

Narrating the Repressed Self: Freudian Psychoanalysis, Gender Identity, and Narrative Agency in Laxmi Narayan Tripathi's Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life

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In this paper, the article about Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life written by the Indian transgender activist Laxmi Narayan Tripathi is analyzed with the help of the psychoanalytical concepts introduced by Freud, such as repressions. The analysis of the intersections between gender identities, exclusion, trauma, and self-expression is done on the basis of an autobiographical story of one of the most influential activists fighting for the rights of transgender people in India. Repression was defined by Freud as a process when people unconsciously exclude from their consciousness certain undesirable or socially unacceptable thoughts or desires. The paper aims to show that the story of Tripathi is both the result of constant repressions and the creation of a self-narrative that helps to get rid of them and become a more authentic person that does not follow heteronormative and patriarchal constructions. The memoir discloses psychic conflicts created by the pressures of society related to ideas of masculinity and femininity, while being the source of catharsis and identity reconstruction.

keywords Repression, Freud, Transgender autobiography, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Psychoanalysis, Gender identity, Trauma, Life writing

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Introduction

The advent of transgender autobiography in contemporary Indian literature has radically changed the ways in which the themes of gender, identity and marginalization are spoken about. Autobiography is not just a record of personal experience but a challenge to epistemological regimes which, over the years, have marginalized, pathologized or devalued the lives of transgenders

(Smith & Watson, 2010). Red Lipstick: The Men In My Life by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi stands out among such texts for being both an autobiographical account and a political act (Tripathi, 2017). By narrating memories of childhood, relationships, social discrimination, physical experience and instances of resistance, the autobiography builds up a complicated

account of the process of transgender identity formation in contemporary India. Instead of depicting identity as something static and predetermined, Tripathi's text emphasizes the negotiation that goes into becoming who one is within contexts which constantly demand the conforming to of gender norms (Butler, 1990).

Laxmi Narayan Tripathi is widely regarded internationally as an influential transgender activist, author, and spokesperson for the Hijra community in India (Tripathi, 2017). Her public persona has often been tied to activism, exposure, and policy changes; but *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* shows aspects of vulnerability and internal struggle that tend to be overlooked when discussing empowerment. The memoir chronicles instances of family control, societal prejudice, emotional neglect, and sexual violence along with those of love, support, and self-discovery. Such experiences imply that the journey toward transgender identity is not just about politics and society, but also psychology. Self-construction takes place amidst a social milieu where the expression of femininity, desire, and difference are routinely controlled, stifled, or repressed. Therefore, the memoir prompts an exploration of how identity is oppressed and eventually regained through narration.

Repression, an idea put forward by Sigmund Freud as one of the most fundamental concepts of the unconscious, can be an efficient way to analyze this dynamic process of psychic negotiations. Repression according to Freud is a way to exclude unacceptable wishes, memories and impulses from consciousness in order to evade any kind of tension and social disputes (Freud, 1915/1957). However, repression does not annihilate that which is excluded; on the contrary, it comes back in the form of symbols and symptoms (Freud, 1900/1953). Though Freud's idea arose in the psychoanalysis of early twentieth century Europe, it still can provide us with useful perspectives to analyze literature of marginal people. In the case of transgender stories, we can perceive repression not as a reason for being gender variant, but as a result of prohibition of such identities and expressions

imposed by society. Gender variance is repressed not because of being psychologically unusual, but because of being culturally prohibited within heteronormative system.

The emergence of new theories in feminist, queer and transgender studies complicates and expands the psychoanalytic view on identity formation even more. According to Judith Butler, who proposes a theory of gender performativity, concepts of masculinity and femininity are not based on any essentialist features but result from the repetitive performances in social life (Butler, 1990). Like that, Jacques Lacan suggests a notion of the split subject, which implies impossibility of achieving the integrity and wholeness of one's self in the symbolic structures (Lacan, 1977). Theorists in the area of transgender studies, like Susan Stryker, point to the political aspect of non-binary stories about gender (Stryker, 2008). These approaches, although being contradictory to some of the Freudian ideas, should be taken into consideration when discussing repression not as an intrapsychic phenomenon but as a process of social and cultural character, taking place within the frames of the family, educational system, religious beliefs and legal system.

