and Belatedness

According to Genette (1983), the order in which events or temporal segments are put in the narrative discourse is compared to the order of succession that the same events or temporal fragments have in the story to define the narrative's temporal order (1983: 35). When these two representational systems are combined, it is clear that both the chronological order of the narrative and any discrepancies between the two temporal orders of tale and narrative play a significant role (1983: 40). This can be clearly observed in *The Lowland*, which explores death and the lingering memory of a person's death in the minds of all the characters. It deviates from the logical order and sequence of events and is presented to the listener in accordance with the time of aphasia. The narrator is dealing with psychological upheaval and explains the narrative's backdrop as well as the primary and minor characteristics. The narrator speaks incoherently, allowing the reader to focus on the most crucial incident. The characters' memories are narrated in the present tense, so that past, present, and occasionally future events coexist simultaneously in the narrative. As the narrator returns to the past, sometimes time and place change, that is, the narrative becomes agitated by the association of a memory or a sign: "East of the Tolly Club, after Deshapran Sashmal Road splits in two, there is a small mosque... Once, within this enclave, there were two ponds, oblong, side by side. Behind them was a lowland spanning a few acres" (Lahiri 2013: 1).

The Lowland is one of the places constantly repeated in the story which acts as a symbol of memories that the characters of the story talk about. The reason for this

may be the nostalgic feeling of the past, which evokes childhood in the mind. The story begins with a child's dreams and keeps going and coming back to childhood and the present time of the "author" is repeated throughout the story. The purpose is to depict the events that the protagonist has experienced after immigration and their impact which has continued to this day. According to Genette (1983), they represent a contrast "between the present and the past", which is really reassuring because remembering is usually euphoric even when it brings back sad memories (1983: 55).

The oldest time narrated in the story, 1770, goes back to the history of British colonialism. The characters' memoirs are from lowland as a motif for postcolonial theme that shows the history of colonialism and postcolonialism. The narrator intends to keep the history within by showing the motif of the story, as Craps (2013) mentions the "numerous words, phrases, motifs, and themes that echo from one narrative to another" (2013: 93). Repeating the place of lowland, the narrator manifests the importance of history of sufferings of colonized people.

> [I]n matching notebooks, they summarized the history of India, the founding of Calcutta. They drew maps to learn the geography of the world. They learned that Tollygunge had been built on reclaimed land. Centuries ago, when the Bay of Bengal's current was stronger, it had been a swamp dense with mangroves. (Lahiri 2013: 22).

This narrator's description of time and history is retrospective because it refers to an event in the past that occurred outside the time of the first narrative. This external retrospective helps identify the characters of the story and create its space to draw suffering of characters during partition. Lahiri uses calendar dates related to history of Partition and the Naxalite movement at the beginning of the narrative. Moreover, the external retrospective helps review past memories.

> [I]n 1967, in the papers and on All India Radio, they started hearing about Naxalbari. It was a place they'd never heard of before. It was one of a string of villages in the Darjeeling District, a narrow corridor at the northern tip of West Bengal. (Lahiri 2013:30).

The author uses these calendar dates to highlight the suffering of victims of

Partition and colonial era. The text from the novel shows that this is an external retrospective that sometimes deals with the characters. External retrospective order demonstrates the description of political events and the impact of power on history and collective identity of characters. In addition, by retrospective order, the action of the narrative leads to a painful history and the plight of the rural people who suffer from the injustice of social classes. It might be true in all cases as Luckhurst (2008) says that traumatic identity is now also commonly argued to be at the root of "many national collective memories" (2008: 2), emphasizing the fact that all the people of a colonialized country have gone through some sort of traumatic experiences. From pages 22 to 46 of the novel, the narrator narrates two centuries and their events in linear chronology,

> [I]n 1770, beyond the southern …. In 1785, he'd built a Palladian villa…. But by 1895, when a Scotsman named William Cruickshank…. In 1964, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorized American to use military force against North Vietnam…. in the summer of 1966, on the shortwave, they listened to England play German…. In 1967, in the papers and on all India radio…. By early 1968, in the face of increasing opposition, the United Front government collapsed, and West Bengal was placed under President's Rule. (Lahiri 2013: 22-46).

