

Historicizing Brati: A Journey of Sujata's Memories in Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*

Stephen Samuel A¹, & Evangeline Priscilla B²

¹ Research Scholar, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore – 632014, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: stephensamuel.a2021@vitstudent.ac.in

² Assistant Professor, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore – 632014, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: evangeline.b@vit.ac.in

Correspondence: Evangeline Priscilla B, Assistant Professor of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore – 632014, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: evangeline.b@vit.ac.in

Received: April 28, 2024

Accepted: June 26, 2024

Online Published: July 30, 2024

doi:10.5430/wjel.v14n6p308

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n6p308>

Abstract

Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* has a trope of returning to the past events, after a tragedy. This trope is central to both the plot and act of narration of the protagonist, Sujata. Sujata's journey to the past is not just part of a thematic element, but also a narrative strategy through which Mahasweta Devi casts an indirect gaze on the Naxalite world. This study analyses Sujata's trip into the past by focusing on different subsets of memory involved in her journey which Mahasweta Devi employs throughout the novel. Devi's *Mother of 1084* entirely is a narrative from the perspective of a bereaved Sujata after having lost her son Brati to unknown circumstances. By referring to the theoretical underpinnings of renowned scholars from the field of Memory Studies, including Jacques Lacan, Endel Tulving, Chris Brewin, and Kurt Danziger, this study explores how different memory subsets that of recollection, reminiscence, episodes, semantics, and flashbacks of the characters in the novel come together to historicise the memory of the deceased (Brati). The study then attempts to understand memory's role as the focal point in bringing an artistic sense to the novel.

Keywords: memory, recollection, reminiscence, episodes, flashback, historicise

1. Introduction

Memory in the present era is not what it used to be. Earlier, 'memory' was associated with a particular place and it can be found in various monuments worldwide, in the form of written texts, and geographical locations. The modern 'memory' has brought a sense of historical permanency to those monuments as national, familial, and social communities. Currently, memory is seen as a flexible and fluid affair due to globalisation, memories travel through migration. In the age of digitalisation, memories were transferred first from computers and then from cameras. Due to technological innovations like data management and security, memories are transferred through digital mediums. The shift from transmitting memories through physical landmarks to using digital platforms as a medium has reshaped the relationships between various generations, and these relationships serve as the basis for memory studies.

In this contemporary rational world, researchers from memory studies are deploying various memory elements as a theoretical tool to analyze a text. It originated from the works of a German psychologist, Herman Ebbinghaus, who is credited "*with founding not a school of psychology, but instead a whole field of research*" (Roediger, 1985). In recent years, the scope for memory studies increased greatly, bringing a wide range of topics which included studying narrative memory, eyewitness recollections, déjà vu, and various literary elements. The field of memory studies eventually became a multidisciplinary field combining numerous elements such as history, education, literature, psychology and numerous subjects.

Memory Studies created a significant impact on the field of English literature. It has highlighted the relational and dynamic nature of memory and focused on the various social, cultural, and historical factors that collectively play a major influence on memory formation and recall. Researchers aspiring to know about the term 'collective memory' as a part of their primary reference in terms of theoretical approach refer to the works of Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist (1925, 1941). Through his work *Social Frameworks of Memory* which was published in 1925 (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 106), Halbwachs marked that memories of people and objects are all social and are passed from one generation to another. According to Halbwachs, memory is not something that can be considered to be an individual phenomenon but it is interactive with family, relatives, friends, and society as a collective group. With the contribution of Memory Studies in the field of research, the work of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) deals with the complex interaction between the past and the present, posing new questions so that historians and anthropologists understand our history. This work has inspired numerous researchers to research in the memory studies field (Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004, p. 349).

Numerous texts are available in memory studies in the modern era. Some of the key texts related to this field include Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896) where Bergson shows the distinguishment between "habit memory" and "pure memory", the former being an

automatic behaviour that is achieved through repetition. The latter is the way an individual's memories are stored unconsciously in their mind. Jacques Le Goff's *History and Memory* (1992) discusses the ethnicity of memory and the rise of memory from the orality to the Renaissance and the present and about the modern revolutions in the field of memory. Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, (1996-8) in which Nora explored the various aspects of nationalism, the nation, and the national identity and discussed the association between history and memory. Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History and Forgetting* (2004), here Ricoeur emphasizes the positive aspects of memory claiming that memory is the direct connecting link to our past and it is the building block of history. These four pioneering works by the corresponding authors laid the foundation for the evolution of Memory studies (Bosch, 2016).

Individuals while striving to make sense of the world around them, attribute their experiences to emotions, "Individuals through their senses and their observations try to comprehend the society/surroundings they live in by attributing emotions to the experiences they face be it joy, laughter, pain, sadness, etc... and these experiences are stored by memory" (Samuel A & Priscilla B, 2023, p. 83). Memory can occur in various circumstances to an individual, unconsciously, and sometimes they are triggered by an external factor. They can be seen in the form of recollections, episodes, flashbacks and so on. These memory elements can be found employed in the novel of the renowned Indian Bengali author Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*. *Mother of 1084* documents the historical Naxalite Movement and is reflected in an urban space, as the main plot of the novel occurs through the recurrence of memory. The Naxalite Movement in India is a famous movement which sprung from a village in the remote jungles of West Bengal by the name of Naxalbari; by the peasants (tribals) of the village and later it developed as a students' movement as a form of revolt against the domination of the Bourgeois class (30 years of Naxalbari, 2010). This Naxalite Movement of the 1960s is deployed as the background of the novel by Mahasweta Devi as she gives a passive reference to the movement throughout the novel but she never accounts for the movement directly and insists on "I believe in the value of documentation" (Devi, 1974, p. xii).

