

**Memoirs or the Recounting of the Growth of the
Artist's Mind**



Mushira Habib

Student ID: 05203001

Department of English and Humanities

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Mushira Habib

Student ID: 05203001

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Abstract

The genre of autobiography or memoir has always been very popular among readers because of the instinctive interest of human beings to feel connected to the lives of others. The memoirs of great people have always inspired others. Being a student of literature, I always wished to know how the writers we love became the people they are and what had influenced the literature they produced. Therefore, in this paper, I will look into the memoirs of different writers and trace the development of their artistic minds through the recollection of their memories. I will also look into the different features of memoirs to substantiate their authenticity. Thus, in this paper, I will use the memories of the writers as tools to observe the growth of an artist's mind.

Introduction

“Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems– but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible.”¹

This is how Salman Rushdie describes reality, past and present in his extraordinarily crafted novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981). And perhaps this irresistible temptation of digging into the reality of the writers, whose writings we read, has attracted me towards their autobiographies. I have always felt an urge to know the real people behind the stories or poems we read. The more I liked their works, the more I wanted to be familiar with the writers whose real lives definitely had some impact on the wonderful pieces of literature they produced. As we also read criticisms of all sorts about the writers' personal experiences or thoughts as they are reflected in their texts, I wanted to know what actually facilitated their writing. This is why I opted to write a thesis on 'autobiographies' initially. Since then, a new journey in the world of literature began for me. The more I explored, the more involved I got and the more discoveries I made about this wonderful craft of writing.

The first discovery that amazed me was that 'autobiographical writings' are neither 'autobiographies', nor 'memoirs'. Autobiographical writings are the texts that unintentionally reflect the real life stories or thoughts of the writers. When the writers do not integrate their real lives in their literary products overtly, yet the readers find

¹ Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. (London: Vintage, 1995) 229.

autobiographical elements in those writings, then we call them autobiographical writings. But autobiographies or memoirs are declared by the writers themselves to be the true portrayal of their stories and the texts are meant to let the readers know about their lives and personal thoughts. Thus, novels like *The Bell Jar* (1966) by Sylvia Plath, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) by Earnest Hemingway or *Head above Water* (1986) by Buchi Emecheta, etc. that draw highly upon the true stories of the respective writers, can be called autobiographical novels; but not autobiographies or memoirs.

There is a slight difference between autobiography and the memoir, which is often ignored and the terms are interchanged as synonyms. But the technical differentiation explains that autobiographies are expected to be more 'proper' and 'politically correct' about their integration of facts, dates and events presented in the writing. Contrasted to them, memoirs give a more personalized and idiosyncratic perception of the memories the writer decides to incorporate in the writing, not being very conscious or correct about their representations. For memoirs, another influential thought of Salman Rushdie proves to be true, where he writes,

“Memory’s truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else’s version more than his own.”²

² Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 292.

The trend of writing autobiographies goes back to old times, where it began as confessional writings. This style continued till the 18th century, when Rousseau wrote his autobiography under the title *Confessions*. It initiated the chain of the highly self-critical confessional autobiographies of the Romantic Era and beyond. The gradually increasing popularity of this genre made it very common in those days, where people coming from every walk of life would write an autobiography and publish it. Eventually, the autobiography took the form of poetry, when the great romantic poet William Wordsworth wrote his very long autobiography on the form of a poem, later titled as *The Prelude*, published in 1850.

However, if we think about the genre of autobiography or memoir more strictly, we can also claim that it was one of the first forms of writing. If we consider the travelogues, which were based on the journeys of the writers and their experiences, we might ask, were they not a form of memoirs? Or if we think about 'Fictional Autobiographies', then the first official novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe or the first unrecognized novel, *Oroonoko* (1688) by Aphra Behn, both fall under this umbrella as they claimed to be true stories. But on the one hand, Defoe made his narrative style similar to another related form to autobiography, and showed it as the 'Diary' of Crusoe. On the other hand, Behn claimed her narration as coming out of her real life encounter with the protagonist, Oroonoko, in Surinam, which sounds very similar to the genre of memoirs. Even all the 'Bildungsroman' styles of narrations like *Jane Eyre* (1847) or *Great Expectations* (1860-61) also fall under the category of 'Fictional Autobiographies'.

Linda Anderson, in the introduction of her book, *Autobiography: the New Critical Idiom* writes on the very first page that "All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another"³. Then, she also quotes, "It is my political right to be a subject which I must protect"⁴. Here, the first quote addresses the controversy about the categorizing of an autobiography, as opposed to fiction. The second quote gives the writer the right to call her/his piece of work, whatever s/he wants to call it and follow any genre s/he chooses to write in.

In defining autobiography, she comes up with several definitions, given by different people at different times. She says, "Autobiography is indeed everywhere one cares to find it"⁵. She also mentions what Candace Lang wrote in 1982, that a major problem for anyone who studies this topic is that "if the writer is always, in the broadest sense, implicated in the work, any writing may be judged to be autobiographical, depending on how one reads it."⁶

Anderson brings in Sigmund Freud in describing the different aspects necessary to be looked into in an autobiography or memoir. Freud's thoughts on the relation between narration and the subject have important consequences for the understanding of autobiography and how we remember our lives. The two conflicting notions of time and narrative order and the differences between them can be allied to his theories. His studies proclaim that memories follow no rational order of time or social importance. They are the unconscious remembrances of events that are significant to the

³ Anderson, Linda R. *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*. (London: Routledge, 2001) 1.

⁴ Anderson, *Autobiography* 1.

⁵ Anderson, *Autobiography* 1.

⁶ Anderson, *Autobiography* 1.

individual and have been thought over and over again. Thus, an incident gains the position of a long-lasting memory regardless of its origin or goal.

Furthermore, one of the major insights of Freud is the idea that the present can retroactively alter the past. According to his theories, our past, especially our childhood and family relations have an enormous influence in our lives. He pays immense importance to the role of the Oedipal Drama in our internal and external lives. His explanations of the history as a process of evolution also substantiates the way memories are represented in memoirs and autobiographies. It justifies how the memories of the writers change over time and the same incidents acquire different significance at different stages of their lives.⁷ Freud also emphasizes the fact that the past can never be restored perfectly in the present; the sensation is always different from the perception, so to say. The emotion of the present cannot relive the instant senses of the experience from the past. Therefore, the present is always different and distant from the past.

We can draw upon these insights in scrutinizing *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, the autobiographical poem by Wordsworth. Wordsworth had finished writing this poem by 1799, but kept editing and modifying the piece through the rest of his life. What is interesting here is, as Linda Anderson puts it, "how the poem, in the very process of its production, remains indeterminate, in pursuit of an inviolable origin which inevitably gets dispersed into various different revised or substituted versions"⁸. The poet exercises his poetic power over his memory and the development

⁷ Anderson, Linda R. *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 2001.

⁸ Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 2001.

of rationality alters his imaginations over time, which we will discuss in the next chapter in greater details. This very interruption of logic and reason of the poet's recollection of incidents brings the authenticity of the 'autobiography' in question.

Such a question can be posed about every 'autobiography' and 'memoir' and so we may well ask if every 'autobiography' is a piece of fiction. The fact still remains that life is reality and literature is a representation. Hence, in *Midnight's Children*, trying to mimic the narrative technique of an autobiography, Rushdie writes,

"To tell the truth, I lied about Shiva's death. My first out-and-out lie...whatever anyone may think, lying doesn't come easily to Saleem, and I'm hanging my head in shame as I confess...Why, then, this single barefaced lie?...I fell victim to the temptation of every autobiographer, to the illusion that since the past exists only in one's memories and the words which strive vainly to encapsulate them, it is possible to create past events simply by saying they occurred."⁹

Thus, in every respect, we see, a question that keeps recurring about autobiographies and memoirs is that do they tell the truth. According to J. A. Cuddon,

"An autobiography may be largely fictional. Few can recall clear details of their early life and are therefore dependent on other people's impressions, which can be equally unreliable. Moreover, everyone

⁹ Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 619.

tends to remember what he wants to remember. Disagreeable facts are sometimes glossed over or repressed"¹⁰

Similarly, the English novelist Anthony Powell said, "Memoirs can never be wholly true, since they cannot include every conceivable circumstance of what happened. The novel can do that."¹¹ But all of it depends on how someone defines truth. As some people make a distinction between truths of facts and truths of moments, memoirs can be seen to be dependent on truths of moments rather than of facts. Therefore, I would like to say that the very beauty of this genre lies in this representation or misrepresentation of the memorable events of the writer's life that should be given a space to spread its wings of creativity without scrutinizing or judging them critically.

So, in my thesis, I will be trying to address all these issues related to memoirs. I will refer to all the books I am dealing with as 'memoirs' as they deal with certain aspects of the artists' lives instead of following linear narrations of their lives entirely. And through these narrations, I will try to identify the stepping stones that contributed to the making of the artists we know today. Looking at their memoirs, I will seek the recollection of the significant memories that had signified the development of the artists. Again, as artists, I am referring to the writers, whose memoirs I will be dealing with. They are famous for their writings of other forms like poems, theories or fiction. But looking into their memoirs, I will try to bring out the relationship between their works and real lives. I will also look at the blend of their memories and their craft of

¹⁰ Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 1991.

¹¹ Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 2001.

representing them through language. All in all, it can be said that this paper looks at the memoirs as the art of representation of the realities of the writers.

In the first chapter, I will bring in Wordsworth's views on memory and language. In order to support these, I will look at his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*. We will also discuss why this poem fails to prove itself to be an ideal for memoirs. Then, we will look at James Joyce's fictional autobiography, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914-15), where he beautifully shows the intellectual development of an artist. Even though it portrays the journey of an artist perfectly, it cannot be called a memoir because of its fictional setting and characterization. Later in this chapter, we will also consider Rabindranath Tagore's memoir *Chhelebel*, translated by Radha Chakravarty as *Boyhood Days* (2008), which gives a brief glance at the boyhood days of the multi-talented artist. Through this concise account of his life, I will attempt to trace the obvious hints of the becoming of the putative artist. His lifestyle, thoughts, worldviews and relationships will be scrutinized as significant markers foregrounding his artistic prospects.

In the second chapter, we will see, how Edward Said, in his memoir, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999), provides a detailed depiction of his life. As a result, it becomes very easy to identify the relationships, events and realizations that merged together to become the postcolonial literary critic, Said, whom we look up to today. Feeling 'out of place' all his life gave him the place in history and literature he possesses today, which becomes evident in the discussion in this chapter.

Unlike these two memoirs, Orhan Pamuk finds his identity to be deeply rooted in his city's history and evolution, as portrayed in his memoir, *Istanbul: Memories of a City* (2005), translated by Maureen Freely. All of his relationships, dreams, thoughts, joys and sorrows are blended with his city's imagery and its effects. Therefore, his memoir shows how the artist that developed by and within the framework of a city. Similarly, in this chapter I will also look into the memoirs of Shamsur Rahman, titled, *Smritir Shohor* (2000) and *Kaler Dhuloy Lekha* (2004). Both these memoirs of the writer highlight his identity in relation to his city and its history. He also finds it very difficult to separate his story from the stories of the people, who, according to him, have contributed to the making of his city or country. Thus, his perception of himself is also found to be determined by his city, country and the people surrounding him. This chapter of my thesis will look into these two writers, Pamuk and Rahman, who recognize their artistic development to be a product of the larger society that they belonged to.

