

ഇശൽ
വൈത്യകം
ഐത്രമാസിക ലക്കം: 41

Ishal Paithrkam

Online issue 26

print issue 41

March 2025



Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyar

Mappila Kala Akademi

Department of Cultural Affairs

Government of Kerala-India

March 2025

ISSN:2582-550X

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ത്രൈമാസിക

ലക്കം: 41

2025 മാർച്ച്

പകർപ്പാവകാശം: പ്രസാധകർക്ക്

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Ishal Paithrkam

ISSN: 2582-550X

Peer-Reviewed

UGC CARE indexed

Quarterly

Bilingual

Issue: 41

Online issue: 26

March: 2025

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Editor

Dr. Shamshad hussain. KT

Printed @

LIPI Offset

Malappuram

Publisher

Mahakavi Moyinkutty

Vaidyar

Mappila Kala Akademi

Kondotty, 673638

Ph: 0483-2711432

പ്രസാധകർ

മഹാകവി മോയിൻകുട്ടി വൈദ്യർ

മാപ്പിള കലാ അക്കാദമി

കൊണ്ടോട്ടി: 673 638

ഫോൺ: 0483 2711432

www.mappilakalaacademy.org

www.ishalpaithrkam.info

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**Reconfiguring the Marginality of Disability in
Nazi Euthanasia: A Study of Countermemory
Narratives of Yuko Tsushima's *Karino Jidai* and
Ann Clare LeZotte's *T4: a Novel in Verse***

**Riya Ajit
Dr. Rajesh M**

The historical and political significance underlying the narratives of the disabled victims has remained largely unacknowledged since the marginal position occupied by the victims within the mainstream popular understanding of the Holocaust has been undermined. Moreover, the act of legitimizing the survivor testimonies has resulted in the de facto marginalization of their memories within the discourse of Holocaust and Memory Studies. The study attempts to interrogate the post war memory cultures of the Nazi euthanasia in Ann Clare LeZotte's *T4: a Novel in Verse* and Yuko Tsushima's *Karino Jidai*. It examines the historical

uncanny and the *unheimlich* felt in the memory cultures of Nazi euthanasia. It also studies the various memory cultures of disabled victims, drawing on Kaja Silverman's concept of heteropathic recollection and Hannah Arendt's notion of compassion in order to resist the appropriation of their memories. It incorporates the methodology of narrative prosthesis and aesthetic nervousness as a means of reading the narratives of disability and underscore the conflicts and crises of representation of disability. The diverse representational strategies of reading the disabled bodies emphasizes the role of body in literature as a liminal point in the representational process.

Key Words: Holocaust narrative, Memory, Disability, Euthanasia, Prosthesis

Introduction

The Holocaust has emerged as the touchstone for the discourse of European memory, perceiving it as a “negatively founded myth”. The major goal of such a memory project was to erase the discrepancies surrounding the memory cultures of lesser-known events surrounding Holocaust and thereby marginalize certain memories which becomes a matter of concern since any productive negotiation with the European sites of memory calls for reading the local and regional memories. Hence such sites of memory can be integrated into a transnational framework, contributing to a heterogeneous and multi voiced memory of the Holocaust. The historical and political significance underlying the narratives of the disabled victims has remained largely unacknowledged since their marginal memories within the mainstream Holocaust has been undermined. The Nazi euthanasia plan involved the conception of the Aktion T4 program (1939) legitimizing the elimination of the physically and the mentally handicapped patients since they threatened the existence of the pure Aryan blooded race. About 20 million handicapped people were killed between 1940 and 1954 as a result of the sanctioning of the T4 program. Although the entire program received huge criticism and was officially scrapped, the doctors received sanctions on killing those considered “unqualified”. Hence the Nazi’s eugenic thought gave rise to the euthanasia of disabled and unqualified bodies and the birth of qualified and able-bodied youths. The program became a means of eliminating the physically and mentally disabled bodies, including those of the Down syndrome in postwar Japan, in order to ensure the continuity of a growing youth who are highly educated and financially independent. The eugenic based policies also applied to the victims of Hansen’s disease mandating a law that sanctioned their imprisonment and sterilization.