Within this narrative, narrator deals with main characters of the story through mixed retrospective order. The narration begins with a calendar date and then narrates individual events. Using this method, the narrator describes importance of relationship between history and individual memory and examines the space outside and inside the narrative. She fills the gaps in history with individual memory and descriptions of main characters to use the connection between history and personal memory as evidence. This retrospective task helps the author not only to draw the content of the story in different layers but also to move time forward. As a result, the delayed memory functions in trauma are closely tied to the memory network component that links the analeptic order. This technique is not limited to the events and the author employs the same method in describing the characters as well such as in case of Gauri who is one of the main characters and who suffers from PTSD memory, to the extent that every sign throws her into the past. The incident of Udayan's death, which is the

foremost individual memory, remains hidden until the end of the story. The author use ellipsis to manifest the depth of suffering of event.

> [I]t was covered by a carnage of earthworms; they'd emerged from the wet soil to die… Then [Gauri] remembered another thing. How, at the height of the crackdown, the bodies of party members were left in streams, in fields close to Tollygunge. They were left by the police, to shock people, to revolt them. To make clear that the party would not survive. (Lahiri 2013, 207-208)

In micro-level, this formula connects the place to the past and the narrator delays the main event of death of Udayan. The wet garden reminds her of lowland where Udayan is killed, but the narrator uses implicated subject for recollecting memory. Gauri does not intend to recount the main event. Through ellipsis, narrative stimulates the reader to seek out the absent memory and individual histories of loss. Lowland is a reminiscent motif for postcolonial history and homeland and diaspora. Double geography and being in-between formed through memory in Gauri's mind makes the time dynamic. Here is the mixed retrospect that forms both the atmosphere of the story and the mind of the main character.

In anticipation as opposed to retrospect, the story moves forward, through a dream or mental ideas, and makes the reader feel that the story has specific dynamics and plans. In parts of the story, the narrator uses external anticipation when the Naxalite movement is formed. The story uses present and future grammatical tense, based on an optimistic view of the future and popular struggles for freedom and hope. Narrator directs ongoing Naxalite movement as contemporary political strife which is a way to bear collective witness to cultural trauma. The narrator here uses the first person plural to indicate the importance of predicting the future:

> [B]y the year 2000, that is only thirty-one years from now, the people of the whole world will be liberated … and will celebrate the worldwide victory of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's thought…. We will certainly be able to make a new sun and a new moon shine in the sky of our great motherland, he said, his words ringing out for miles… (Lahiri 2013: 46)

Through the relationship between anticipation and analepsis the narrator

intends to make the reader aware of the importance of lost memory hidden in the heart of this non-linear narrative. Lahiri has used past tense and adverb of time and create "double anachronies" to show the "double structure" of anticipation and analepsis. Udayan's national identity is closely tied to the collective solidarity of the Naxalite movement. The author structures the text to transform individual memory into a collective one, showing how public and political life shapes the private experiences of individuals. External events and narrative anticipation are employed to create the story's atmosphere, highlighting the interconnection between personal identity and broader social and political movements.

Frequency, Duration, and Repetition

Another methodology of Genette for representing time is frequency, defined as the number of repetitions of an event in the text; it is a macro-level narrative discourse analysis for indicting trauma in the narrative. Frequency consists of three parts called signulative, iterative, and repetitive. The use of signulative and repetitive frequencies is very noticeable in the structure of the novel. The author revisits events and memories repeatedly, expanding narrative time by exploring the experiences of each character in depth. Significative frequency is the dominant aspect of time, and many events are discussed at once. Besides, the frequency associated with the trauma theory is repetitive.

The plot of *The Lowland* revolves around one memory, which is the death of Udayan, and this memory connects all characters. In the novel, the author reinforces the plot by retelling the events in order to manifest the central event, which is repeated by other characters at different times. "She'd been converted permanently by... Udayan's death... Udayan killed. Come back if you can. The police had killed Udayan... He lay on the sofa, listening to her suffer, listening to her relive his brother's death, perhaps…" (Lahiri 2013: 105- 377). Images and accounts of Udayan's death appear repeatedly in the story, occurring almost fourteen times. These episodes are presented from different perspectives, and the repetition is deliberate: the author uses multiple characters to convey how individual memories become part of a collective consciousness. The repeated remembrance of Udayan's killing signals a historical episode that has otherwise remained unspoken. Another recurring event in the novel

is Udayan's killing of a policeman, which is initially vague and only fully revealed toward the end of the story. This episode is revisited in Gauri's thoughts, filling her with guilt. The persistence of this guilt traps her in time, and the only way to process it is through narration:

> [H]e'd known from the beginning the risk of what he was doing. But only the policeman's blood had prepared him. That blood had not belonged only to the police officer; it had become a part of Udayan also. So that he'd felt his own life begin to ebb, irrevocably… (Lahiri 2013: 405).