Hence, the three chapters of my thesis will also focus on the questions we posed at the beginning of the introduction and try to answer them. They will give an insight to the roles of language, memory, authenticity, relationships, social position and other aspects of the artists' lives that contribute in the intellectual development of the artists. Thus, this thesis will try to give an overview of the memoirs that recount the growth of the artist's mind.

Chapter 1: Poetry, Fiction and Memory

The question that arises at this point is, what makes a good memoir? Or, how do memoirs differ from one another? If we get answers to these questions, we will also know the difference between the memoirs I am dealing with here. But the primary fact to be considered here is that every artist has his/her own way of recollecting memories and putting them into words. Their notions of what to include in a memoir and what to exclude also vary. As a result, different sorts of memoirs are written, each being unique in their own ways.

William Wordsworth's autobiographical poem, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind* (1850) can be read as parallel to James Joyce's fictional autobiographical novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Both these texts show the internal development of the artist's mind. Their narrative techniques are similar to autobiographies, as they follow a chronological order in depicting the evolution of the artist from their childhood to adulthood. But they cannot be labeled as autobiographies because of the lack of factual documentation. Even though they cover the whole journey of the mind of the artist till they discover their artistic qualities, they only portray selective parts of their lives that seem to evolve in the respective texts. They neither mark the accurate dates of the events that take place in the speaker's life, nor do they draw upon every socio-political happening of that time.

Wordsworth believed that poetry is the tranquil recollection of memories, where the craft of language gives it more weight during the representation. His world famous poem, "Daffodils" or "I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud" is the most referred poem in

this respect, where he recalls the memory of seeing a bunch of daffodils dancing in the sweet breeze and relives the same excitement that he felt during his actual experience. The last few lines of the poem describes the pleasure of the poet as,

“For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.”¹²

Again, in “Preface to Lyrical Ballads”, he writes,

“I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind...”¹³

Therefore, his autobiographical poem also begins with the crafting of language, paying the biographical facts less importance. In fact, even if the poem considers his

¹² Wordsworth, William. “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”. *The Norton Anthology: English Literature*. ed 7. vol 2. London: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2000.

¹³ Wordsworth, William. “Preface to Lyrical Ballads.” *Prefaces and Prologues*. Vol. XXXIX. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909–14.

internal development as mentioned in the title itself, it ignores the external facts of time, place and so on. Thus the philosophical poem begins with the lines,

“O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.”¹⁴

Thus, Wordsworth describes the growth of his poetic mind in a linear narration, marking different significant events of his life as the titles of the chapters. He writes his chapters on childhood, school-time, summer vacations, books, Cambridge and the Alps, residence in London, retrospective love of nature leading to love of man, residence in France and how imagination and taste are impaired and restored. But all these chapters provide prolonged descriptions of romantic thoughts and perceptions crafted in exquisite language. For example, he writes about London,

“The soul of beauty and enduring life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colors, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things,
Composure, and ennobling harmony.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude or the Growth of a Poet's Mind*. Dec 20, 2008. Jan 15, 2009. <http://books.google.com.bd/books?hl=en&id=a-skopU3lxMC&dq=the+prelude&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=sfx5sqeVsk&sig=ZOIQX5CRr0pnSQSts_MddnodFS4&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=9&ct=result#PPR3,M1>

¹⁵ Wordsworth, *Prelude* 203.

In such descriptions, the poet's experiences get overridden by his language and gains more attention than the original event. Nature becomes the most powerful element that occupies the poet's mind and plays the primary role in the poet's growth. Thus, the readers might feel disconnected with the poet's experiences and the long philosophical poem might appear as an epic rather than as an autobiographical poem. In fact, the poem ends with a romantic thought as well, as he writes,

"Prophets of nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things."¹⁶

Joyce, on the other hand, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, draws the picture of a boy who grows up to be an artist. Joyce is known for his unique ways of detailing and portraying the psychological processes of his characters. This novel is often considered to be autobiographical to some extent as Stephen Dedalus shares many of the events of his life with Joyce's. The settings are also of real places, where Joyce had actually lived and visited. Hence, this novel echoes some of the elements that contributed to Joyce's growth as an artist in real life. It is said that all memory is grist to the fiction writer's mill. The pleasure or pain experienced by the characters of a

¹⁶ Wordsworth, *Prelude* 371.

story, the ecstasy of happiness and even the grief or distress should be the storyteller's own. If that is so, then all fiction has its autobiographical roots.

This novel is also said to be influenced by Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* (1882). In a letter to Ibsen, Joyce said that the feature of that play, which inspired his writing, was "the model of the heroic artist, resolute and uncompromising, absolutely convinced of his way in truth and art."¹⁷

Despite all these, Joyce wonderfully portrays the journey of an artist from his childhood to becoming a young writer. Many of the characteristics of this book echo the real memoirs with which we will deal in this paper. The opening lines of this book are:

"Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face."¹⁸

These lines are the recollection of a story by the young protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, which he had heard from his father. The story is kept in the shape it had been registered in the child's mind. The words 'moocow', 'nicens' or 'tuckoo' are not modified by the writer, and shows the innocence and thought processes of the young

¹⁷ "Bloomsday: Joyce and Ibsen again". 12 April, 2009.
<<http://www.sheilaomalley.com/archives/001909.html>>.

¹⁸ Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. (New Delhi: UBSPD, 2004) 1.

artist. His memory is recalled without any modification in the language. Here, the expected beginning of an autobiography with the name and date of birth of the protagonist is not maintained. Instead, an insight into the young artist's mind is emphasized, focusing on the artistic development of the writer's mind.

The novel shows the journey of Stephan Dedalus going through different epiphanies. His childhood, coming of age, sexual awakening, intellectual development and revolt against strict nationalism and conservative religiosity are explored in this novel. The name of the protagonist, Dedalus itself suggests its connotations coming from Greek mythology. Just the way Dedalus flew away from the prison inventing wings, Stephen Dedalus breaks through all the boundaries of the society to become an artist. As mentioned in the introduction of the book, "The novel moves through a youthful sentimental love, a refusal to become a Jesuit and ends with a remarkable perception of the "possibilities of art transcending the narrowness and spiritual suffocation that religion had become for him and (he feels) his country."'¹⁹

The novel can be divided into major parts that signified Stephen's journey of becoming an artist. Joyce plays with his character and words beautifully as the protagonist's image not only changes in descriptions, but also in their ways of being described. Stephen writes his memoir in this book as a diary that seems to be maintained from his childhood. When he is small, his words, understanding and writing style are simpler. For example, he writes with conscious effort, his first lines of poetry as a child:

¹⁹ Joyce, *Artist* viii.

“Stephen Dedalus is my name,
Ireland is my nation
Clongowes is my dwelling place
And heaven my expectation.”²⁰

These words seem to come out of a real child’s mouth while we read it and Stephen Dedalus becomes alive in our mind and vision. Again, in describing his daily incidents, the child narrator lacks proper words and expressions, repeats unnecessarily or misrepresents facts and events. He writes whatever he believes, understands and feels. He fails to understand the adults’ arguments, but observes them carefully. Later in his life, he is seen to revisit those memories with a better cognition and rational explanations.

He makes it a point to remain a good boy during the early years of his life. But during his teenage, there seems to be a digression in his mind. He, by then, becomes less repetitive and reads a lot of works by great writers like Byron and gets inspired. He develops his own judgments and opinions about things. He finds himself to be different from others and often feels alienated because of that. He gets bullied and beaten up by others as he was the only boy of his age that thought Byron was a better writer than the most popular Tennyson. These unusual choices that he made foreground his non-conformist attitude that flourishes in his artistic mind he develops.

Through the alienation and the guilt that follows from visiting brothels and fantasizing erotic relationships, influenced by a highly religious environment, he gradually turns

²⁰ Joyce, *Artist* 10.

to God and the church. He thought that putting his heart and soul into prayers will let him escape from the divided world and give him peace of mind. But when he gets the offer of becoming a priest, he refuses it; thinking that it will bind him in, rather than letting him break through. Then, he realizes as he later declares,

“I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning.”²¹

After this remarkable step in his life, he returns to his previous self with a better understanding of the world, people and relationships. Love, family, education, desire, writing—all of these acquired a new meaning for him. As the final step in finding his true self, he becomes a writer, not following any other writer anymore but developing his own idiosyncratic style. He writes, “O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my souls the uncreated conscience of my race.”²²

Thus, the journey and quest of Stephen Dedalus seems to end through the discovery of the artistic self. The heaven he intended to achieve in his first poem, going beyond his name, nationality or religion was gained through his writing. This fictional autobiography proves that each artist draws on specific elements in tracing the

²¹ Joyce, *Artist* 241.

²² Joyce, *Artist* 247.

journey towards his or her craft. Therefore, it can be said the artist portrayed in the book, Stephen Dedalus, incorporates all the fragmented facts and events of his life.

An interesting feature in all the writers I am dealing with is the distinction they make between the memories they themselves have of their childhood and the ones that they formed from other people's narrations. It is even funny to which extent the stories of the same events get manipulated as it passes through various mouths and how the adult's view differs from the child's. This is perhaps why all these books that I am dealing with can be called memoirs and not autobiographies, as they portray the personalized memories of the writers. Insignificant events become worthy of mention for these writers as they touched their imaginations. Similarly, huge socio-political gains or situations go unnoticed as the tender minds could not judge them accordingly and those events did not get registered in the young minds. Therefore, all these memoirs have become collages of the memories of the writers and not chronological mappings of important events of their lives. Through these memories, some issues seem to be common in all of these memoirs. These raise important questions and comparisons between them. And these common factors are perhaps the ones that make a person or an 'artist' regardless of their origin, time, place and condition.

The very thought of 'artists' or 'writers' raises certain ideas in most people about their characteristics. However, not all the writers think or act alike. Nor do they have similar views of the world. Therefore, every discourse has a counter discourse in art and literature. But some artists share the same thoughts and perceptions that give rise to different artists' groups or clubs of thinkers. If we look at the different autobiographies or memoirs of writers from different parts of the world, who come

from very different backgrounds and have very different lifestyles, we find several similarities and contrasts in their journeys in becoming literary figures. Hence, the question that arises here is, is there an essential element in every artist? In order to answer this question, let us look into memoirs of four artists coming from distant backgrounds, whose memoirs are very different from one another in almost every way. The shortest and most precise of all these memoirs is Tagore's *Boyhood Days*, which highlights only the childhood innocence of the poet, ignoring the complicated events that occurred during his adolescence and coming of age.