The historical trajectory of eugenic thought predetermines the cultural conceptions of disability which further exacerbates the tendency to legitimize the euthanasia programme than the mass persecution of Jews. The sophisticated technologies of genetic testing

and prenatal screening contribute to the underlying assumptions that a life with disability is less worthy of living than the “normal” one. Hence reconfiguring the memory cultures of the Holocaust in the history of eugenic thought exposes the intersection between the discourses of memory studies and disability studies. The Nazi euthanasia program has been obliterated from the discourses of memory studies and disability studies with the notable exceptions (Davis and Hubbard; Snyder and Mitchell). Moreover, the erasure of the event raises questions on the significance of witness and survivor testimonies, which thereby poses a serious challenge to memory studies. The only records that have survived are the medical records created by the perpetrators which becomes problematic since any account of the memory requires giving agency for the victims either through the testimonies of the historians or the families of the victims or by reframing the language of the perpetrators.

Yuko Tsushima’s writing career was active and prolific, as she raised her voice against the erasure of the collective memory underlying “unqualified people” such as single-mothers and their children, handicapped people, colored races, gays, and the elderly. Her *Karino Jidai [The Age of Hunting]* (2016) is set in the post Second World War II Japan and gives agency to the once hidden but gradually revealed narratives that are referred to as the literature of 3/11. It recounts the tale of Emiko and her family and unfolds the struggles of the mentally retarded child Kotaro, following his birth. Ann Clare LeZotte’s novel *T4: a Novel in Verse* foregrounds the narrative of the 13-year-old deaf child Paula. As the family begins hearing rumors about the program to eliminate disabled children, Paula decides to leave her home and hide. She is put in a situation of precarity as her safety is caught in peril and her continual attempts to fit into the society are evident in terms of her search for refuge as well as her attempts to learn sign language.

The study attempts to interrogate the historical uncanny and the unheimlich post war memory cultures of the Nazi euthanasia in both the texts and studies the various memory cultures of disabled victims. It also aims to understand the politicization of eugenics, using Agamben’s notion of bare life and thereby understand the politics of

exclusion and elimination underlying Nazi euthanasia. It also underscores how vicarious witnessing attempt to reclaim the lost memory of the forgotten victims and thereby involves the readers in a continual process of commemoration. It incorporates the methodological framework of aesthetic nervousness and narrative prosthesis as a means of reading the narratives of disability and brings into forefront the potential tensions of representations of disability inherent in the texts.

The scope of the study involves envisaging the crucial intersection of disability and memory studies to foreground the ambivalent relationship between disability and memory of Nazi euthanasia. The failure of narrative prosthesis and aesthetic nervousness involves the suspension and abrogation of the dominant modes of representation of disability. There emerges the need to preserve the uncanniness of the memory cultures and study the amnesic gaps and tensions surrounding the Nazi euthanasia.

Historical Uncanny and the Unheimlich

French historian Pierre Nora puts forth the notion that the ‘real environments of memory’, or the *milieux de mémoire*, as he asserts, does not exist and that there remains artificial and constructed nature or sites of memory. He refers to group memory as a web of material and immaterial sites of memory, which “are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration” (Nora, 1989, p.18). Thus, *lieu de mémoire* acts as a “a site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also forever open to the full range of its possible significations” (Nora, p.24), in a complete state of reconfiguration and transformation. Such a conception of cultural memory as a network of changing signification has undergone a drastic transition to a conception of memory as a network of interconnected nodes or knots. They are multidirectional and rhizomatic nodes of memory, foregrounding the assumption that memory does not belong to the past but rather an active entity that is subjected to change and resignification. It also brings into forefront another defining characteristic of Nora’s conception of memoir, having the “capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning

and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications” (Nora, p.19). The characteristic feature of memory culture as an object of contention and conflict brings into forefront the notions of counter memories and minority memory cultures that need to foreground their identity and existence in the face of dominant memory cultures especially when they are politicized in the hands of the state or other figures of authority.