While *Red Lipstick* has been extensively studied for its depiction of transgender identities, activism, embodiment, and exclusion from society, it has received less attention as regards to psychoanalytic repression theory. Most of the existing literature has focused on the problems of visibility, citizenship, and resistance rather than on the psychological aspects of identity formation. In addition, the literature on the psychoanalysis of transgender literature has tended to be limited by discussions about Freudian binary concepts of sex and sexuality which has made many authors reject or accept blindly the psychoanalysis. In this context, the paper aims at filling this gap and examining the concept of repression within Tripathi's memoir as the consequence rather than the cause of transgender identity.

This paper suggests that the phenomenon of repression is viewed by the article as being socially constructed and psychologically conditioned via familial expectations, surveillance, affective

relations, and the cultural codes which regulate masculine behavior. Simultaneously, the book reveals that the process of autobiographical narration becomes a mechanism of Freud's "working-through" (*Durcharbeiten*) and allows expressing those experiences which have been dispersed before (Freud, 1914/1958). Through remembering, naming, and narration, Tripathi converts the coming back of the repressed into narration agency and self-empowerment. Hence, the memoir can be considered not only as a testimony, but also as a therapeutic and political recreation of one's subjectivity.

Methodological approach of this research consists of qualitative analysis of the text based on psychoanalytical literary criticism and close reading. Theory of repression elaborated by Freud is the basis for analysis, while theories of Judith Butler, Jacques Lacan, Susan Stryker, and Cathy Caruth become its auxiliary sources related to the problems of gender performativity, recognition, trauma, and identity construction (Butler, 1990; Caruth, 1996; Lacan, 1977; Stryker, 2008).

Ultimately, this paper contends that *Red Lipstick*, through its reading of Tripathi's story, poses a challenge to the limits of classical psychoanalytic theory, while at the same time proving its pertinence to the experience of marginality and selfhood. What the text shows is that the act of repression is not an isolated psychological event, but rather one created through societal mechanisms of valuing gender norms and punishing deviations from those norms. Through the act of returning the repressed, the author writes herself back into existence.

Literature review

The growing presence of transgender stories in Indian literature has attracted considerable academic attention to issues of identity, citizenship, body, and resistance. Autobiographical works by transgender authors have become crucial interventions into culture where non-binary gender has been historically denied recognition or pathologized in the past (Smith & Watson, 2010; Stryker, 2008). Not merely autobiographies, such works are political

narratives negotiating the issue of legitimacy, recognition, and citizenship within heteronormative societies (Butler, 1990).

Academic analysis of transgender autobiographies has primarily been concentrated around the politics of representation and visibility. Scholars have studied how autobiographical accounts resist the epistemic violence inherent in legal, medical, and social systems which conceive of gender in terms of a binary opposition (Butler, 1990; Stryker, 2008). In the case of India, studies of Hijra narratives have stressed the intersections of caste, class, religion, and gender that produce both exclusion and resistance (Reddy, 2005). Scholars have argued that autobiographical writing gives transgender people an opportunity to reclaim narrative authority on identities created through state institutions, medical knowledge, and mass media and not by transgender people themselves (Smith & Watson, 2010).

Among the existing scholarly works on the novel, *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* is mainly discussed in terms of its treatment of issues of activism, social marginality, and identity politics (Tripathi, 2017). There are analyses of the ways in which Tripathi's memoir discusses such issues as visibility, legislation, and the politics of embodiment in postcolonial India. Researchers note that in her life-writing Tripathi challenges fixed definitions of masculinity and femininity, drawing attention to flexible and diverse forms of gender identity (Butler, 1990). Some scholars interpret the novel as an instance of resistance literature which turns private experience of oppression into political awareness (Stryker, 2008).

Despite the significant contribution these analyses make in terms of discussing socio-political aspects of the novel, not much research is focused on the psychological dimension of the text, specifically on how repression contributes to the construction of transgender identity. There are numerous examples of silence, secrecy, self-discipline, and psychic fragmentation in the memoir, which indicates that identity is constructed in the context of a dialogue between desire and social prohibition.