“Those bygone days were like a prince, dispensing largesse occasionally, at their pleasure, at auspicious moments, in their own areas of jurisdiction. These present days are like merchants’ sons, displaying all sorts of glittering wares at the crossroads, to attract buyers from the highway, and from the alleyways as well.”²³

This is how the old Rabindranath Tagore recalls his boyhood days. In his mournful tone, there is a dint of regret that those days are gone as well as a hint of realization of his becoming old. In his memoir, *Boyhood Days*, he tells the story of his childhood, but his narration seems to be of a distant observer. It lacks childlike emotions and naiveté and the readers might find it hard to relate to the young Tagore as the adult Tagore himself does not seem to be at ease with him. He is quite harsh about his childhood emotions often and gives little importance to them. His mature perceptions ignore the innocent passions of childhood.

²³ Tagore, Rabindranath. *Boyhood Days*. Trans. Radha Chakravarty. (New York: Penguin Group, 2008) 32.

Throughout this memoir, he appears to be very conservative about the culture he was born in. He seems to be forced to embrace modernity, English education and the new waves that British colonialism had brought to Indian lifestyles. Though he gradually becomes a part of it following the necessity of time, he seems highly critical of it and mocks his own position at times in the memoir. Tagore starts his book with the description of his time and city, which he calls 'old-time Kolkata'. At times, he romanticizes it, and even exaggerates. He represents the culture as a mixture of many things, which he celebrates. For example, he writes, "Those days, the howling of jackals could still make that old house in Kolkata shudder, down to its very foundations."²⁴ Here, he romanticizes the howling of jackals, which have faded away behind the overwhelming sounds of modern gadgets that were conquering Kolkata.

He gives the impression of quite an underdeveloped city trapped in backwardness and conservatism in this book. As the poet grows older, scenes change in the city. It embraces the modern ways of life as well as gets introduced to Western technologies and styles. After describing the restricted positions of women, the superstitions, the absence of electricity and presence of moon light in their lives, the poet writes, "Now we have more light, both indoors and out."²⁵ Again, in these lines, a tone of regret is being echoed. The poet reluctantly faces the fact that the presence of moon light in their lives was being replaced by the light coming from electricity. The metaphor of light perhaps also hints at the light of education that modernity or globalization was bringing, which is often depicted as progress.

²⁴ Tagore, *Boyhood* 24.

²⁵ Tagore, *Boyhood* 11.

All these characteristics of the age are often reflected in his works. For example, in his famous short story, "Hoimonti", the hold of patriarchy and the position of women in the society is portrayed harshly. Again in the short story, "The Punishment", the cruelty with which women were treated is shown along with a resistant voice that the poet perhaps expected from the women of his time.

One theme that keeps recurring in the memoir is of freedom. The young Tagore's longing for breaking through every bond comes across in his short story "Chhuti", where the young protagonist fails to fit into the routine that the society expected him to adjust to. Tagore mentions several times how he felt free in the terrace and loved to spend time in the open air, under the vast sky. The theme of breaking through also recurs in his other pieces, like in the novel *The Quartet*, where the protagonist is haunted throughout, in search of his destiny or destination. The opening lines of the memoir incorporates this feeling where he writes,

"I was then of tender age, and slight,
Like a wingless bird, my frame was ever so light..."²⁶

Thus, Tagore's urge to become free from every bond becomes evident in these lines. He wanted to get out of his house and join the people on the roads. No institution or organization could bind him. He left school and took tuition at home as he was demoralized by the rules and regulations of the traditional educational system. Even 'Mastermoshai's' tuition at home could not make him interested in studies. He writes,

²⁶ Tagore, *Boyhood* 7.

“At nine in the evening, half-asleep, my eyes heavy with drowsiness, I would be set free.”²⁷

Many sorts of training were imposed on the young Tagore, who was not ready to acquire any of the skills. Wrestling, music, biology, maths, Bengali, Sanskrit, all these were fields that Tagore got a chance to explore in his childhood, some of which he internalized, and some not. The nonconformist mind of Tagore claims only to correspond with Ramprasad Sen’s lines, “O my heart, you do not understand what cultivation is all about.”²⁸

Tagore makes fun of his bad singing, but cannot deny his attraction towards it. He could not become a singer as singing was also being imposed on him. Yet he knew how to sing and could easily amaze an audience through his songs. He was passionate about music, but his passions were not enough to tie him to regular music lessons either. He needed to break through these as well. He confesses, “In the pursuit of knowledge, nothing held my attention for long: this was my weakness. I filled my bag of learning with pickings from here and there, as the fancy took me.”²⁹

But we can undoubtedly claim that these bindings were unnecessary for the genius. The songs he wrote and composed later in his life not only startled the Bengali audience, but ‘Rabindra Sangeet’, a whole category of Bangla songs, that was a collection of his compositions and was named after him, is still considered among the best tunes in world music. And the significance of these songs lies in their uniqueness,

²⁷ Tagore, *Boyhood* 9.

²⁸ Tagore, *Boyhood* 43.

²⁹ Tagore, *Boyhood* 40.

which was probably the outcome of his methods that were distinct from traditional teaching.

He gives detailed descriptions of the working people around him, which show his involvement with them. He gives detailed descriptions of all their servants as they perform their specific duties. He writes,

“Pyari the maid, crossing the front yard, on her hip a dhama or large rattan basket laden with vegetables; Dukhan the bearer, fetching water from the Ganga in pitchers suspended from the bankh balanced on his shoulder...And a crowd of beggars waiting, hoping for their regular portion of charity.”³⁰ The beggars also seem to be functioning according to their assigned responsibilities in his description.

He lived a very healthy life, as he complains. He complains as he could not make excuses of illness to avoid studying or tuition. He writes, “My health was so disgustingly sound that even when I longed restlessly to play truant from school, I could not make myself ill by abusing my body in any way.”³¹ He gives the credit for his perfect health to Brajeswar, the head of their domestic staff, who used to make sure that their meals were healthy. Such an exceptional insight of the poet foreshows his unusual perspectives and explanations of ordinary events that got life in his artistic creations.

³⁰ Tagore, *Boyhood* 14.

³¹ Tagore, *Boyhood* 21.

The child comes alive in front of our eyes when his games are described along with their significance. Or the stories that used to excite him immensely are recalled word by word. Even the childhood rhyme is recalled, which played an important role in the game with his wooden lion. It goes,

“Singhimama, off with your head!

At Andibose’s shrine I strike you dead!

Ulkut dhulkut dum dum dum

Walnut balnut whack-whack-whack

Crack-crack-crack!”³²

This rhyme can perhaps be seen as Tagore’s first step towards becoming a poet. Even though this rhyme is a modification of another similar rhyme he had come across, it exposes his creativity and the sense of rhymes and meters he had even at that tender age. So, we can see that the imaginative sparks of the poet were ready to become artistic flames from quite an early stage of his life.

He describes his mother as a very loving lady, who was traditional and conventional.

He says how she was and compares her to the strict mothers of the modern age:

“Our old-fashioned mother would see no harm in her son missing an occasional lesson. Had I fallen into the hands of today’s mothers, I would not only have been sent back to the tutor, but had my ears

³² Tagore, *Boyhood* 31.

tweaked as well; or perhaps, with a suppressed smile, she would have made me swallow castor oil, to cure my illness forever.”³³

Here, he is not only seen to contrast his mother with the modern women, but also criticizes their structures and devotion to education.

The few lines he writes about his father are,

“When my father was home, he would occupy the room on the second floor. Concealed behind the attic, I would often watch him from afar, as he meditated silently before sunrise, hands folded on his lap, like a white stone statue on the terrace. Sometimes, he would depart for the hills, and be away for many days.”³⁴

And then he gives a very brief notice of his father’s leaving in a matter of fact manner. He calmly informs, “Our esteemed father had left the Jorasanko house, by then. Jyotidada took up residence in the room on the second floor.”³⁵ These very short accounts of memories of his father gives the impression that Tagore did not share a close relationship with his father, who played a minimal role in his son’s life.

Relationships started to form and change in his life after the arrival of ‘Bouthakrun’ in the house. About this shift in life, he writes, “Here began a new chapter of my lonely, nomadic existence on the terrace, for into my life came human companionship, and human affection. It was my elder brother, Jyotidada, who held centre stage at this

³³ Tagore, *Boyhood* 32.

³⁴ Tagore, *Boyhood* 52.

³⁵ Tagore, *Boyhood* 61.

point.”³⁶ This brother introduced Tagore to the adventures and other bright sides of life. He actually took the young poet away from his monotonous life which he used to complain about. Finally, the poet’s fantasies took the forms of adventures in the company of his brother. The memories of these outings appear to remain afresh in Tagore’s mind, giving rise to a combined feeling of excitement and anxiety.

Many of these relationships between him and his family members are reflected in his writings. His mother’s reflection is found in many traditional mothers that were represented in his writings. For example, in the novel, *Gora*, Gora’s mother resembles his own mother. The sister-in-law, ‘Bouthakrun’ has become familiar through many pieces, like the novel, *The Home and the World*, the short story, “Noshtoneer” or the song, “Tumi ki kebol e chhobi”.

On the one hand, Jyotidada was letting the wandering mind of the poet explore and expand new areas of thought. On the other hand, Bouthakrun became his friend with whom he would play chess or have aimless arguments. These two relations brought new dimensions in his life. But strikingly, the decay of these relationships is not shown or described in greater details as if they were not that significant. Tagore writes, “I have recounted elsewhere how Jyotidada went bankrupt trying to run a fleet of indigenous ships in the rivers of Bengal...Before that happened, Bouthakrun had already left us.”³⁷ The death of his Bouthakrun and separation with his brother are expressed in a matter of fact manner, without showing much attachment or emotion. This may point to an arena of his life which Tagore has deliberately censored.

³⁶ Tagore, *Boyhood* 59.

³⁷ Tagore, *Boyhood* 73.

The poetic potentials of the young poet started to flourish during his stay in Shilaidaha. The process is described interestingly as something that was absolutely natural and easy, the value of which was exaggerated. "There I remained in a solitary, frame of mind...Meanwhile, the pages of my notebook had begun to fill with poems."³⁸

In his sixteenth year, he starts writing journals in the family periodical, "Bharati", which he himself did not find to be up to the mark in the standard of writing. He finds his own writing lacking substance and his Borodada's ones incomprehensible. By his seventeenth year, he left and stopped attending the editorial meetings of the journal. Most of his family members were related to writing or other forms of art and it can be said that Tagore inherited his talent, but outshone everyone else in the family.

During this time, he was sent to England to get acquainted to the "civilized world" and fit into Western ways. His Mejdada was appointed his facilitator in order to prepare him to be fit for England, to whom he was sent. None of these happened with his consent, and he complains, "I was uprooted, transplanted from one field to another."³⁹

To console the poet in exile, his Mejdada thought that he should be "introduced to young women who could bring the flavor of homeland"⁴⁰ in his life in a foreign country. The ladies educated in English will also help him acquire the language and culture better. Therefore, he was sent to Bombay to live with a family. There the poet first encountered a girl to whom he dedicated his poems as well as wrote poems with

³⁸ Tagore, *Boyhood* 68.

³⁹ Tagore, *Boyhood* 82.

⁴⁰ Tagore, *Boyhood* 84.

her name. Finally, the girl especially urged the poet saying, "You must keep one request of mine. Never grow a beard; let the contours of your countenance never be concealed."⁴¹ But after she passed away, Tagore grew a beard. He ends this part of the book with the beautiful metaphor of guest birds that come to foreign lands for shelter in winter, but suddenly disappear.