The term uncanny becomes integral to the understanding of the memory cultures involving the Holocaust since it becomes a touchstone of foregrounding the political and cultural actions by which certain memories become visible while certain others are deliberately erased or forgotten. Sigmund Freud in his essay “Das Unheimliche” asserts that the term *unheimlich* is the opposite of *heimlich* i.e., homely or native and hence it becomes frightening since it remains completely unknown or unfamiliar (Freud, 1919, p. 195). In *Multidirectional Memory*, Michael Rothberg discusses the various implications of the event of Holocaust acting as a ‘screen memory’ in the discourse of Western thought (Rothberg, 2010). A screen memory, in the discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis, acts as a means of displacing or hiding a traumatic memory of an event by another, unrelated memory. Rothberg asserts that such a practice displaces that traumatic memory from the consciousness thereby leading to a form of forgetting that happens simultaneously along with acts of remembrance, a kind of forgetting is subject to recall” (Rothberg, p.13). Hence such a conception illustrates how commemoration and formation of memory cultures are multidirectional in terms of their approach, thereby acknowledging the need to conceive memory as “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative” (Rothberg, p.3). Such an approach also necessitates understanding how the Holocaust can not only act as a screen for the memory of other traumatic war memories but most importantly how the predetermined conception of the memory of the Holocaust negates confronting the marginalized and the repressed aspects of its history.

The terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich* reiterate the notion of “home” (from the term *Heimat*), bringing into forefront the spatiotemporal relations that a person feels, imbuing a sense of rootedness and belonging. However, certain sites of memory have

the capacity to create an impression of uncanny since the return of an experience from the past creates a sense of *unheimlich* (unfamiliarity or strangeness). In the novel, Emiko's personal vague memories foreground the post war memory, oscillating between the familiar present memory and the strange *unheimlich*, returning from the past that has been repressed and forgotten, hence challenging and disrupting her conception of home. The traumatic memories of the Holocaust that seeps into the fabric of the present produces an uncanny effect on Emiko as she fails to get a complete understanding of the past, which alludes to the obscurity and the lack of authenticity of the historical records owing to the Nazi euthanasia plan. The physicality of her brother and the discovery of victimization remain intertwined with that of her own and thereby the discovery of the euthanasia plan coincides with the discrimination faced by her own disabled brother, Kotaro. It is the physicality of her brother that creates a sense of *unheimlich*, and hence it is the discovery of the disability that remains concealed in the collective memory, which coincides with the lack of authenticity regarding the historical events of the Nazi euthanasia. Paula also faces a sense of *unheimlich* when she says, "I could see Bluish hills in the distance. That was my home. But my country, Germany was not my home" (LeZotte, 2008, p. 1). The subjects inhabiting the unhomely third space exist in an intersection of the private and the public, the personal and the political. It also reflects her vague post war memory and her mother's prewar memory, by juxtaposing the physicality with the memory culture of Nazi euthanasia.

Bare Life and Bio Ethics

There has been a growing significance on the need to intersect the discourses of disability studies with health humanities and bioethics, as is evident from the call for a bioethical move towards

"Disability bioethics" or "disability-conscious bioethics" (Aguilar,2019). It asserts that ableism—defined as "a value system that considers certain typical characteristics of body and mind as essential for living a life of value" opened up debates regarding people with disabilities and its association with bioethics (Aguilar, p.5). The conflictual relationship between disability and bioethics rests on the notion that bioethics mostly focuses on the diverse, complex and social

nature of disability and therefore fails to open up discussions on the bioethical issues concerning persons with disabilities. The hegemonic able-bodied notions have perpetuated the belief that the lives of the disabled are a life not worth living and hence such limitations in bioethics must be dealt with in an attempt to encourage more disability-inclusive bioethical narratives. The bioethical implications of the Tiergartenstrasse 4 program are evident in terms of the mandate to direct doctors to euthanize the mentally and disabled ill bodies as 'unfit to live', regardless of their age. The killings under the program ended but it remained unsafe for Paula and Kurt until the end of the war resulting in such unsanctioned killings. "Our leader, Adolf Hitler, And the Nazi Party Hated People like me" invokes the bioethical implications of segregating and sanctioning the killing of the disabled Other (LeZotte, p.1). The bioethical rights which are supposedly held by the physicians remain abrogated as the disabled subjects continue to be put into the necropolitical conditions of death, wherein the subject is deprived of the right to live and die.

Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer* delineates the notion of bare life, life that is devoid of politico juridical value and hence subjected to the hands of the sovereign's right to kill. The Nazi euthanasia program foregrounds the politicization of eugenics, legitimizing the regime's authority to kill and decide whether a life is worthy of living or not. This, along with the genetic conception of race, culminated in a politics of exclusion and elimination where disabled bodies were rendered "undesirable". He conceived the notion of *Lebensunwertes Leben* (Life That Does Not Deserve to Live) to explain the transition from a Nazi biopolitical regime to a form of thanatopolitics (Agamben, 1998, p. 142). Emiko and Paula are reduced to bare life as a result of their disability and are rendered unfit for living. Hence their existence rests outside the political juridical confines of law. They are thrown into the throes of death as can be seen in the case of Paula who repetitively seeks refuge along with the deaf priest, in hopes of safety. However, the juxtaposition of Nazi euthanasia and Holocaust memory fails to receive the same kind of victimhood since the memory of euthanasia occupies a marginalized space in the memory cultures of the Holocaust.