The field of psychoanalytic literary criticism has offered valuable insights into the study of identity, memory, and narrative throughout history. Freud's concept of repression continues to be significant in its consideration of socially unacceptable experiences which are relocated into the unconscious and then come back in symbolic form (Freud, 1915/1957). The concept of repression has been widely used by literary critics to study trauma narratives, autobiographical memory, and the making of the subject (Freud, 1900/1953). On the other hand, it could be argued that psychoanalysis has not yet successfully approached transgender literature because of Freud's use of binary concepts in his theories.

Feminist and queer theory has attempted to re-think and build upon the concept of psychoanalytic theories instead of discarding them. Butler's theory of gender performativity denies any natural concept of gender, and presents it as repetitive practice in culture (Butler, 1990). Through her analysis, Butler explains how gender identities are performed repetitively, not biologically determined. In a similar way, the fragmented concept of the subject as presented by Jacques Lacan denies the possibility of the subject to have any knowledge of him/herself (Lacan, 1977).

By focusing on how the experiences of transgender individuals occur in the context of larger systems of regulation and control, transgender theorists such as Susan Stryker and Judith Halberstam have extended the critique of pathologizing approaches to gender variance (Halberstam, 2018; Stryker, 2008). These approaches do not seek to ask why there are transgender identities but what makes it possible for there to be a transgender identity. Trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth have shown how trauma often remains unarticulated and returns in fragments (Caruth, 1996).

This study seeks to advance the literature by combining psychoanalytic literary criticism with recent transgender theory. Repression is no longer seen as the origin of transgender experience but its result, in response to the effort to regulate nonconforming gender expression socially. This

study adds to the existing research on transgender autobiographies and the ongoing discussion of the relationship between unconscious tension and identity formation.

Theoretical framework

The theory used in this research is multi-disciplinary in nature. It uses the theory of Freudian psychoanalysis along with the theories of feminism, queerness, and transgenderism. This will allow for an understanding of the psychological aspects as well as the social mechanisms regulating gendered life.

Repression theory of Sigmund Freud forms the core of the theory used in this study. According to Freud, repression is the mental process by which unpleasant memories, desires, and impulses are pushed out of conscious realization in order to avoid anxiety or conflict (Freud, 1915/1957). But repression does not erase those experiences, and instead they remain in the unconscious mind and come back in the form of symptoms, dreams, slips of tongue and symbols (Freud, 1900/1953). In literature, these reappear in the form of recurring memories, discontinuous narrative, emotional conflicts, and symbolic language.

Repression theory by Freud is used not to explain transgenderism, but as a tool to explore the psychological impact of discrimination and discipline. In the case of Tripathi's autobiography, experiences related to femininity, sexuality and personal expression become regularly controlled and monitored both at home and at school (Tripathi, 2017). The result is a set of inner conflicts that may be regarded as an example of what Freud describes as a recurrence of the repressed (Freud, 1915/1957). Therefore, repression is seen as socially produced rather than biologically predetermined.

Working-through theory (Durcharbeiten) is another aspect of Freud's theories that is used in the paper. Working-through is the process during which repressed memories are reviewed and transformed to consciousness (Freud, 1914/1958). Autobiographical writing in *Red Lipstick* can be viewed as a way of working through because it is about revisiting and

organizing the memories that were fragmented and inaccessible before.

In addition to Freud's theory, the study uses Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. This concept means that gender cannot be seen as something natural because it is socially constructed in the process of repetition and recognition (Butler, 1990). In the context of the memoir, it helps to understand how this process of policing gender takes place in society and how the non-normative forms of masculinity and femininity are punished.

Finally, the concept of the split subject by Jacques Lacan will help us understand the problem of identity formation as a complex and problematic process. According to Lacan, the processes of social recognition through the prism of language lead to the impossibility of self-transparency in the process of identity formation (Lacan, 1977).

The study will use Susan Stryker's contribution to the field of transgender studies to analyze the issue of transgender identity in terms of psychoanalysis. Thus, thanks to Stryker's works, we can use psychoanalytic theories without diagnosing people and treating their identities as pathological phenomena (Stryker, 2008).