Tagore ends the book with a brief portrayal of his life in England. He mentions Mrs. Scott's motherly affection, which made him feel at home. But he did not continue his formal studies even there and left university in three months. He concludes the memoir by writing,

"I went to England, but did not become a barrister. I encountered no experience violent enough to shake the early foundations of my life. I absorbed within myself the fusion of East and West. In my own heart, I discovered the meaning of my name."⁴²

Thus, he ends his recollection of his boyhood days by referring to his name, 'Robi', meaning sun, which does not differ in the East or West and remains the same everywhere, in every age. This claim that he makes about himself proves to be true in his novels *Gora* or *The Home and the World*, where he speaks both for and against Westernization and nationalism.

⁴¹ Tagore, *Boyhood* 85.

⁴² Tagore, *Boyhood* 90.

“To read the translation of a book one knows in the original is also to die a little, and no translation, no matter how good and accurate, can prevent that”⁴³, comments Amartya Sen in the introduction of this translated book. However, reading the translation, I felt, the feel of the book is kept intact and the boyhood days of Rabindranath Tagore really reach the heart of the readers through this translation. And this book also shows the development of Tagore as the artist. The significant memories that he recalls in this memoir have influenced and inspired his writings in many ways. So, in this book, we see the journey of Tagore from his boyhood days and can also see the gradual growth of the artist that we know today.

But the question that strikes us after reading the book is, was this the whole story of the boyhood days of Rabindranath Tagore? And the other question that follows, is his memoir authentic enough? It can be guessed that being an ideal figure of his time, Tagore only describes the parts of his story that he wanted the world to know about him in order to set an ideal. He manipulates his memoirs, deciding what to keep and what to alter or erase altogether. He avoids the unpleasant realizations that are natural during adolescence. The growth of sexuality or ambiguous desires are carefully left out of this memoir. This brings the authenticity of this memoir into question and we are forced to ask, was Tagore’s life so passively positive in reality?

⁴³ Tagore, Rabindranath. *Boyhood Days*. Trans. Radha Chakravarty. New York: Penguin Group, 2008.

Chapter 2:

Finding One's Place while being 'Out of Place'-The Memoir of Edward Said

Edward Said's memoir resembles Joyce's fictional autobiography in many ways. As Joyce analyses all the aspects of his protagonist's growth, Said's internal and external growth as an artist exposes the harshest truths that could bring controversy to his public image. But Said is brave enough to open himself to his readers without altering his perception of reality and showing both his strengths and weaknesses to his readers.

"What I wove and reweave in my mind took place between the trivial surface reality and a deeper level of awareness of another life of beautiful, interrelated parts—parts of ideas, passages of literature and music, history, personal memory, daily observation—nourished not by the "Edward" whose making my family, teachers, and mentors contributed to, but my inner, far less compliant and private self, who could read, think, and even write independent of "Edward." By "complexity" I mean a kind of reflection and self-reflection that had a coherence of its own, despite my inability for some years to articulate this process. It was something private and apart that gave me strength when "Edward" seemed to be failing."⁴⁴

In these lines, the making of Edward Said is described not only as a struggle of construction, but also as a process of deconstruction. In order to become the literary critic and theorist "Edward Said" we know today, the "Edward" that was isolated in

⁴⁴ Said, *Out of Place* 165.

his family framework had to be deconstructed as well as reconstructed in the real world outside his home. Throughout this memoir, this continuous struggle of the artist becomes potent, where a sense of split within the self works in Said's mind. The thoughts and memories of the family keep interrupting Said's intellectual mind. As a result, he feels dislocated both inside the family and out in the public sphere. Therefore, he begins his memoir, with the passage,

"All families invent their parents and children, give each of them a story, character, fate, and even a language. There was always something wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit in with the world of my parents and four sisters. Whether this was because I constantly misread my part or because of some deep flaw in my being I could not tell for most of my early life. Sometimes I was intransigent, and proud of it. At other times I seemed to myself to be nearly devoid of any character at all, timid, uncertain, without will. Yet the overriding sensation I had was of always being out of place. Thus it took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with, "Edward", a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said."⁴⁵

If this is how one begins his memoir, then it can be presumed that the person did not have a very happy childhood. And in these lines, what becomes evident is the emphasis Said puts on the role of the family in shaping a person's life. Throughout *Out of Place: A Memoir*, Said's family proves to be quite strange and not functioning

⁴⁵ Said, *Out of Place* 3.

properly. However, it cannot be called a dysfunctional family either, as it had its unusual rules functioning perfectly in order. Said himself criticizes and comments on the strangeness of his family in several places, such as, when he writes, "Only later did it occur to me that the kind of discipline my parents devised for me meant I was to regard our life and house as somehow the norm and not, as it most certainly was, fantastically isolated and almost experimental."⁴⁶

He felt repressed not only at home, but also outside it. He and his family belonged to the Christian minority in a Muslim country. Making it worse for them was their American citizenship, which worked against them in a British colony like Cairo. So, in every step of life, he was looked at with critical eyes by the people belonging to the dominant groups. From his name to his religion and from his background to accent, everything gave him a feeling of inferiority injected by the people around. In his heart, he always knew that none of the answers he gave would satisfy the queries about his belonging. That is because the point of the teasers was not to get an answer out of him, but to make him feel insecure. Said points out,

"I do not remember that any of the answers I gave out loud to such probings were satisfactory or even memorable. My alternatives were hatched entirely on my own: one might work, say, in school, but not in church or on the street with my friends..."⁴⁷

Gradually, Said adjusted himself to the environment that was almost always unfriendly and alien to him. He was in constant fear of being harassed, interrupted or

⁴⁶ Said, *Out of Place* 38.

⁴⁷ Said, *Out of Place* 6.

corrected by others. And all of these feelings collectively gave rise to an identity in him that was 'out of place' all the way.

Said's relationship with his mother certainly comes across as the strongest bond in his life, surpassing all its flaws. The extremely dominating, omnipresent, manipulative and exploitative influence of his mother became an inevitable part of his life. Said seems to idealize this relationship, putting it beyond any comparison with any other feeling of his till the end of the book. He therefore used to take every remark made by his mother for granted consciously or unconsciously. It used to get injected in his mind and remained with him as reinforcements. The most painful of all the statements she made about him might have been that ""Someday perhaps you will know, may be after I die, but it's very clear to me that you are all a great disappointment.""⁴⁸ Writing this memoir, approaching his last years of life, Said recalls these lines uttered by his mother with sheer regret and wonders if he had been able to satisfy his mother by becoming extremely successful, by the end of her life.

However, the attraction Said felt towards his mother was Oedipal, of which Said himself seems to be aware. In some places he innocently confesses the existence of an incestuous tension between him and his mother. Hence, he writes,

"They were a part of her infinitely maternal atmosphere, which in moments of great stress. I found myself yearning for in the softly uttered phrase, "ya mama", an atmosphere dreamily seductive then

⁴⁸ Said, *Out of Place* 57.

suddenly snatched away, promising something in the end never gives.”⁴⁹

But contradictory to these honest declarations, appear passages of complete denial of his Oedipal leanings. However, the more he tries to deny it, the more it catches our eyes as an unconscious attempt on his part to manipulate the actual condition of their relationship. For example, he describes reading *Hamlet* with his mother, writing,

“Reading *Hamlet* as an affirmation of my status in her eyes, not as someone devalued, which I had become in mine, was one of the great moments in my childhood, we were two voices to each other, two happily allied spirits in language. I knew nothing conscious of the inner dynamics that linked desperate prince and adulterous queen at the play’s interior, nor did I really take in the fury of the scene between them when Polonius is killed and Gertrude is verbally flayed by *Hamlet*. We read together through all that, since what mattered to me was that in a curiously un-Hamlet-like way, I could count on her to be someone more than an exquisitely maternal, protective, and reassuring person...”⁵⁰

This direct comparison shows Hamlet’s relationship with Gertrude and Said’s with his mother, in spite of as contrasts, to be very similar. When he stresses on the ‘un-Hamlet-like’ relationship he shared with his mother, it actually highlights his conscious effort to ignore the ‘Hamlet-like’ ambiguity in it, which he is cautious of.

⁴⁹ Said, *Out of Place* 4.

⁵⁰ Said, *Out of Place* 52.

Being one of the most powerful influences in his life, Said's mother exercised her power over all the other relationships that Said could have possibly made. She not only kept him away from outsiders, but also from his own sisters in a peculiar manner. And this distance between the siblings grew over the years, perhaps just as planned by his mother. Giving vivid details of the prohibitions made between the brother and his sisters, Said says,

"The closed door of Rosy and Jean's room signified the definitive physical as well as emotional gulf that slowly opened between us...The physical distance is still there between us, I feel, perhaps deepened over the years by my mother."⁵¹

Her dominance in the artist's life often reminds us of Lawrence's portrayal of the mother-son relationship in *Sons and Lovers*, where the intense intimacy of that relationship made it too complicated for the son to form other strong relationships with anyone else. Said confesses his realization of her power of involving others in her obsessive bond by writing, "There was a kind of demonic possessiveness and, at the same time, an infinitely modulated responsiveness...confidential and reassuring of fugitive *sotto voces*."⁵²

Said's life was so much under the surveillance of his mother that he could not even revolt against it properly. The only attempt he makes to speak for his freedom is

⁵¹ Said, *Out of Place* 58-59.

⁵² Said, *Out of Place* 60.

perhaps when his mother walks in through the half-opened door of the bathroom of her naked adolescent son:

“For a second she didn’t close the door, but stood there surveying her naked son as he hastily dried himself with a small towel. “Please leave,” I said testily, “and stop trying to catch up where you left off.” This injunction carried the day, since she burst out laughing, quickly closed the door, and walked briskly away. Had she ever really left off?”⁵³

Thus, Said’s effort to protest against her omnipresence in his everyday life was laughed off by his mother. Ironically, she also laughed off the possibility of leaving her son alone ever. Under such strict observation and continuous comments made by his parents, Said started to view himself through his parents’ eyes. He did not have confidence in himself and was uncomfortable with his physical attributes. He came to know himself through descriptions of his parents as he mentions,

“From her I learned that at the age of one and a half the former Edward had memorized thirty-eight songs and nursery rhymes, which he could sing and recite perfectly...Or that his ability to read simple prose was quite developed by the age of two and a half or three...I recalled none of this myself, but my mother’s frequent rehearsal of it plus a couple of photo albums from those years...supported the claim.”⁵⁴

⁵³ Said, *Out of Place* 61.

⁵⁴Said, *Out of Place* 28.