Aesthetic Nervousness and Narrative Prosthesis in Disability Narratives

Ato Quayson conceives the idea of aesthetic nervousness, which is seen when the dominant methodologies of representation of disability within the narratives remain short circuited. This is seen in terms of the interaction between the disabled and nondisabled characters, along with various other potential tensions in the texts in terms of the symbols and motifs deployed, characterization and plot structure and so on. There is also a visible tension in terms of the interaction with the reader as well, wherein the reader's identification with certain aspects of the disabled character. Erving Goffman (1959) discusses stigma in association with the initial social interactions between the disabled and non-disabled characters as can be seen when she says,

When one person has a visible disability, however, it almost always dominates and skews the normate's process of sorting out perceptions and forming a reaction. The interaction is usually strained because the nondisabled person may feel fear, pity, fascination, repulsion, or merely surprise, none of which is expressible according to social protocol. Besides the disconcerting dissonance between experienced and expressed reaction, a nondisabled person often does not know how to act toward a disabled person: how or whether to offer assistance; whether to acknowledge the disability; what words, gestures, or expectations to use or avoid. (Thomson, 1997, p. 12)

Some of the distinct characteristic features of the encounter between the nondisabled and persons with disabilities coincides with Thomson's notion of "normate" that involves a range of social attitudes that determine the nondisabled perceptions of themselves and their relationships with the 'others' inhabiting the corporeal normativity. Here, the disabled body emerges as the site of metaphysical or divine importance, their physicality, a result of the exact opposite or order and normality. It also calls for the reevaluation of what it means to be human in a world subject to chance and contingencies. The subliminal and divine associations of the disabled body as can be seen in the case of hypersensitivity and animality of Emiko and Kotaro also bring

into forefront the possibility that the non-disabled realize the origin of his or her constructedness and the social conceptions of disability that stems from it. The frameworks within which the disabled are placed are in relation to the concept of beauty and wholeness, giving rise to the nefarious social conceptions of disability. Thomson puts forth a symbolic interactionism model which coincides with the idea that “people do not respond to the world directly, but instead place social meanings on it, organize it, and respond to it on the basis of these meanings” (Albrecht, 2002, p.27). This is clearly seen in terms of Paula’s attempts to learn sign language in order to organize her perceptions of normality and her interaction with the world. Her only form of interaction is with the deaf Kurt, who understands her language and thereby her entire social construction of the world is based on her interaction with the like-minded disabled bodied Kurt. This becomes further problematic since the normate social attitudes of the nondisabled stems from fear and anxiety as can be seen in the response of the fellow dwellers of the village who refuse to give shelter to Paula on account of her deafness.

The notion of narrative prosthesis involves ‘prostheticize’ in David Wills’s sense of the term, or correcting a deviance which is marked improper. It involves using the disabled as symbols of moral disorder and chaos so that the non-disabled can learn from their encounters with persons with disabilities. The fictions of Tsushima and LeZotte involve introducing the deviance of the characters to the readers: Deafness in the case of Paula and Down Syndrome in the case of Kotaro. The plot then deals with the historical context that led to the deviance and its consequences, as can be seen in the case of stigma and taboo associated with the disability that they face from their family and their neighborhood. In the case of narrative prosthesis in literary domain, the rest of the plot deals with fixing the deviance or obliteration of the difference or extermination of the deviant, a search for the cure or reevaluating and seeking an alternative form of being. In the last case, these texts fail to perform the function of ‘prostheticising’ which is not because of the inability to erase such effects of disability in the real world. It is mostly because the aesthetic domain of literature is short circuited or virtually collapses in terms of its interaction with disability. It is here that the texts exhibit aesthetic

nervousness in that it involves the suspension and abrogation of the dominant modes of representation of disability.