These events—together with the account of Udayan's footprint in the cement and the novel's portrayal of the Naxalite movement, are anchored in the Tollygunge neighborhood near *The Lowland*, a setting the narrative returns to multiple times, reinforcing its role as a site of trauma and collective memory. Furthermore, Genette's concept of duration helps explain how delayed memory functions in trauma are connected to the analeptic structure of the narrative (1983: 87–88). Duration is divided into three parts, which include isochrony, acceleration, and declaration. According to calendar data, the story of *The Lowland* is set from 1770 to 2010, and the volume of text devoted to this long period of time is 398 pages. Therefore, in terms of time, the text dedicated to the narrative time (NT) is acceleration, which indicates the speed of narration. The story from 1770 to 1930 is written in two pages, so the narration time is less than the story time (ST). According to Genette's formula, if the narration time is less than the story narration, it is a summary type, which is marked by NT < ST. Lahiri used a summary to describe pre-Independence India, which demonstrates the absence of history in the colonial era in India.

The death of Udayan in the year 1971 is given a large extent of almost seventy pages in the novel. This is a straightforward application of Genette's NT > ST formula, or descriptive pause, where the timing of the narrative surpasses that of the story. The precise narration of the Naxalite movement (1967-1972) plays by the same rules, as the narrative slows down and captures the political events, settings, and character experiences in detail. The novel's many memories seem to come back to this historical period, which not only generates repetitive frequency but also creates additional descriptive pauses that highlight the period as the locus of the characters'

trauma. On the other hand, one of the major ellipses of the novel is the murder of the policeman by Udayan and the subsequent silence of Gauri on the subject. This gap becomes clear when Gauri starts telling about Udayan but suddenly moves to events related to the Naxalite movement, thus indicating a conscious gap in the narrative, as the author writes:

> [S]he sat in the car, looking at the house, … knowing how much it would surely upset him to see her, unbidden. Knowing she was ... She remembered looking for the policeman's mailbox in Jadavpur. Terrified of what she was seeking, … She was tempted not to bother him…, she wanted to thank him for being a father to Bela. For bringing Gauri to America, for letting her go. The shame that had flooded her veins was permanent. She would never be free from that. (2013: 370)

By using implicit ellipses and retrospective, Gauri intends to connect events. This text emphasizes Gauri's shame, which causes her to remain silent about the event that transformed her life and the lives of the people. Another reason that Lahiri uses this method is to delay the narrative of trauma. Lahiri uses signs such as letters, police, and shame to bring the reader closer to the main event of the story. She also illustrates how a memory of the past affects her whole life. Combining postcolonial history with personal memory to produce collective memory is another application of implicit ellipsis. Genette (1983) believes that this method is important for determining events and extending time "to allow one to establish with precision the points on which such a work occurs" (1983: 109). As a consequence, Lahiri uses implicit ellipsis to reveal the source of violence and its effect on individuals and to inform the reader why violence occurs in postcolonial society, who to blame, and how political violence produces future victims like Bella in *The Lowland*.

Mood, Voice, and Representation

According to Genette's narratological model, mood refers to the management of the narrative information via distance and focalization, not through tensed ordering. Mood governs the reader's access to the information and also its nature—the connection between the narrator and the story being narrated. Distance is the specific term used