As another tool for her dominance over her son's life, she tried to determine Said's relationships with others and interpret them in the way she wanted. Throughout his life, Said heard from his mother, the thoughts of his father about him, which his father never actually expressed to him. But his mother used to try convincing him that his father was very different from what he appeared to be. Said writes,

"It was as if he were a marble statue and it was her job to put words into his mouth to make him articulate and fluent; she spoke my father to me, miming all the sentiments he never expressed, drawing him out so much that he became a loving, caring man so very different from the harshly unyielding person whose authority over me was practices almost to his death."⁵⁵

But Said's experiences with his father never reflected what his mother used to say. The relationship between him and his father was always full of tensions and miscommunications or deprived of communication altogether. Said often failed to find any emotion in his father or any intimate connection between them. He recalls a very disappointing incident, where while walking behind his father, he stumbled and fell. But when he cried out his father's name for help, he only looked back for a moment and then carried on walking. This makes Said wonder if his father really had any deep emotion for his son.

Trying to trace his origins, Said never succeeded. He always got fragmented stories from his family about their backgrounds that were often contradictory and confusing.

⁵⁵ Said, *Out of Place* 79.

It took him a long time to gather all those stories and combine them to complete the picture, of which some parts are still missing because of lack of information provided to him. So, about his father's part of the story, he recalls how certain aspects of his stories were always highlighted as his heroic achievements. He used to take pride in his victories. Thus, in this selected story of his father about himself amazes Said till date. The overall faith and trust that he had in his father came into question right after his death when no official document was found to prove that his father was ever a part of a military campaign.

Said's father was not only to be blamed for breaking his son's trust, but for using his signature in an illegal deed of business. This fraudulent act led Said to fifteen years of exile, for which his father did not even feel guilty. But there, too, Said consoles himself thinking that there must have been any mistake and what his father led him to was not done consciously. Even though he gets no compensation for all his lost years in trying to fulfill the dreams of his parents and to prove himself worthy of their pride, he loves them unconditionally. He admits his inability to judge them as well as to forgive them altogether for all the sufferings they caused to his existence. Thus, he admits that he does not hate his parents for their suffocating dominance over him. He has forgiven them as time has healed many of his pains. But he cannot completely ignore the complexes that remain in him because of them. He writes,

"What I cannot completely forgive, though, is that the contest over my body, and his administering of reforms and physical punishment, instilled a deep sense of generalized fear in me, which I have spent most of my life trying to overcome. I still sometimes think of myself as

a coward, with some gigantic lurking disaster waiting to overtake me
for sins I have committed and will soon be punished for.”⁵⁶

Thus, within the boundaries of his home, Said was constantly demoralized and demotivated by his parents in whatever he used to do. Hence, a sense of dislocation and repression started to form in him since his early days. It was as if a process of colonialism was going on in his own house, where he was always gazed at, by the ‘centre’, which comprised of his parents and he was the silenced ‘other’ that never got to express his individual feelings and thoughts. His voice was always repressed and he was always placed in a state of subordination. Hence, the origins of Said’s resistant voice can be seen. He could easily compare his personal situation with the national sufferings later on. Just as he was under the constant surveillance and dominance of his parents, his nation, along with some others, was being supervised and exploited by the colonial powers.

The imprisonment in his home was so suffocating that he wanted to get out of it. If real incidents could not let him flee, his mind used to escape from his omniscient house and family. Not only was he forbidden to go to other people’s houses, but very few people had access to their house. As a result, one of his favorite pastimes became to imagine other people’s houses, and thus entering the zones of socializing that were forbidden for him.

The exploring mind of the artist was not to be tamed by the limited world that was presented to him. He used to look around and afar to gather knowledge of the

⁵⁶ Said, *Out of Place* 70.

unknown, observing ordinary things and events and interpreting them in his own way.

He writes,

“I always looked around doors that were ajar; I read books to find out what propriety kept hidden from me; I peered into drawers, cupboards, bookshelves, envelopes, scraps of paper, to glean from them what I could about characters whose sinful wantonness corresponded to my desires.”⁵⁷

His extraordinary nature led him to take a closer look at everything that went around him and to make an extra effort to read between the lines. This prying and curious nature must have led to the emergence of the literary critic, Edward Said.

In the process, he kept reading books that were not of his level. His curiosity and habit of reading were so overpowering that he used to read even pamphlet or notepads of others to gain knowledge from quite an early age. Thus, gradually, through his exposure to different texts coming from different authors belonging to various backgrounds, cultures and mindsets, he grew to be a critical reader. He could break through the narrow view of the world that was being projected to him by his family. His knowledge of the world and life developed; the horizons of his outlook were widened.

And through this curious exploration of the surroundings and circumstances, the artist comes across two resources of imagination that released his creative thoughts take a

⁵⁷ Said, *Out of Place* 31.

flight. He writes about books and films being his two best companions, whose boundaries he could expand. About the books, he writes, "It opened an entire world to me...they were my friends and partners, parents, cousins, uncles, and mentors..."⁵⁸

Said's fascination for books keeps recurring in his memoir. He found them to be the companions in his solitude. They were his source of connection to the outside world that always attracted him. He had fantasies of various kinds concerning books. For example, he writes,

"One of my recurrent fantasies, the subject of a school essay I wrote when I was twelve, was to be a book, whose fate I took to be happily free of unwelcome changes, distortions of its shape, criticism of its looks, print for me was made up of a rare combination of expression in its style and contents, absolute rigidity, and integrity in its looks. Passed from hand to hand, place to place, time to time, I could remain my own true self (as a book), despite being thrown out of a car and lost in a back drawer."⁵⁹

Thus, we see, how Said's mind was attracted to forms of expression that would allow his fantasies to grow in proportion. Books not only interested him, but also became the sole companion in his solitude. Even though he was not allowed to read most books, yet he used to break through his parents' restricted terrain whenever he could, to read books that were kept away from him. Thus, he recalls how he started to think through these books, which offered him a pleasure that nothing else could. He also

⁵⁸ Said, *Out of Place* 33.

⁵⁹ Said, *Out of Place* 76.

began to get involved into music and started his journey towards a musical identity. But he mentions over and over again, how he hated to be interrupted by formal lessons of music, which he found to be demoralizing and unnecessary.

Here, we find Said to be very similar to Tagore, where both their interest for music was interrupted by the supervised teaching process. Just like Tagore, Said loved music and felt connected with it, but hated if others tried to facilitate his musical journeys. Later in the book, therefore, adding other excuses to it he asserts, “When it came to music, my interest in a professional career diminished as I found myself intellectually unsatisfied by the physical requirement of daily practice and very occasional performance.”⁶⁰

In a way, we can claim that Said inherited the creative mind from his parents. His first exposure to Shakespeare and Operatic music was through his mother. They used to read books together and try to interpret them through creative interpretations. She also encouraged him in learning music and secretly supported his habit of reading books. But his father’s creativity of using language comes across in an extremely unexpected situation. He explains the phenomenon of ‘wet-dreams’ to Said in an ornamental language of the metaphor of the filling up of an overflowing cup.

Said was kept so isolated from the outside world and people that he never came in contact with any girls outside his family. The extreme isolation resulted into his ‘desire for the unknown’. His first infatuation or rather admiration for a classmate is romanticized and idolized. He was amazed by this girl’s performance in the school

⁶⁰ Said, *Out of Place* 291.

play and how she shifted from being an ordinary girl to the princess in the play and her ability of maintaining the two roles simultaneously. But the Platonic element in this love is emphasized as he did not have exposure to the meaning of desire till then. He confesses, "I felt no defined sexual attraction since I simply had no conception of what sex was..."⁶¹

This familial sexual repression resulted in a fear-desire dilemma in Said. He confesses searching for sexual elements in every material that was accessible to him. He used to look for sexual pleasure reading books or watching musicals with pornographic elements. He recalls how the memoirs of Wilfred de Saint-Mandé with great details of sexual intercourse became silent and secret companions of his adolescence.

But none of these could satisfy the deprived soul of the adolescent Said. He then took the pen in his own hand to write pornographic pieces, shaping them with his own sexual fantasies of older women or of other such prohibited relationships. It is surprising to find out that the first creative pieces that Edward Said produced were erotic pieces. He then gradually started to write other pieces of poetry, articles or critical analyses, during his leisure hours in his father's office, where he was sent forcefully. He mentions reading Freud, Nietzsche or many other influential writers who played a great role in the shaping of the renowned Said of later times.

Said's family always tried to keep its members away from all the political tensions that their country was undergoing. Perhaps his parents did not want their children to participate in these discourses, which could have harmed their innocent minds. But

⁶¹ Said, *Out of Place* 48.

Said, who was so integrated in his surroundings and observant of the happenings, could not be separated from the fragments of references that were being made by the outsiders or even his father. But the explicit experiences of being dislocated accompanied the young Said from a very early stage in his life. They had to shift from one country to another, one city to the other on a regular basis. Cairo, Jerusalem, Dhour, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, all these names of places were so frequently referred to as 'home' for him that he almost lost the perception of distinction between countries, cities or homeland. And the transitions were never smooth and simple. Instead, they were full of disappointments and dissatisfactions that could not be kept hidden from the faces of his parents. Said recalls,

"I vividly remember the haggard, weary expression on my father's face as he assented to this lopsided arrangement, and so we proceeded silently through the night...to endure the pressure of his little family inside the car, and outside the Egyptian Jewish businessman, convinced that he was running for his life, constantly bearing down upon us."⁶²

Said's simple mind failed to understand the underlying politics between the places they lived in. Only Jerusalem seemed quieter and cooler to him because of lacking the tensions of a mixed population of different religions and British troops. The overall image of Jerusalem changed for him within a very short span of time. The simple, small and calm place turned into a battleground with perhaps more British people in the view than the Arabs.

⁶² Said, *Out of Place* 25.

In this tone, Said is found to be very similar to Forster's while writing *A Passage to India*, where he writes about the vast change in the scenario of the colonized India that actively became a colonial India within the gap of a few years only. Similar was the case for Cairo, which had been colonized to the core in such a way that all its features were turned British. This huge difference between the two cities gave rise to many unanswered questions in the young mind of Said. He was observant of the deteriorating lives of the Palestinians, but unable to interpret their miseries and their underlying meanings. He regrets not being able to be empathetic to the Palestinians, when they were going through the toughest situations of their lives. They were helpless, homeless and directionless; but Said could not even comprehend their pain.

What he encountered closely in Jerusalem was the existence of the 'orthodox Jews' in the society. They were always separated from the general people, which Said observed closely. He used to watch a Jewish boy in school, who used to stay away from everyone else, with a sense of dislocation similar, yet very different to Said's. He never spoke to him, but always felt a connection with this repressed boy, whose story he wanted to be a part of. But returning to Cairo, he lost the contact of that boy that remained a closed book to him. He recounts his separation from that boy, with whom, he shared a bond of being 'out of place'.

Said never felt happy being a Christian in the Muslim Arab world, not just because he was 'out of place', but also because he could never relate to the religion. He refers to the church or the missionaries with utter disgust. The only explicit comment he makes about the church is in the line, "...the church, which I really disliked for its somber

and incomprehensible services..."⁶³ Obviously, the postcolonial theorist unconsciously received the knowledge of the civilizing mission underlying the church activities, which he refused to incorporate in himself.

The making of the critic of colonialism, was in process since very early days of Said's life. He recalls his encounter with the headmaster of his school, who was an English poet, as he later found out. He whipped him brutally, while Said had to keep standing there as if surrendering his whole existence to the colonial authority. He also remembers how hurt he was the first time he was called an outsider in his own country by Mr. Pilley. He called out to Said in the club and told him that he did not belong to that club. Being an Arab, he was not supposed to be there, no matter what license he holds.