Kotaro is affected with Down syndrome and it is his physicality that becomes a matter of centrality, especially in the gaze of his sister, Emiko, since he exhibits more sensitivity towards smell than the others. His peculiar sensitivity and the exhibition of animalistic senses remain explicitly conspicuous especially when there is the activation of the sensitivity of smell, linking Koichiro with his sister as well. Such a hypersensitivity to sense and the possession of animalistic traits reinstates the body and the sense of the other, who has been regarded as inferior by the social conceptions of disability. Although Koichiro has passed away, Emiko's animalistic sense of smell is triggered, creating the voice of an objectified being, Koichiro, as a subject in the intimate memory of Emiko. Hence it is the physicality of her brother that invokes and triggers in her the hypersensitivity of smell, which reinforces how disability and physicality hovers around the collective memory of the victims of Nazi euthanasia. It also presents a crisis in representation since the very physicality of Kotaro and his disability precipitates a conflict in representation as to whether a character has to be represented normally. This is not the case since Kotaro's disability is represented also in terms of his hypersensitivity towards smell. This brings about a crisis in representation since the social conceptions of disability always link disability with a mythical or supernatural quality or trait inherent in the disabled body. It also precipitates another mode of tension since it raises the question of whether character of disability and his animalistic sense acts as a metaphor for some form of human condition. Moreover, the animalistic sense triggered in Kotaro and later in Emiko underlines the representational strategies deployed by writers and the various registers of meaning associated with it.

Stokoe believes “vision may have an advantage, for it is neurologically a richer and more complex physiological system than hearing. Sight makes use of much more of the brain's capacity than does hearing” (Stokoe, p. 20). Paula's deafness also opens up varied discourses on deaf studies and its relevance as can be seen in the notion of deaf-gain, put forth by H-Dirksen L. Bauman and Joseph J.

Murray in *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity*. It involves the heightened sensory orientation of deaf people leading to a creative and nuanced creative visual-spatial language and a diverse exploration of human character. Paula, being devoid of a proper medium of communication engages in learning sign language along with her deaf companion, Kurt. The rich metaphoric iconicity is evident in terms of her poetic language when LeZotte deploys visual spatial metaphors when she says,

Hear the voice of the poet!
I see the past, future, and present.
I am deaf, but I have heard
The beauty of song. (LeZotte, p. 1).

She equates the voice of the marginalized as the “beauty of the song” (LeZotte, p. 1), subverting the supernatural conception associated with disability by asserting that she possesses the clairvoyant sense of seeing the past, present and the future. Hence the complex ideas of marginality are demonstrated through visual spatial metaphors, a language which is not riddled with abstract ideas but rather emphasizes a concrete representation of complex ideas. The unique sensory orientation of the deaf individuals is evident in terms of Paula’s recognition of the “blue sky” with the limitless possibilities that exist in the world. LeZotte, being deaf, writes from her personal experiences of the alienation that she felt on account of her disability and hence opens up to the discourses of deaf studies and the inherent diversity.

Cognitive Disability and the Limits of Self Narrativity

The question of cognitive disability arises in the text, foregrounding the assertion that the characters with cognitive disability must not be relegated to symbolic functionality as a consequence of their disability. Michael Bérubé asserts, “The dynamics of disability compel us to recognize that there will always be among us people who cannot represent themselves and must be represented” (Bérubé, 2005, p.572). Characters like Emiko, Kotaro, Eiichiro and Paula are given the voice of agency and narrativity since the mainstream discourses render people with cognitive disabilities and mental illnesses the inability to narrate their own stories and representation. However, Berube asserts that on a deeper level, it is cognitive disability that

tests the very limits of representation and self-narrativity since “mindedness is so obviously a necessary condition for self-representation and narration that it should be no surprise to find various depictions of damaged mindedness serving neither as moral barometers nor as invitations to pity or horror but as meditations on the possibility of narrative representation” (Berube, p.572). Hence the question of self-narrativity has acquired much centrality in the discourses of Holocaust and memory studies and the urgent need to establish one’s own subjectivity in the face of dehumanization. *Karino Jidai* juxtaposes the historical reaffirmation of the discourses of the T4 program and his cognitive impairment or dementia through his aging. Hence his dementia as a cognitive disability brings into question the exclusion of those whose cognitive disability has prevented them from self-narrativity.