Lastly, the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth offers further understanding of the connection between memory and storytelling. According to Caruth, trauma is usually difficult to represent immediately and comes back late through repetition and fragmentation (Caruth, 1996). This is evident in many parts of Tripathi's memoirs since autobiographical storytelling turns out to be a means of coming back to traumatic events and turning them into narratives.

Overall, the combination of the above theoretical approaches gives an integrated perspective on the analysis of *Red Lipstick* as a narrative that exists at the crossroads of unconscious struggle, social control, trauma, and resistance. The approach enables the study to go beyond oppositions of pathology and empowerment and see how transgendered subjectivity is constructed.

Analysis and Discussion

Childhood, Gender Nonconformity, and the Social Production of Repression

Perhaps one of the most important contributions of *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* can be attributed to the depiction of childhood as a primary locus of production and internalization of repression. According to Tripathi's memories, the struggle pertaining to gender identity was not something that arose inside the individual but something that emerged after encountering various institutions which were responsible for disciplining acceptable types of masculinity and femininity (Tripathi, 2017). Family pressures, peer groups, schools, and the community all contributed to forming a kind of mechanism for creating an experience of repression.

Repression, according to Freud, is the process whereby unacceptable desires or impulses are repressed from consciousness in order to prevent psychic conflict (Freud, 1915/1957). In the case of *Red Lipstick*, however, repression becomes much more social rather than psychological in nature. Here, the unacceptable thing is not the impulse per se but its manifestation on a body that has been labeled male.

The need to conform to normative constructions of masculinity leads to the formation of a split between bodily experience and social norms. Such split can be understood through the framework of Lacan's concept of a fragmented subject whose identity is defined by the ongoing mediation of the process of becoming recognized (Lacan, 1977). Tripathi's childhood experiences highlight the psychological impact of being unable to achieve the state of coherent representation in dominant symbolic discourses.

It is important to note that Tripathi's memoir does not seek to frame the conflict between internal identity and external expectations as an instance of mental disorder. Instead, the memoir presents psychological discomfort as the result of society's intolerance towards gender diversity. Therefore, the cause of trauma is not the transgender identity itself but the persistent need for its erasure or silence. The memoir shares a perspective common in contemporary

transgender studies (Stryker, 2008).

Familial Regulation and the Internalization of Social Authority

The family represents a complex case in the sense that it is both a place of love and repression in Tripathi's story. The individuals in the family may act out of love or social concerns; however, the act of loving and taking care is what leads to the continuation of gender stereotypes and norms.

One of the best instances where the idea can be seen is the case of Tripathi cutting her hair since her father disapproved of her looks (Tripathi, 2017). It should be noted that hair symbolizes much more than appearance, including identity, feminine identity and body control. Asking someone to change their appearance in order to satisfy the requirements of the patriarchal order shows that repression often happens through ordinary family discipline and not violence.

One of the ways Freudian structural theory of mind helps understand the process is the transformation of social prohibitions into the superego, which controls people using guilt and self-monitoring (Freud, 1923/1961). The memoir shows how the act of being judged on the outside becomes an act of self-censorship.

At the same time, Tripathi's account points out the weaknesses of repression. The self that is suppressed by society does not vanish but insists on being heard and recognized. The claim made by Freud that repressed content always comes back in a new disguise receives ample confirmation in the recurrent instances of femininity and yearning in the memoir (Freud, 1915/1957). Thus, the comeback of the repressed can be viewed as not a symptom of disease but as proof of the strength of personal experience against all regulation.

The concept of performativity advanced by Butler sheds additional light on this phenomenon. Gender identities are sustained through repetition, and any deviations highlight their temporary nature (Butler, 1990). By not giving up femininity altogether, Tripathi undermines the illusion that masculinity and femininity are innate categories. Hence, the memoir turns individual rebellion into

an attack on the very concept of gender essentialism.

Love, Recognition, and the Politics of Desire

One of the psychologically complicated elements of the memoir is the discussion of intimate relationships. Intimate relationships with men are presented as not only personal but also as those that reveal the social hierarchy of genders and legitimacy.