Then he mentions the school that treated English, Muslim Arabs and other students differently. The 'Orientalist' views of the colonizers can be traced back to these experiences that shaped the main ideas of his revolutionary book, *Orientalism*. He recounts the experience as, "The school was not interesting as a place of learning but it gave me my first extended contact with colonial authority in the sheer Englishness of its teachers and many of its students."⁶⁴

Crude racism in the texts as well as in the academic setting is explicit when he mentions the presence of "...a large black woman housekeeper with an extremely exaggerated expression of either sadness or delight on her face"⁶⁵ in every textbook they studied in Victoria College, which is an embodiment of the British education

⁶³ Said, *Out of Place* 112.

⁶⁴ Said, *Out of Place* 42.

⁶⁵ Said, *Out of Place* 84.

system. The portrayal of perfect family households in these books also gave rise to a sense of peculiarity in him for not belonging to one of them. He sensed a split within his identity and an alienation from the surroundings. He admits, "Daily at school I felt the disparity between my life as "Edward," a false, even ideological, identity, and my home life, where my father's prosperity as an American businessman flourished after the war."⁶⁶

Issues of inequality and difference kept triggering questions in the mind of this postcolonial theorist. The obvious 'Orientalism' that he had to face in every aspect of his life relates directly to the shaping of *Orientalism* or *Culture and Imperialism* later on. Their visit to the United States opened up a new awareness of racial difference and the sense of inferiority arising out of racist discrimination. Said failed to understand it then, but later knew that it was only an extended version of the alienation that he had felt in his own country. At least, being 'othered' in a foreign land was preferable than to be 'othered' in his birthplace.

All these experiences gave rise to different realizations in him and he was caught in a complex position, where he could not locate his existence in any certain place. He could not articulate his grief, nor could he revolt against these circumstances due to lack of proper knowledge and concepts about power, colonialism, racism or even other forms of repression. But the complexities were visibly present in his thoughts from his adolescent days, as he mentions in these lines:

⁶⁶ Said, *Out of Place* 90.

“Such relatively modest, even imperceptible breaks in the dullness and enforced monotony of our “relaxation” in Dhour provided me with a gradually emerging sense of complexity, complexity for its own sake, unresolved, unreconciled, perhaps fully unassimilated.”⁶⁷

But as the writer grew, his cognition developed, as well as his knowledge increased. All the complexities of his mind started to gain names of their own. He could relate his conditions to other forms of repression, exploitation and alienation. The extended readings led to different combinations of experiences and epiphanies. He recalls with great detail,

“The sense of complexity beyond Dhour’s appalling limitations continued to grow in me after my departure to the United States in 1951; but the seeds had been planted paradoxically at a time of my greatest deprivation...I was aware of myself making connections between disparate books and ideas with considerable ease, wondering about, for example, the role of the great city in Dostoevsky and Balzac, drawing analogies between various characters (money lenders, criminals, students) that I encountered in books that I liked and comparing them with individuals I had met or known about in Dhour or Cairo. My greatest gift was memory, which allowed me to recall visually whole passages in books, to see them again on the page and

⁶⁷ Said, *Out of Place* 164.

then to manipulate scenes, characters, giving them an imaginary life beyond the pages of the book.”⁶⁸

In the U.S.A., the discussions with other intellectuals broadened his outlook as he started to think beyond “passionate loyalty to tribe, sect, and country”⁶⁹ He gained the vocabulary and conceptual tools that could rationalize all his feelings of alienation, repression and subordination. Gradually, he started to live a more transparent individual life there and came to be known as ‘Said’, who was a public figure. But what hid beneath this identity was ‘Edward’, whose split inner self used to suffer from the insecurities his memories and alienation had injected in him.

Thus, Said’s life in the United States gradually became to symbolize, what is called hybridity in postcolonial studies today. He became habituated to his conflicting identities of mixed nationalities, along with his sense of ‘belonging nowhere’ in particular. He started to acknowledge that his source of strength perhaps came from his sense of alienation and disillusionment. So, he could mold himself to the ways of life of the States, which he admits as,

“My years in the United States were slowly weaning me away from Cairo habits—of thought, behavior, speech, and relationships...my speaking and thinking were undergoing a radical change that took me far beyond the comfortable certainties of Cairo life.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Said, *Out of Place* 165.

⁶⁹ Said, *Out of Place* 280.

⁷⁰ Said, *Out of Place* 275.

Thus, he came to calmly decide that he was going to live in the United States forever. And through different processes of reconstruction, he stopped searching for his sole individual identity, acknowledging the possibility of having multiple identities. The private and public spheres of his life merged into a coherent 'Edward Said', who was able to establish his own position in the world. He realizes,

"My search for freedom, for the self beneath or obscured by "Edward," could only have begun because of that rupture, so I have come to think of it as fortunate, despite the loneliness and unhappiness I experienced for so long. Now it does not seem important or even desirable to be "right" and in place (right at home, for instance). Better to wander out of place, not to own a house, and not ever to feel too much at home anywhere, especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die."⁷¹

Therefore, through reinventing his identity and potentials as a hybrid subject in the postcolonial world, effective and successful, Edward Said stopped regretting his past life, full of terror, disappointment and domination. He faced his real self and combined his personal feelings with his studies, to become one of the most inspiring critical analysts of literature and especially in postcolonial studies. The haunting question, "Could "Edward's" position ever be anything but out of place?"⁷² stopped chasing him. Edward Said became content with his life, with all its ups and downs taken for granted as his part of becoming what he is known for today. Thus, he ends his memoir with a positive note of celebrating his life and uniqueness as he writes,

⁷¹ Said, *Out of Place* 294.

⁷² Said, *Out of Place* 19.

“That skepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place.”⁷³

⁷³ Said, *Out of Place* 295.

Chapter 3: One with the City: Pamuk's Istanbul

While Said finds satisfaction in his being 'out of place', the writer we look at in this chapter finds his place of birth and being brought up in to be inseparable from his existence. Orhan Pamuk cannot think of his artistic development without the influences of his city or country in his memoir of the city. He writes,

"From a very young age, I suspected there was more to my world than I could see somewhere in the streets of Istanbul, in a house resembling ours, there lived another Orhan so much like me that he could pass for my twin, even my double."⁷⁴

Pamuk begins his journey of self-discovery in his memoir, *Istanbul Memories of a City* (2005) through these lines. Throughout this memoir, we find the artist searching for his identity, in the streets of Istanbul, in other houses or in various circumstances vastly different from one another. But what he discovers during this journey is that his identity is inevitably rooted in his city, Istanbul, and fails to separate himself from the city's history, environment and 'communal ideology', as he calls it. Pamuk finds himself to be one with the city in which he was born. This book is, he claims, about fate- and the fate is not his alone; it is about an intermingled fate of the artist, Orhan Pamuk, and his city of memories, Istanbul. He therefore asserts,

⁷⁴ Pamuk *Istanbul* 3.

“Mostly I am disinclined to complain: I’ve accepted the city into which I was born in the same way I’ve accepted my body...This is my fate, and there’s no sense arguing with it. This book is about fate...”⁷⁵

As the smallest unit of the city, or perhaps the community, Pamuk’s home or family is described in great details in the memoir. The melancholy through which he suffers all through the book is formed during his childhood, at home. His family was never the ideal kind, nor was it able to secure the sense of belongingness in its members. It was a broken family that was trying and retrying to function as a unified whole. However, it failed to survive and left a disappointing impression on the young Pamuk. Highlighting the deceptive concept of the perfect ‘family’ and its nonexistence in reality, he writes, “For me, the thing called family was a group of people who, out of a wish to be loved and feel peaceful, relaxed and secure, agreed to silence for a while each day the djinns and devils inside them and act as if they were happy.”⁷⁶

The imaginary Orhan he mentions at the beginning of the book keeps re-entering his stories in the memoir. That Orhan became a silent companion in his solitude, an internal resistant voice and an embodiment of whatever the real Orhan could not become in his life. At the same time, the other Orhan was deprived of whatever he considered to be worthy in his life. Therefore, the picture that reminded him of that Orhan also reminded him of his home and family, of which the other Orhan was not a part. He admits,

⁷⁵ Pamuk *Istanbul* 7.

⁷⁶ Pamuk *Istanbul* 248.

“Every time my aunt and uncle teased me about being the boy in the picture I felt my mind unraveling my ideas about myself, my house, my picture and the picture I resembled, the boy who looked liked me, and the other house would slide about in a confusion that made me long all the more to be at home again, surrounded by my family.”⁷⁷

Pamuk’s relationship with his mother proves to be very strong till the end of the book. Even though she often abandoned her two sons often in their childhood days, she remains beside the adult Pamuk in his days of insecurity and procrastination. Or perhaps, it can be said that in such days, Pamuk wanted his mother to stay beside him, for which he could not leave his home and city. His mother’s advice about his career and life are recalled over and over again in the memoir. For example, he mentions, “I’ve never left Istanbul—never left the houses, streets and neighbourhoods of my childhood...”⁷⁸ He knows that in this age of massive migrations and globalization, travelling and going out of one’s comfort zone is necessary. But he confesses his inability to leave Istanbul.

His relationship with his mother has developed during the years. The recollection of his mother’s presence in his life comes across as purely Oedipal. Pamuk honestly confesses the tremendous attraction he used to feel towards his mother. He writes, “I could see her nightgown as well as her beautiful skin, and I could see her beautiful neck and I’d want to climb onto her lap and nestle up to her, get closer to that beautiful triangle between her hair, her neck, her breasts.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Pamuk *Istanbul* 4.

⁷⁸ Pamuk *Istanbul* 5.

⁷⁹ Pamuk *Istanbul* 69.

A very similar description of his beloved's neck is given in the chapter titled 'First Love'. It shows that Pamuk did not make an effort to hide his feelings for his mother. He mentions his rivalry with his brother that arose as a competition for their mother. He also says that the frequent absences of his father in the family made the competition easier for the brothers. He admits, "...my rivalry with my brother took on the significance it did: he was the rival for my mother's love. As we of course knew nothing of psychology, the war with my brother was initially dressed up as a game..."⁸⁰

Also, his recollection of the first feelings of getting aroused at a very early age is linked to his mother's words. He remembers how he used to get excited hearing the words that his mother used to utter to him passionately. Later, these words would arouse sexual desire in him, uttered in any situation, by even himself. Hence, he recalls, "It happens that these were the words that made the greatest impression on me in the stories my mother told me: 'I am going to eat you!,' which I understood to mean not merely to devour but to annihilate."⁸¹

Contrasted to this passionate relationship with his mother was the casual and light relationship he shared with his father. His father was a light-hearted person, who found the meaning of life to be in pleasure and enjoyment. But the common motto of getting pleasure of the young Pamuk and his father somehow got destroyed, when the young Pamuk was caught in an act similar to masturbation by his father. The child did not know what he was doing, other than the fact that his game with the bear gave him pleasure. He describes the scene, when his father walks into his room and silently

⁸⁰ Pamuk *Istanbul* 16.