The problematic horror and nightmarish scenes in both the fictions represented by sparse and plain language prompts crucial questions regarding its artistic representation. The unrepresented atrocities of the Nazi euthanasia program are conveyed by simple and sparse language. The victims of euthanasia such as Emiko, Kotaro, Eiichiro and Paula appear different from the others since they are victims of disability and are defined through their Otherness. Hannah Arendt proposes compassion as intense identification with the victim rather than pity which is depersonalizing and generalizing. The texts attempt to engender a form of empathetic identification and solidarity that transcends the private and moves into a political or social sphere (Arendt, 1990, p. 86). Such representations must involve their portrayal as humans and not as stereotypes and acknowledging their ability for self-narrativity. Lezotte uses a first-person narrative as she begins the novel at the outset saying, “Our leader, Adolf Hitler, And the Nazi Party Hated People like me” (LeZotte, p.1). As a result of her alienation from the society, she is unable to reconcile with the discrepancies of the value system surrounding her and hence she is forced to study sign language in order to communicate with the outside world. She strives to challenge the stereotypical notions of the society about the disabled victims and emerges as the disabled enabler who does not succumb to the societal constraints but attempts to challenge

the situation of precarity that she is caught up in. Striving to find security, she transitions from one place to another in search of home but even then, she strongly identifies with her “voice of the poet”, for she says, “I see the past, future, and present, I am deaf, but I have heard the beauty of song, And I wish to share it with young readers...” (LeZotte, p.1) She therefore emerges as a marginalized figure, endowed with the emblematic or symbolic power to resist the societal restrictions and taboos imposed on disabled victims. However, the problematic nature of representation of disability comes into forefront when the disabled characters function as viable plot devices only on the basis of his or her special powers or else they do not have the potential for meaningful position in the society. Such representations of disability “proceed as if characters in literary texts could be read simply as representations of real people” (Bérubé, 2005, p.570). It opens up the problematic nature of the parameters of narrativity since the transition of the disabled enabled from a one-dimensional marginalized figure to a more complex role is also symptomatic of their identity being limited as a result of their social marginalization. Such narratives attempt to portray the inevitability of a productive engagement with the memory of euthanasia and its victims.

Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell delineate the ‘cure-or-kill’ ending in *Narrative Prosthesis* as a characteristic feature of most of the literary representations of disability, wherein disability or Otherness is conceived of as a problem in need of a remedy rather than a rich or a productive mode of being (Snyder and Mitchell, 2000, p. 169). The texts often bring into forefront the need to resolve these Otherness into a meaningful narrative of redemption for the disabled enablers such as Paula and Emiko. The subject identity of Paula as a deaf girl turned poet and Emiko’s enlightenment of the collective memory of Nazi euthanasia acts as a form of disciplinarian structures described by Foucault intended to remedy alterity and restore order. However, such fictions open up the discourse on the problematic and complex nature of disability, “a moment of silence, a question without answer,” by provoking “a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself” (Foucault, 1961, p.288). Dominic Capra believes that empathic unsettlement foregrounds the need for

historical uncanny since he believes that “at the very least, empathic unsettlement poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in jeopardy harmonizing or spiritually uplifting accounts of extreme events from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit (for example, unearned confidence of the ability of the human spirit to endure any adversity with dignity and nobility)” (Capra, 2001, p.41–42). Thus, enforcing empathic unsettlement surrounding the memory cultures of Nazi euthanasia preserve a sense of discomfort and precarity while encountering the historical atrocities and thereby prevents the need to create a safe and familiar narrative around the Other. In the case of Paula, Lezotte blends her personal experiences as a deaf child at the time of Nazi euthanasia which induces a sense of empathic unsettlement rather than creating familiarity and comfort around the narrative. Yuko does not bring a sense of closure to the characters of Kotaro who succumbs to death and Emiko who lives in alienation and battles with the social conceptions of disability. Hence it is the deliberate creation of empathic unsettlement that preserves the historical uncanny around the narratives and memory of Nazi euthanasia and thereby reinforces the problematic and complexity of representation in disability.

Vicariousness and Empathic Identification as Means of Foregrounding the Process of Remembering

Vicariousness acts as a medium of not only giving agency and voice to the victims of Nazi euthanasia and thereby appropriating the memory and narratives but rather emerges as an attempt to bridge the silence surrounding the discourses of disability and memory of the victims of Nazi euthanasia through narrative means. It acts as a legitimate medium that would aid in rediscovering and reimagining the narratives of the victims. The silence that enshrouds the discourses on Nazi euthanasia and disability studies is embodied through the characters of Emiko and Paula who let the voicelessness speak through them. It is their vicarious witnessing that engenders compassion in that it creates a form of identification with rather than maintaining distance from its victims. The phenomenon of authors witnessing the traumatic memory of the others is referred to as vicarious witnessing, according to Froma Zeitlin, who states that along with an urgent search for the past, there remains an awareness and identification with the

events at a distance. This falls under the rubric of what Marianne Hirsch has referred to as postmemory, a space for remembrance, negotiation and identification, in order to establish an “ethical relation to the oppressed or persecuted other” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 9).