Throughout the story, intimacy always comes with conditional acceptance. The partners recognize Tripathi as feminine only in private, denying the fact in public out of fear of shame in society (Tripathi, 2017). These types of intimate relationships show how transgender people face unequal conditions of negotiating affection and acceptance.

In this regard, Lacan's concept of desire proves to be very helpful. Desire is connected with the process of recognition by the Other and it involves the procedures of being seen and acknowledged (Lacan, 1977). In other words, Tripathi's pursuit of intimacy goes further than romantic pleasure since she is looking for ontological recognition – to be acknowledged as a human being.

These processes of misrecognition have severe psychological effects since the emotional rejection is connected with social nonacceptance. Love and politics cannot be separated since intimate relationships are rooted in social power relations.

On the other hand, Tripathi refuses to see transgender narratives as those of victimhood. The author shows her personal experiences using emotional complexity instead of simple sentimentality, which involves desire, disappointments, affection, rage, and strength. Thus, by emphasizing the right of transgender people to feel desire, the book makes a statement against cultural narratives that present them only within the context of pain or marginalization (Halberstam, 2018).

In other words, this focus on emotions is a political statement. Through her work, Tripathi allows transgender people to have full access to all

those emotions that are considered an attribute of normative subjects.

Trauma, Memory, and Narrative Reconstruction

Trauma is an important element in Tripathi's autobiography, although his memoir chooses not to structure traumatic experiences on the basis of a conventional narrative of healing or catharsis.

According to Cathy Caruth, trauma cannot be represented immediately and tends to repeat itself in a belated fashion through symbolic means (Caruth, 1996). Tripathi's memoir is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Acts of violence, degradation, and rejection are not depicted as individual instances but repeat themselves throughout various phases of the narrator's life, illustrating the effects of marginalization on psychological development.

Repetition compulsion described by Freud sheds some light on this phenomenon as well. Traumatic events tend to repeat themselves not because the person wants to remember them but because they are unresolved psychologically (Freud, 1920/1955). Thus, the memoir's repetitive insistence on experiences of exclusion is an effort to turn passive experience into active interpretation.

Significantly, however, the memoir steers clear of turning trauma into spectacle. Neither the violence nor identity gets represented through a sensationalizing or victimizing approach to narrative. On the contrary, trauma becomes part of an overall story of survival and self-making. In this way, the memoir can preserve its ethical complexity without falling prey to triumphalism.

The process of moving from silence to narration corresponds to the process of working-through described by Freud as *Durcharbeiten* (Freud, 1914/1958). Through multiple instances of remembering and interpreting, fragmented experience gains meaning in terms of narrative.

Autobiography as Working-Through and Narrative Agency

The most profound achievement of *Red Lipstick* seems to be the way that the form itself becomes one of psychic construction and reconstruction rather than mere narrative account of events.

Freud's idea of working-through refers to gradual confrontation and reassessment of repressed material in order to minimize its psychological significance (Freud, 1914/1958). Likewise, Tripathi's memoir accomplishes this task on the formal level: memories, which have been connected with shame, confusion, and silence are now subjected to contemplation and articulation.

This phenomenon is also linked to Jessica Benjamin's idea of recognition, when mutual acknowledgment of both participants is vital for creating the sense of self (Benjamin, 1988). Tripathi's act of storytelling can be regarded as an appeal for recognition not only to her readers but also to various social institutions, which have always neglected the voice of transgender people.

Autobiography thus emerges as a process of resisting invisibility in history. It is a challenge to the power of medical, legal, and cultural discourses that have attempted to make sense of the transsexual identity without ever acknowledging the subjectivity of that experience itself. Narration provides the narrator with the power to interpret her life.

The process of moving from repression to expression goes beyond being simply psychologically cathartic to being a political realignment of identity and citizenship. Here, autobiography shows not only how personal memories are made public but also how individual suffering becomes political resistance.