⁸¹ Pamuk *Istanbul* 17.

goes away seeing what his son was up to. And a distance developed between the father and the son, as the father did not find his son that innocent perhaps. There was a fear and respect in his look, which made Pamuk realize that what he was doing was not a proper way of getting pleasure.

Thus, the idea of pleasure was blurred for the young artist as he came to know the distinction between innocent pleasures and forbidden acts. This incident somehow strengthened his relationship with his father, as he felt later on. He claimed that the only person who had an idea of Pamuk's imaginary world was perhaps his dad. As his father kept the child's secret and did not make an issue out of his son's exposure to sexual pleasure at a very early stage of life, Pamuk developed a trust in his father. Here we find a direct contrast between Said's father, who was overly strict and Pamuk's, who was unexpectedly laid-back.

Again, what developed into a very strong bond in Pamuk's life was his relationship with his brother. Even though they used to fight a lot when they were very young, they suffered through similar circumstances and had grown together surviving them. So, it was very difficult for Pamuk to go away from his brother, who was his companion in games, festivals and sufferings. At one point, he mentions his relationship to his brother to be even stronger than that with his mother.

He was not only attached to his family members, but also to his place of birth-the 'Pamuk Apartments'. This gives rise to the question, why was he so attached to the place and the house? As an answer, he asserts,

“Then as now, home served as a centre for the world in my mind—as an escape, in both the positive and negative sense of the word. Instead of learning to face my troubles squarely, whether awareness of my parent’s quarrels, my father’s bankruptcies, my family’s never-ending property squabbles, or our dwindling fortune, I amused myself with mental games in which I changed the focus, deceived myself, forgot altogether what had been troubling me or wrapped myself in a mysterious haze.”⁸²

However, all the shifts that the young writer had to face because of his parents’ separations in his childhood, gave rise to a fear in him. He was scared of losing everyone close to him as well as everything that he thought to be his own. It was similar to the game he used to play with the mirror in his mother’s dressing-table. This game was perhaps an outcome of the fear of the tender mind, which he names as the “disappearing game”⁸³. He started to believe that all the people close to him would leave one after another.

As an antidote to this fear, Pamuk developed a habit of fantasizing his existence in another world, not at all related to his reality. He keeps referring to his game of the ‘second world’ that could let him escape from any situation, like a fight between his parents and so on. His world of fantasies showed him hopes and possibilities that the real world had deprived him of. He writes, “...if I was from time to time a refugee in the second world, it was not because I was unhappy...”⁸⁴ He refuses to call his escapism a result of tensions in his real life. He rather sees it as a creative adventure, a

⁸² Pamuk *Istanbul* 79.

⁸³ Pamuk *Istanbul* 70.

⁸⁴ Pamuk *Istanbul* 21.

talent, which he thought was uniquely bestowed upon him. Later, he was disappointed to discover that this was not his unique talent, but a common habit of human beings in general, known as 'daydreaming'.

Pamuk justifies his wandering mind to be a result of being stuck at home. As a child, he was not allowed to go out of the house very often. As a reaction, his rebellious mind used to travel to other destinations. He also complains about being unable to see nature, because of the urban location of their apartment and its suffocating surroundings. He blames the setting, as he describes, "...when looking out of the window, I hated seeing nothing of the building next door, nothing of the street below, and only the narrowest strip of sky; at the smelly butcher shop across from us..."⁸⁵

Hence, the split Pamuk found himself to be dwelling in two worlds at the same time. He was leading one life in his fantasies and the other in reality. And he assures that he was living two lives simultaneously and "...that second life is none other than the book in your hand."⁸⁶ Thus, he ensures us that his memoir is giving reality to his imagination.

Trying to dig into the root of his melancholy, Pamuk finds the need to observe his life from a distance, as a distant observer. Otherwise, he would not have been able to locate his problems objectively. Therefore, he writes,

"I'd have liked to write my entire story this way—as if my life were something that happened to someone else, as if it were a dream in

⁸⁵ Pamuk *Istanbul* 22.

⁸⁶ Pamuk *Istanbul* 8.

which I felt my voice fading and my will succumbing to enchantment.”⁸⁷

In this process, he finds the city itself to be the cause of his ever increasing melancholy. He figures out that not only is he in melancholy, but his whole community suffers from the same feeling of depression. All of them echo the destruction of the city that has taken place over the years. They have internalized this devastation in their own lives and their lives cannot be separated from this pain of loss. Pamuk says, “Still, the melancholy of this dying culture was all around us. Great as the desire to Westernise and modernise may have been the more desperate wish, it seemed, was to be rid of all the bitter memories of the fallen empire...”⁸⁸

It was as if the whole city was running away from their own pasts by getting engaged in different activities. But the melancholy of the city would remain with them as their shadows. Pamuk also refers to an established term for this ‘communal feeling of melancholy’. He not only identifies this characteristic of the Istanbul as *hüzün*, but also tries to glorify it. He writes, “If *hüzün* has been central to Istanbul culture, poetry and everyday life over the past two centuries, if it dominates our music, it must be at least partly because we see it as an honour.”⁸⁹

Then, Pamuk recognizes himself as not an individual, but as a part of a larger community that was undergoing the same conflicts in their lives that he was going through. This alignment with the rest of the people of his city gave him a sense of belonging in a community, which his family failed to provide him. Thus, he asserts,

⁸⁷ Pamuk *Istanbul* 8.

⁸⁸ Pamuk *Istanbul* 27.

⁸⁹ Pamuk *Istanbul* 81.

“What I am trying to explain is the *hüzün* of an entire city, of Istanbul.”⁹⁰ He also announces with get pride that this melancholy the city evokes in them is something its people choose to incorporate in their lives.

In these statements, this celebration of *hüzün* appears to be a lot like Negritude or what Walcott and Gikandi try to develop as a new Caribbean identity. It is almost a strategic mechanism, to look at a culture’s marked ‘weakness’ as its biggest strength to overcome the odds this characteristic of theirs bring along. Being constantly reminded of their race, the Africans came up with the concept of Negritude, where their skin color is considered to be their strength, ideologically identified to be their weakness by the whites. The characteristics that the whites found to be inferior are celebrated as traits of being superior in Negritude just as Pamuk is celebrating the melancholy of the *Istanbullus*. Again, Walcott and Gikandi talk about establishing new identities for the people of the Caribbean islands, whose histories are removed by British colonialism. They assert that they have to start from scratch to build a new image of their land and people, in the eyes of the world. But for Istanbul, the task is twice as difficult as they need to erase the pre-existing history to reconstruct a new history.

Pamuk, then, refers to a dilemma, which the *Istanbullus* face in order to combine their *hüzün* with the Western concept of rationalism. He feels that people who try to get beyond this communal identity and to become global, get stuck in-between. He confesses how the image of Istanbul he presents in the book is a constructed image and a few other writers of Istanbul. He believes that the writers of the early twentieth

⁹⁰ Pamuk *Istanbul* 83.

century contributed in constructing the image of Istanbul. Thus, he highlights the four influential Turkish writers, whose works as well as their lives were so melancholic, that they got attached to the image of Istanbul itself. He finds "The memoirist Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, the poet Yahya Kemal, the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, and the journalist-historian Reşat Ekrem Koçu-all the four melancholic writers..."⁹¹ to be partly responsible for their representation of Istanbul that attached to it the sense of extreme melancholy, which the Istanbulis started to internalize and take for granted.

Again, Pamuk romanticizes the lost empire of Istanbul, of which only ruins remained. But he finds it hard to accept the fact that his city will never regain its lost status. He says, "The city into which I was born was poorer, shabbier, and more isolated than it had ever been in its two-thousand-year history. For me it has always been a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy."⁹²

Istanbul's history was being substituted by the grasp of Westernization. He admits that he was struggling through a constant dilemma and was stuck in-between the notions of modernism and nationalism between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. Sometimes he wanted Istanbul to be completely Western and sometimes he longed for the old Istanbul that he loved by instinct.

He recalls the educational system that was playing an active role in the Americanization of Istanbul. Meanwhile, a timid anti-Americanism took on a leftist mood in the youth, not being able to express their resistance properly. This lack of a firm direction makes him weary and sometimes angry. He feels as if giving in to the

⁹¹ Pamuk *Istanbul* 103.

⁹² Pamuk *Istanbul* 6.

modernity was to betray his city, which he sees as his extended self. So, letting his city become modern meant the corruption of his self. He states, "...the anger brewing up inside me makes me hate the city as much as I hate myself..."⁹³

He realizes that 'to be unhappy is to hate oneself and ones city', as he entitles a chapter in his memoir:

"Sometimes one's city can look like an alien place...With its muddy parks and desolate open spaces, its electricity poles and the billboards plastered over its squares and its concrete monstrosities, this city, like my soul, is fast becoming an empty—a very empty—place."⁹⁴

What crushes the artist is a sense of alienation. He feels out of place in the very city that he thought was his main element. It shocks him to think,

"I've never wholly belonged to this city, and may be that's been the problem all along...the idea rises up inside me that I'm worthless and belong nowhere, that I must distance myself from these people and go hide in a corner..."⁹⁵

This isolating fear was present in himself since his childhood, which he failed to recognize. His escape to the imaginary world and ignoring the crisis of his real life ensured that he was not at ease with his existence. Therefore, he wrote about his early adventures: "My talent for prettifying my life with soothing illusions served me well

⁹³ Pamuk *Istanbul* 287.

⁹⁴ Pamuk *Istanbul* 286.

⁹⁵ Pamuk *Istanbul* 289.

in this house where I was not taken seriously and did not feel I belonged..."⁹⁶ But facing this cruel fact was tougher for the adult writer, who felt so intimate with his city that he could hardly think of his identity without his city. Conrad, Nabokov and Naipaul are writers, whose identities were fluid just as their languages and cultures due to migration, and who would move between languages and cultures. Pamuk, even while admiring their facility, admits his inability to emerge out of the boundaries of Istanbul, where he is rooted entirely. He regrets not being able to free himself from the shadow of his city by writing, "Istanbul's fate is my fate: I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am."⁹⁷

This overwhelming sense of belonging to his city, while at the same time, feeling alien in his familiar setting forced him to look at things differently than before. The familiarity of the scenes disappeared and was altered by a haunting fear of deception. The unified identity of the writer and his city seems artificial when he says,

"I sensed that what had plunged me into this wretched state was Istanbul itself. Not just the Bosphorus, the ships, the all-too-familiar nights, lights and crowds, of that I was sure: there was something else that bound its people together, smoothing their way to communicate, do business, live together, and I was simply out of harmony with it."⁹⁸

Thus, the very thought of separation from either the city or its identity made the writer feel completely out of place. Here, he resembles Said, who felt out of place in every aspect of his life. But for Pamuk, the alienation he feels in the city, which he found

⁹⁶ Pamuk *Istanbul* 75.

⁹⁷ Pamuk *Istanbul* 6.