Drawing on Kaja Silverman’s concept of heteropathic recollection, a process of ‘identification-at-a-distance,’ it resists a complete form of appropriation of the other and thereby emphasizes circulation of memory. Hirsch explains,

post memory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and effectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. (Hirsch, p.106–7).

LeZotte incorporates fictionality along with her own personal experiences to narrate the story of Paula Becker. Being deaf herself and growing in the shadow of the euthanasia program, the novel becomes an attempt to reclaim the memory and identity of the victims from the hegemonic discourses of the perpetrators. Shoshana Felman’s notion of the Holocaust as a “crisis of witnessing” becomes a starting point to foreground the unspeakability of trauma and the resultant paradox of testimony as nonverbal: through silence, elisions and gaps. Lezotte says that she chose short lyric poetry to describe the harrowing experiences of Paula and ultimately the collective memory of the Nazi euthanasia, even though it does not occupy a powerful position for such silences to be meaningful. Hence vicarious witnessing in the texts attempt to reclaim the lost memory of the forgotten victims and thereby involves the readers in a continual process of commemoration and foreground questions of ethical responsibility to people with disabilities. Hence distancing from the actual event by incorporating sparse lyric forms of expression is what allows them to bridge the silence and reconstructing narratives. Yuko invokes a multilayered narrative of several narrators such as Emiko, Kotaro and the cognitive disabled Eiichiro. Emiko acts as the alter ego of Yuko during her childhood days, thereby reinforcing how vicarious witnessing acts as

a medium that resists the appropriation and stereotyping of the disabled Other and thereby aids in the circulation of memory cultures surrounding Nazi euthanasia.

Conclusion

There exists a form of silence imposed upon the history and memory of Nazi euthanasia and to the victims themselves as well, by the disciplinary and state apparatuses as a consequence of their disability. Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* asserts that the social structures where the weak or the deviants remain separated from the rest of the society results in a form of erasure and silencing of their voices and agencies. They become the objects of hegemonic narratives as they remain unable to legitimize themselves through their own narratives as a result of their disability.

Vicarious witnessing in the texts attempt to reclaim the lost memory of the forgotten victims and thereby involves the readers in a continual process of commemoration and foreground questions of ethical responsibility to people with disabilities. Enforcing empathic unsettlement surrounding the memory cultures of Nazi euthanasia preserve a sense of discomfort and precarity while encountering the historical atrocities and thereby prevents the need to create a safe and familiar narrative around the Other. Tsushima does not bring a sense of closure to the characters of Kotaro who succumbs to death and Emiko who lives in alienation and battles with the social conceptions of disability. Hence it is the deliberate creation of empathic unsettlement that preserves the historical uncanny around the narratives and memory of Nazi euthanasia and thereby reinforces the problematic and complexity of representation in disability.

The intersection of the discourses of disability studies and memory studies in studying the disabled victims of the Nazi euthanasia foreground the interrelated continuities between the past and the present, the microbiological and the macro logical perspectives. Hence there emerges the need to preserve the uncanniness of the memory cultures surrounding the Nazi euthanasia since it encompasses many minority communities that the hegemonic discourse may attempt to silence or erase. The texts therefore bring into forefront the contentions underlying the memory cultures of the Nazi euthanasia and the inherent

multidirectionality, thereby reinforcing the need for departicularized and transnational narratives. The diverse representational strategies of reading the disabled bodies emphasizes the role of body in literature as a liminal point in the representational process. The failure of narrative prosthesis exhibited by such fictions underscores how the aesthetic domain of literature is short circuited in terms of its interaction with disability. It is here that the texts exhibit aesthetic nervousness in that it involves the suspension and abrogation of the dominant modes of representation of disability. The literary domain must therefore include writers that identify the symbolic value of disability and thereby foreground the lived experiences of disability. Hence the study becomes integral to understand and emphasize empowerment and agency of the disabled bodied persons over obscene, abject and traumatic representations that further contribute to stigma concerning disability.

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