Discussion

However, the insights obtained through this research indicate that the work *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* necessitates a rethinking of repression as a process which is both psychological, social, and political. Although Freud perceived the notion of repression as an individual process involving the exclusion of unacceptable drives from conscious awareness, the memoir by Tripathi proves that this process often starts outside the person and only then gets incorporated into his/her subconscious (Freud, 1915/1957; Tripathi, 2017). In this way, the memoir extends the classical psychoanalytic theory of repression by proving that the family,

school, close personal relations, and even culture itself are all involved in the creation of this process.

The result of this research adds to the discussions currently taking place within the field of psychoanalysis and transgender studies concerning the application of Freudian theories to non-normative sexualities. Traditionally, the criticism against psychoanalysis has been the use of the medical model in describing gender variance as an outcome of developmental malfunction or psychic disorder (Stryker, 2008). It was understandable that this practice had made queer and transgender theories skeptical about psychoanalysis. But in this research, it appears possible that the Freudian theory of repression may still prove useful if applied the other way around. The purpose of the study was not to ask psychoanalysis to account for transgendered experience, but rather to employ psychoanalysis in explaining the psychological impacts of being within an environment that refuses to recognize one's transgendered reality.

The importance of this differentiation lies in the fact that it turns the focus from the pathology of the individual to the violence of the institution. It can be seen from the memoir that the experience of being under surveillance, being regulated, ridiculed, and misunderstood leads to psychological problems and not the identity of the person. This interpretation is consistent with current minority stress models that posit that psychological problems experienced by people from the sexual and gender minorities result from their constant exposure to stigma and discrimination and not inherent in identity (Meyer, 2003).

Moreover, the memoir prompts a reconsideration of Butler's concept of gender performativity in light of transgender autobiography. According to Butler, gender is created through acts which are performed repeatedly rather than having anything to do with biological essence (Butler, 1990). In the memoir, Tripathi's experience shows the compulsory nature of the acts which constitute gender identity. Masculinity is repeatedly presented in the book as something that is forced

upon Tripathi rather than the expression of his true identity. His family members, friends and institutions ask for repetition of masculine acts and gestures so as to keep alive the idea that gender identities are stable and natural. The threat posed to the idea of masculinity through the feminine nature of Tripathi is revealed through this.

On the other hand, the memoir problematizes the notion of performativity of gender by highlighting the continuity of self-recognition in spite of outside interference. This is demonstrated in Tripathi's story because identity cannot simply be understood as performance since personal experience goes beyond all available social scripts time and again. Femininity persists even in those moments when there is regulation and repression of it as it comes out through gestures, desires, practices and emotions. Thus, the memoir assumes an important place in the space between essentialism and constructivism regarding gender.

In addition, the results of the present research are significant for Lacanian analyses of recognition and subject formation. Lacan's theory of the subject posits the necessity for the subject's identity not to be formed independently but via symbolic structures of language and social recognition (Lacan, 1977). In *Red Lipstick*, Tripathi's problem is not only to understand who she is but to have her identity recognized by others. This aspect shows how, in the course of the memoir, recognition works as a necessary element of social life. The denial of recognition is not just a conflict but also the violation of ontological security of the individual.

The dynamic of the memoir becomes especially clear through its depictions of romantic relationships. Relationships in *Red Lipstick* are often marked by conditional recognition where the presence of affection is accompanied by denial or social invisibility (Tripathi, 2017). Thus, such relationships demonstrate how intimate relationships still remain affected by heteronormative and hierarchical relations. In the memoir, love is not considered an apolitical private space but rather the social institution that is implicated in the process of legitimization and

exclusion. The inability or unwillingness of partners to openly recognize transgender femininity reveals the deep-seated anxiety in culture towards identities that subvert binary concepts of sex and gender.

At the same time, it is important to note that Tripathi's memoir does not reduce the experience of transgender people to victim narratives. Although trauma remains the main concept that operates in the text, it is never used as the only element that constructs the identity of a person. On the contrary, the memoir claims the legitimacy of joy, sexual desire, ambition, and other emotions in the life of a transgender. In this way, the author makes an intervention into literary narratives about transgender people who were traditionally described in tragic terms (Halberstam, 2018).