⁹⁸ Pamuk *Istanbul* 290.

himself to be an essential part of, made him feel detached from every other aspect of his life. To him, "misery meant feeling out of place, in one's home, one's family and one's city."⁹⁹

Hence, perhaps, to feel comfortable and worthy, he throws away the thought of separation and decline of his city as it questioned his own existence. He consoles himself by assuring, "...I love my city not for any purity but precisely for the lamentable want of it..."¹⁰⁰

However, it was still hard for the artist to hide from reality and to cheat himself. Therefore, he invented new tools for escaping the emptiness he felt to be grasping him. One of his primary attempts of leaving the real world behind as has already been mentioned was his world of fantasies. Another act of breaking away from his isolation became masturbation. His hollow room became his companion and masturbation the flight to feeling better. But masturbating alone could not be the solution for the writer's melancholy and loneliness. He turned to art and painting at this point. His paintings could portray his unfulfilled wishes, his ambitions and dreams. They could also embody the artist's innermost emotions, which he could not express to others.

He also painted as performing a duty to portray his city and landscape to the world in the way he wanted to. His paintings could give Istanbul a new image just as the melancholy writers' writings gave it its melancholic representation. He could combine the beauties and flaws of his city in his paintings and bring a new life to it.

⁹⁹ Pamuk *Istanbul* 289.

¹⁰⁰ Pamuk *Istanbul* 288.

The traces of becoming a writer were prominent in Pamuk from his childhood. He used to love reading books and they could give pleasure to his restless mind. He regrets not knowing his uncle, who was a writer himself. So, we see that the young Pamuk was involved in reading, which gradually led him to becoming a writer himself. It cannot be determined clearly, since when he started to write, but it seems as if it started after his beloved left him and his passion for painting had disappeared. He found his ambition of becoming a painter to be responsible for losing his love. But his father was also a writer at times, which could have inspired him as well. Moreover, when the artist was doubtful about his future and could not decide whether he wanted to become a painter or a writer, his father's words influenced and encouraged him greatly. Although the society was giving him negative impressions about the future of an artist, his father gave an elevated hope to his son.

It was evident that Pamuk was not prepared to become anything but an artist. No other task suited him as he says, "Wherever I was the performer and not the spectator, I could not feel at home."¹⁰¹ Alongside, he also writes with utter sarcasm that "these are the words of a fifty-year-old writer who is trying to shape the chaotic thoughts of a long-ago adolescent into an amusing story."¹⁰² Here he hints at the possibility of the artist's mind to justify the path of life he chose for himself to be the only successful one possible. Thus, he brings into question, the credibility of his own thoughts.

Thus, through all these fragmented stories of his life, Pamuk presents to us the development of the writer, Orhan Pamuk. As is mentioned earlier, he called this memoir to be a story of fate. Therefore, he concludes his memoir accordingly by

¹⁰¹ Pamuk *Istanbul* 290.

¹⁰² Pamuk *Istanbul* 290-91.

showing that it was his fate to become a writer and his fate was intermingled with the fate of Istanbul which made him the person he became. His concluding passage shows Istanbul and the writer standing in tandem once again to live their combined fate. He writes,

“The streets of Beyoğlu, their dark corners, my desire to run away, my guilt—they were all blinking on and off like neon lights in my head....in a few minutes I would open the door and escape into the city’s consoling streets; and having walked away half the night, I’d return home and sit down at my table and capture their chemistry on paper. ‘I don’t want to be an artist,’ I said. ‘I’m going to be a writer.’”¹⁰³

However, he is not the only writer, whose memoir focuses on the influence of his city in the development of his artistic development. Shamsur Rahman, in his autobiography of the city, *Smritir Shohor* (2000), tries to uphold the history of the city, Dhaka, combining his memories of the city with the history of its evolution. In this memoir, the city’s glory represents the innocent childhood of the poet that got lost along with the city’s uniqueness. With the passage of time and the grasp of modernity, the city has become something distant to the city in which the poet was born. The city he recalls as his birthplace or playground remains alive only in his memories perhaps. He introduces his city in this book as, “শহরের নাম ঢাকা। এ শহরে একটা স্নু গলিতে যখন আমি প্রথম চোখ খুলেছিলাম তখন ঢাকা ছিল কেমন ফাঁকা ফাঁকা।”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Pamuk *Istanbul* 333.

¹⁰⁴ Rahman, *Shohor* 11.

In his other memoir, *Kaler Dhuloy Lekha* (2004), he begins to describe Dhaka similarly, as a lost playground that has evolved as a different place, just the way he has grown into a different person. He feels as if he has grown with the city itself and his story cannot be told separately, without involving the progression of the city. In addition, he finds his story is woven with the stories of some other people, who have contributed in his making.

Throughout both the memoirs, he romanticizes his motherland and the city of his birth in many ways. He becomes nostalgic thinking of the days that were fun-filled and safe for him. But gradually, as the country was undergoing structural, cultural and political changes and his cognition was developing with time, his realizations of the city changed. Romanticizing his childhood days in his village, he writes,

“শিশুপুরুষদের ভিটেমাটিতে দিনরাত কাটানো, দাদাজানের তৈরি মসজিদের সামনের খোলা জায়গায় বসে বাঁশবাগানের মাঝার ওপর ফুটফুটে চাঁদ দেখা, দুপুরে বাড়ির পুকুরশাড়ে দাঁড়িয়ে গাছ থেকে একটি কি দুটি আম পাড়া—এসব কথা আজও জীবনের শোধূলিবেলার ভাবতে গিয়ে কেমন এক মন আনমন-করা অনুভূতির জন্য হয়।”¹⁰⁵

Through his craft of story telling, he not only provides the history of his city and country to the readers, but also poses essential questions that piled up in the minds of the citizens during all those periods. His graph of life becomes inseparable from the ups and downs of his city. Hence, he writes,

¹⁰⁵ Rahman, *Kaler Dhuloy* 61.

“আমি যখন আত্মজীবনীর এই অংশটি লিখছি, তখন বাংলাদেশে তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের তদারকির ছায়ায় সাধারণ নির্বাচন হতে চলেছে কয়েক দিন পরে। প্রায় প্রতিদিনই খুনখারাবি চলছেই।...অনেকেই উদ্বেগ নিয়ে ভাবছেন, কী-যে হবে আখেরে। শান্তি ফিরে আসবে তো?...কে দিতে পারে এই ব্যাকুল প্রশ্নের জবাব?”¹⁰⁶

He becomes anxious thinking of the possible dangers the country was facing. He is scared of losing his country's position, in which his own identity is rooted. He presents himself as a part of the larger society, without which he has no existence. Here, he seems to be reflecting Pamuk, who found his story to be a part of the history of his city, Istanbul.

These two writers, writing in their native languages, were constructed by the culture they were parts of. Other writers, politics, crises, relationships, whatever shaped their development as artists was inevitably related to their cities or cultures. Therefore, looking at Pamuk's memoir, along with Shamsur Rahman's, it can be claimed that no writer's talent develops in isolation. The innate creative imagination of the writers is triggered by their societies and these combine into the development of the artists.

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¹⁰⁶ Rahman, *Kaler Dhuloy* 79.

Conclusion

William Wordsworth, in the 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads', writes about the writer, "Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, 'that he looks before and after.'¹⁰⁷ In my research on the autobiographies male writers, the only common element found is perhaps this 'looking before and after'.

Tagore's autobiography shows the luxurious life he spent as part of an elite society. Also, no facts are provided about any sufferings or crises that the poet had undergone. It seems as if that writing began as a leisure activity for the poet. In addition, he wrote mostly about subjects that were not really a part of his lifestyle. Only his intellectual beliefs and distant observations of the world around him got prominence in his writing. He gathered all of these from extensive reading and participating in intellectual discussions, which are not again mentioned properly in this book. The great poet is often recalled as one of the most romantic poets in Bangla literature, but his romantic nature is not explored in his memoir completely either. Thus, *Boyhood Days* fails to uphold all the aspects of the artistic development of Tagore's mind and gives a narrow view of his childhood.

Said's *Out of Place: A Memoir* appeals to me the most as the perfect memoir, where every part of his life is well portrayed. His honesty and boldness attract the readers and add to the authenticity of the book. The significant facts of his life can be marked easily, which influenced and inspired him to become the writer who has had such an

¹⁰⁷ Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." *Prefaces and Prologues*. Vol. XXXIX. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909-14; Bartleby.com, 2001. Jan 16, 2009. <<http://www.bartleby.com/39/36.html>>.

impact in contemporary intellectual life. Hence, his displacement and alienation are part of his position and foretell the critical faculty that he developed.

Pamuk's memoir, *Istanbul: Memories of a City*, justifies his melancholy and also shows his gradual development as an artist. His authenticity is remarkably appealing, despite his claims about exaggeration in representation. His fragmented stories unify into a collective whole to portray his development as a writer. His dilemmas and decisions are well portrayed as being inevitably rooted in his city. His identity is recognized only in relation to his city; this notion makes his memoir unique. Shamsur Rahman's memoirs again show his relation to his city, country and people surrounding him. As he confesses, he did not have many magnificent happenings in his own life, but his surroundings inspired his writing. He blames his memory for deceiving him while recalling significant parts of his life, but ignores that he intentionally leaves out many details that could be unpleasant. Thus, the authenticity of his memoirs can be doubted as Tagore's.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man*, Joyce portrays the journey of a fictional writer, who has a similar developmental pattern to that of the real memoirs we are dealing with. He also highlights the events that contributed in the making of the writer, Stephen Dedalus. The memory of his protagonist appears to be as trustworthy as of Said's or Pamuk's. The developmental stages of the writer's intellectual mind can also be identified thoroughly. Thus, the portrayal of the development of the artist that Joyce shows us, is as appealing as the real memoirs of the writers and seems to be equally credible.

Let us conclude by quoting from Linda R. Anderson's book, *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*. She quotes James Olney, according to whom,

"What is...of particular interest to us in a consideration of the creative achievements of individual men and the relationship of those achievements to a life lived, on the one hand, and an autobiography of that life on the other is...the isolate uniqueness that nearly everyone agrees to be the primary quality and condition of the individual and his experience."¹⁰⁸

The book also claims that the romanticizing of 'selfhood' along with the individual's beliefs and values appear to be essential parts of autobiographies. In Olney's words, as mentioned by Anderson, "the explanation for the special appeal of autobiography...is a fascination with the self and its profound, its endless mysteries".¹⁰⁹ She also highlights that autobiographies are expected to provide both identifiable 'conditions and limits' as an authoritative form of 'truth-telling'. So, finally, we can claim that the autobiography or memoir writers should present their memories in such a way that the authenticity of the content should remain intact, using the power of language to add to its creativity.

Our overall examination of these memoirs proves that there is no identifiable essence that we can ascribe to artists or creative writers. Artists are products of their times and societies, and acquire different characteristics over time. These characteristics again are not necessarily universal. Some artists are born with the talent of writing well, whereas some are rich in their stories, but find it unnecessary to portray them in

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, *Autobiography* 4.

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, *Autobiography* 5.

allegorical language. Every writer has his/her own style and thoughts, which are reflected in their writing. Also, neither ornamental language nor interesting stories alone can make a memoir appealing. A fine balance between these two makes a memoir memorable.

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