for the measure of mediation between the events of the narrative and their showing: less mediation results in nearer proximity. In *The Lowland*, Lahiri opts for a narrative style that is mostly distant and descriptive rather than mimetic (dramatized) depiction. This decision is evident in the use of narrated speech and summary predominantly over direct dialogue and scene. In accordance with Genette's framework, such descriptive narration indicates a significant distance between the narrator and the events narrated. I contend that this narrative distance serves as a formal correlate to the temporality of trauma, more specifically, the idea of belatedness. As per the trauma theory, the events that constitute trauma cannot be entirely processed or recounted when they happen, rather they come out later on, and the time and psychological factors and distances have been their mediators. Therefore, the narrative's descriptive remoteness is reflective of the delayed, mediated nature of traumatic memory itself. The connection between narrative distance and temporal depth finds theoretical support in Ricoeur's observation that historical narration requires distance: "the author must be far from the events in order to be able to narrate history," with "the succession of generations" marking this temporal remove (1985: 109). In *The Lowland*, this distancing is quite pronounced in the portrayal of Udayan's death and the novel's interaction with postcolonial violence in India. The sparse and elliptical treatment of these historical traumas, the relatively little historical context, exists structurally to create the gaps and absences that are the features of traumatic memory. The increase in narrative pace in these sequences (as pointed out in the duration analysis) further highlights the trouble with the continuous engagement of the traumas in question. Consequently, the mood of the novel—its narrative distance—becomes more than just a reflection of the historical trauma's aftermath. The formal remoteness is not merely a stylistic choice but rather a narratological strategy for the representation of the consciousness that is characterized by the violence of colonialism and postcolonialism.

To determine the distance between the narrator and the narrative, the author has used a variety of speech representations, the most important of which are free indirect speech and narrated speech. For free indirect speech, his type of narration determines the distance between direct and indirect speech that expresses the character's words in third-person pronouns and past tense but retains its tone. Genette (1983) states that they include a double misunderstanding. Confusion first arises between spoken

speech and inner speech, followed by misunderstanding between the character's said or inner speech and the narrator's words. (1983: 173). This feature is close to the common concepts of ambivalence and double consciousness in postcolonial theory and trauma, both in structure and content.

This ambiguity of speech representation conveys the paradoxically known and unknown elements of trauma theory. It somehow indicates the belatedness of the narrative in light of trauma theory. Lahiri (2013) uses this method to heal the past and relate to the present, as she writes "He turned to face her. He stroked her head with his hand. He's a part of me. I grew up with him, he said" (2013: 248). Sometimes the narrator emphasizes the presence of the past as a ghost that has prevailed over the present and the living. Its most prominent feature in terms of content and technique of artistic expression is the unification of the voice of the character and that of the narrator, so the narrator is the one who speaks and sinks into the depths of the character.

Focalization

The Lowland has two kinds of internal and external focalization, which are heterodiegetic voice and sometimes homodiegetic. In this psychological aspect, the mentality and cognition of the internal focalization of narrative help manifest hidden knowledge. The problem that causes a lack of language and memory to lead to unknown situations. Therefore, Lahiri connects the theme of immigration as a postcolonial perspective to the theme of grief as trauma theory in order to demonstrate postcolonial trauma through psychological aspects in homodiegetic voice and internal focalization as a restricted omniscient point of view. The omniscient narrator, who has internal focalization, penetrates the consciousness and feelings of the characters. Lahiri uses the inner focalization to show how the past surrounds Gauri like a ghost. The narration is narrated as a memory to determine the distance between the narrator and time and its importance.

In narrated speech, the distance between the narrator and the character is eliminated, and the narrator narrates instead of the character. Because of a lack of language, the narrator looks and feels from the perspective of the characters. It is the character of the mother of Udayan and Subhash who compares the memories and

distance of her children for death and immigration to lowland as conscious memory. She cannot remove it because her consciousness is full of memories of the death of his father and the absence of his other son, as well as political memories of the revolution and the massacre of the people. Gauri has almost the same feelings,

> [S]he felt as if she contained a ghost, as Udayan was. The child was a version of him, in that it was both present and absent. Both within her and remote… as she still did not really believe that Udayan was gone, missing now not only from Calcutta but from every other part of the earth she'd just flown across. (Lahiri 2013: 153)

In case of Gauri, the narrator expresses what he knows. It deals with the emotional aspects of the issues raised in the text. Lahiri uses the internal focalization to show how the past surrounds her as a ghost. Derrida (1994) states that the possibility of adjusting the future depends on our readiness "to learn to live with ghosts" (Craps 2013: 61). According to postcolonialism, what Derrida emphasizes is living between the past and the present, like in-between. While external focalization observes the narrator, which determines the distinction between characters and the narrator, Lahiri uses this focalization for past time and memories, not for the feelings of characters. She knows the sufferings of memories shading her characters' lives and represents the traumatic memories of her attitude through her character. In Genette's opinion, "Only an omniscient narrator", like God himself, able to hear body and spirit, as well as see beyond acts, can disclose (1983: 209).