Trauma as presented in the memoir additionally contributes to current research on trauma through demonstrating the way marginality creates repeated and not isolated trauma. Trauma theory traditionally deals with exceptional cases like war, disaster, or physical abuse. On the contrary, *Red Lipstick* shows how normal and repeated acts of marginality have psychological repercussions: ridicules during childhood, corrections from family members, marginality in social environment, and dismissal of one's emotions. This kind of traumas might seem trivial when viewed separately, yet their cumulative effects last through identity formation and influence self-respect. Thus, the memoir confirms recent approaches in trauma research regarding the significance of mundane acts of violence and marginalization (Caruth, 1996).

The structure of the memoir proves this approach to trauma as well. Memories do not come in chronological order, yet appear repeatedly and with connections to emotional states, which characterize trauma as something broken and not linear. Cathy Caruth notes that trauma is experienced late since the victim is unable to process it immediately (Caruth, 1996). For instance, in the case of Tripathi's memoir, moments of humiliation and exclusion continue to appear in the life of the narrator as a process of

trauma and experience that continues to exist in memory despite its passing nature in time. This process of autobiographical writing becomes an effort aimed at understanding what is difficult to comprehend in the first place.

In order to understand the way in which this process takes place, it would be useful to refer to Freudian notion of *Durcharbeiten* or working-through. Working-through is described by Freud as a process of repeated return to one's repressed memories and experiences that need to be interpreted (Freud, 1914/1958). The *Red Lipstick* book carries out the same mission through narration of experiences.

There is evidence of this in Tripathi's memoir in that instances of humiliation and marginalization are presented throughout her life, thus indicating that the memory of the trauma continues to affect her long after the event. The process of writing the autobiography becomes more of an effort to comprehend the events that initially failed to make sense to her.

The process of narration can be analyzed in terms of what Freud calls *Durcharbeiten* or working-through. Working-through is a psychoanalytical approach in which there is an effort to revisit and reinterpret experiences that have been repressed in such a way that they can be incorporated into conscious thought processes (Freud, 1914/1958). Similarly, in *Red Lipstick*, the process of writing becomes an approach through which experiences that were previously shrouded in silence and shame are subjected to reflection and interpretation.

In terms of literature, *Red Lipstick* is significant in contemporary South Asian life writing since it challenges traditional notions of autobiography based on coherence, linearity, and fixed identity (Smith & Watson, 2010). The memoir by Tripathi represents the kind of autobiographies which are characterized by contradiction, multiplicity and fluidity. In doing so, the author reflects the reality of being transgender in the postcolonial world. Therefore, *Red Lipstick* contributes to the development of autobiography as a genre by opening up possibilities for speaking voices and

new types of narratives.

An interdisciplinary methodology used in this study may be of interest for future research. Combining psychoanalysis, transgender studies, trauma theory, and literary criticism shows the fruitful interaction that is possible between disciplines if they work together in an appropriate way. By using these different theoretical traditions not separately but simultaneously, the researcher is able to utilize their strengths without reproducing their problematic aspects connected with the issue of gender and sexuality.

In essence, the memoir *Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life* clearly shows that the process of repression does not operate in isolation but rather as a social relationship that is defined by power dynamics. Through this work, Tripathi illustrates the manner in which institutions influence the emotional life of an individual, the way recognition assumes significance in the constitution of the self, and how narrative may be used to turn one's silence into power. Through the use of such techniques, Tripathi's autobiography is not just an account of one's life but also an existential reflection on one's identity, memory, and survival against social exclusion.

Conclusion

The present analysis has posited the idea that the *Red Lipstick* by Laxmi Narayan Tripathi radically alters how one should think about the phenomenon of repression since it shows the process as something that is at once psychological, social, and political. In accordance with the Freudian psychoanalysis, the process of repression is understood as an internal mechanism aimed at expelling unacceptable desires from consciousness (Freud, 1915/1957). On the contrary, the example of Tripathi's memoir indicates that the process of repression does not have its origin in individuals and rather occurs in institutional frameworks of gendered life organization (Tripathi, 2017).