> [S]he saw that she impressed him, not only by reading what he gave her, but by talking to him about it. They exchanged opinions about the limits of political freedom, and whether freedom and power meant the same thing. About individualism, leading to hierarchies. About what society happened to be at the moment, and what it might become. (Lahiri 2013: 204)

Lahiri uses the external focalization to express the political and historical events of the past and the historical distance between characters and the narrator. she uses traumatic memories to corroborate her statements as indirect evidence to tie the story to the historical narrative and collective memory through calendar dates and

real-world places. We may thus demonstrate the relationship between temporal and Caruth's aporia of belatedness in the story's analeptic structure and function by looking at narrative characteristics connected to time.

Later, in order to change and harmonize with the protagonist, Lahiri uses an epistolary text of a letter to emphasize what Genette (1983) called "testimonial function, or function of attestation" (1983: 256). It is the letter Udayan writes to Subhash to let him know what was going on back home. Here, Lahiri continues the story not only as a narrator but also as a witness who wants to narrate the traumatic memory,

> I met Comrade Sanyal. I was able to sit with him, speak with him. I had to wear a blindfold. I'll tell you about it sometime …. A Red Guard is forming, traveling to villages, propagating Mao Tse-tung's quotations…Our generation is the vanguard; the struggle of students is part of the armed peasant struggle, Majumdar says. You'll come back to an altered country…I'm confident of this. …supporting a movement that will only improve the lives of millions of people. (Lahiri 2013: 57)

In the example given, Lahiri uses multiple voices, such as heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. she makes use of a paradoxical form of silence and a unique voice to produce a unique representation of multiple perspectives. In this example, the omniscient uses the present, the future, and the past to create dynamic time in contrast to the freezing time of the classic definition of trauma. The narrator addresses both the future and the news of hope and recovery in the second person and with future verbs.

What seems important in this novel are ways of transmitting narrative events through the focalization mentality. The author has chosen between the narration of the omniscient and the limited narration in the same narrative form. Thus, she refers to the postcolonial theme using the motif of house and focalization of place, repairing the home, and reconstructing identity as individual and collective. Moreover, *The Lowland*'s double focalization reminds us of the hybridity of identity, which is made Through the course of negotiation and translation, a new identity emerges that is distinct from both cultures. (Pourgharib & Asl 2022: 1661) and double consciousness from the perspective of postcolonialism.

Conclusion

This article examines how trauma is represented in the landscape using a mixed analytical methodology. The goal has been to use Gérard Genette's order, mode, and frequency to adopt a decolonizing theory of trauma. The results indicate that, in this reading, Lahiri's use of these narrative elements productively challenges the limits defined by Cathy Caruth's three aporias: repetition, belatedness, and representation, which often constrain how trauma can be interpreted or understood. Rather than suggesting authorial intention, this analysis shows how the novel's narrative strategies offer alternative ways of approaching trauma beyond Caruth's framework. *The Lowland*'s narrative structure was retroactive and flashback, demonstrating that the terrible incident was described with postponement. Yet, this postponement is not restricted to the past; it also extends to the present and even the future. Furthermore, the composite retrospective story is used by the author to demonstrate the dynamics of time and the fact that despite the trauma narrative's delay, time does not stand still. This article has looked at the frequency of recurrence in trauma by utilizing the idea to demonstrate that repetition may emphasize the significance of an incident rather than serve as a barrier to understanding the trauma. Through repetition, it becomes obvious that the characters' anguish is mostly caused by the loss of their country as related to the postcolonialism. This study finds that the plot and history in *The Lowland* indicate duration of trauma. Similarly, the author uses both retrospective narrative to intensify the suffering of her characters, which refuses event-based trauma, and anticipative time to transform static time into dynamic. The article also discovered that the representation of trauma is revealed only by using the superficial structure of the narrative, which includes delaying and repeating events and memories, while not only is it represented in postcolonial literature in the narrative structure, but also in language as theme in the story.

Statements and Declarations

Thesis Declaration

This article is derived from the PhD dissertation entitled "Decolonized Trauma: Narrative, Memory, and Identity on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*", currently being conducted under the supervision of

Dr. Behzad Pourgharib in the field of English Language and Literature at University of Mazandaran.

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AI Use Declaration

The use of artificial intelligence was limited exclusively to language editing and proofreading. All stages of the research process, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, were conducted independently by the authors.

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