In other words, family, education, close personal contacts, as well as social discourse in general, actively participates in the process of creating repression by determining what kind of embodiment, desire, and expression of self is

acceptable. As has been mentioned above, the psychological problems described in the memoir arise not because of transgender identity per se, but due to constant demand for conforming to the heteronormative and patriarchal ideal. From this perspective, the work in question radically departs from traditional psychoanalytical approach and brings to light the psychological repercussions of social exclusion, misrecognition, and symbolic violence (Meyer, 2003).

Through the intersection of Freudian Psychoanalysis with the theories of Judith Butler, Jacques Lacan, Susan Stryker, Cathy Caruth, and Jessica Benjamin, this research has highlighted how an interdisciplinary approach can be used to understand the life writings of transgender individuals. The theory of performativity, provided by Judith Butler, helps us comprehend how the social construction of norms plays an integral role in shaping gender identities (Butler, 1990). The concepts of recognition and fragmentation in Lacanian psychoanalysis shed light on the psychic impact caused by living identities that do not belong to the accepted culture (Lacan, 1977). The theories of trauma have enabled us to understand how everyday invalidation leads to traumas, which in turn are explained through the ethical theories offered by the contemporary transgender studies (Caruth, 1996; Stryker, 2008).

Moreover, the memoir highlights the inefficacy of repression as one of the mechanisms for the regulation of behavior in society. In its course, femininity keeps popping up over and over again no matter what efforts are made to repress it. In other words, the book confirms Freud's thesis that the repressed never disappears, and comes back in one form or another (Freud, 1915/1957). Yet, the return of the repressed in the case of *Red Lipstick* does not occur through pathology and neurosis but rather through narrative, memory and self-representation. Thus, Tripathi turns the painful experience of silence, shame and fragmentation into testimony and self-definition, proving the possibility to utilize autobiography as a means of psychological and political resistance (Tripathi, 2017).

The key here is the notion of *Durcharbeiten* developed by Freud. One may say that the memoir represents nothing else but the process of re-visiting and re-interpretation of the experiences which have remained inaccessible, fragmented and socially unacceptable until now (Freud, 1914/1958). It means that through narration, the memories of trauma become reinterpreted into the narrative of self-definition and survival. Hereby, autobiography is more than recollection – it is recovery and reinterpretation.

In more general terms, *Red Lipstick* is a valuable contribution to contemporary South Asian life writing in that it challenges the conventional notion of autobiography based on coherence, stability, and singularity of identity (Smith & Watson, 2010). The multiplicity, contradictions, and fluidity that characterize the author's narrative create an alternative conception of subjectivity that refuses binaries associated with gender and individuality. Consequently, the autobiography enlarges the range of possibilities for the genre itself and for understanding the concept of identity in literary and cultural context.

Also, the results obtained in this study may be considered relevant to discussions about the connection between psychoanalysis and transgender studies because these approaches have been treated as antipodal ones in academic discourse. However, the article shows how Freudian notions can stay relevant when analyzed from the feminist, queer, and transgender perspectives, which means that they do not need to be interpreted as pathologizing gender variance

or deviance (Butler, 1990; Stryker, 2008). The current challenge for psychoanalytic criticism is thus to analyze the socio-cultural circumstances under which it becomes difficult to express or accept some identities rather than treat them as symptoms.

Red Lipstick: The Men in My Life ultimately shows how the battle for transgender recognition is not simply a political battle, but rather a battle of memory, narration, and psychic survival. Through making her experiences of oppression into an act of witness, Tripathi disrupts the systems of invisibility, creating room to think about gender identity outside of dualistic thinking. Her memoir serves as a testament to the fact that literature not only mirrors society, but helps to transform it as well (Tripathi, 2017).

Potential avenues for future research might include an application of this interdisciplinary approach to other autobiographies of South Asian transgender individuals that could be analyzed within the interplay of psychoanalytic, trauma studies, queer theory, and postcolonial criticism. This kind of research could add to knowledge on how marginalized subjects construct their identities through narratives and the ways in which literature operates as the locus of recovery and exploration of silent stories. In general, the importance of Freudian theory of repression is not in the rigid definitions and conclusions it provides but rather in its flexible nature that allows for reinterpretation and development according to new ideas about gender and identity.

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