Mahasweta Devi, is an author famously known for her documentation of history artistically and aesthetically through her works, and a writer who has dedicated herself to sensitising her readers on social issues within India, which require serious concern. Her writings gradually evolved and were focussed mostly on the social and political relevance in contemporary times. Mahasweta Devi's questioning and criticising the government and their authority as per Sen and Yadav are the main reasons for "her questioning of what the nation in the post-independence era has done to its people" (2008, p. 15). Her focus lay on the themes of struggles, and hardships of the tribals and the marginalised people of India, and on how the landlords and people of higher authority exploited the people belonging to the lower class. She also shed light on the fate of all women, including ill-treated household wives, widows, and estranged daughters. However, it was her political connections that helped her to "demonstrate the kind of theoretical engagement of the postcolonial historian with 'nationhood' censuring the make-believe of a benign solidarity built around divergent people" (Sen & Yadav, 2008, p. 16). However, in her work, *Mother of 1084* Mahasweta Devi portrays the picture of a grief-stricken mother who is trapped in a situation living a life-in-death situation after a sense of maternal loss alongside other political, social, and inhumane apathy to human suffering and misery.

Mahasweta Devi brings out the novel by following the quest of an apolitical mother, Sujata. Sujata, the novel's protagonist is married to a middle-class man named Dibyanath. Her son, Brati is an active urban youth who partakes in the Naxalite Movement to protest the government and loses his life in the process of defending his fellow 'comrades.' After Brati's death and having been asked to identify her dead son's body which did not have a name tag on it, rather just a prison tag reading 'Prisoner No.1084', Sujata embarks on a journey to find out the reason behind her son's death and what his mission was that led to his ultimate demise. This journey of Sujata is not only a physical one but also a journey which is coherent and swings to and fro from the present to the past. Sujata's journey is of a repressed mother trying to recollect the memories of her deceased son while also having to bear the double marginalization from her own family and society. All in a quest to find Brati, her youngest son of whose existence neither his father nor his siblings seem to care. The novel also shows the power empowered by Sujata's bourgeois family to alter the history of their dead son so that they could retain their class identity in society. This signified class power can be seen through the memories of Nandini, Brati's love interest and by his family members' opinions of him which Brati raves on to his mother before his death.

2. Research Question

This article aims to analyse Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* as a work of art that centres around memory being a prominent element throughout the novel and the various subsets of memory such as recollections, reminiscence, episodes and semantics, flashback, and their roles in the novel. The process of this study is done by referring to the theoretical underpinnings of renowned scholars from the field of Memory Studies, including Jacques Lacan, Endel Tulving, Chris Brewin, and Kurt Danziger. The research questions of the study are as follows;

1. How do the subsets of memory like recollections, reminiscence, episodes and semantics, and flashbacks identified in the characters in the novel come together to historicize the memory of the deceased Brati?

This article then attempts to understand the role of these memory subsets in the artistic reconstruction of historical events and their impact on Brati's life through Sujata.

3. Memory subsets Identified in *Mother of 1084*

Mother of 1084 written originally in Bengali by Mahasweta Devi was later translated to English by Samik Bandyopadhyay, an Indian critic who also scripted a play of this novel. The original title of the work in Bengali was *Hajar Churasir Ma*. The novel is a narrative from the perspective of a bereaved mother, Sujata after having lost her son, Brati. Completely shattered after hearing and identifying her

dead son's body, Sujata takes on a traumatic and gruelling journey to completely understand her son, Brati and to grasp his behind-the-scenes revolutionary activities which led to him being branded a traitor and killed. Throughout the story, Mahasweta Devi makes her readers experience the plight of Sujata who is marginalized by her husband and by her children. This journey into the past of Sujata with help from other characters in the novel both family members and the ones who knew Brati and his revolutionary activities goes through various subsets of memory shedding light on the psyche of a son who had chosen this model but dangerous life which ultimately jeopardised his life.

3.1 *Sujata's and Nandini's Recollection and Reminiscence of Brati*

Recalling and recognizing are important aspects of memory constituting the formulation and functionalisation process of memory which results in creating a history. In *Mother of 1084*, both Sujata (Brati's mother) and Somu's mother recall the past of their son's lives and, in this process, recognise their respective sons in the resituated history of the Naxalite movement.

At the beginning of the novel, Sujata's recollections go over to the last twenty-two years of her life. Sujata recalls the time Brati was born and how she reached the hospital all on her own for the delivery with no one accompanying her, not even her husband. This shows the suffocating environment that Sujata had to live in even before Brati was born. These two processes of recall and recognition are equipped with the help of communication between Sujata and the other characters in the novel. Later as the story unfolds, Sujata while preparing for the evening party of her daughter Tuli's engagement travels through time both backwards and forward in her mind of her interactions with the other characters (Somu's mother, Nandini) and the incidents she witnessed with Brati.

Jacques Lacan stresses the point that the analytic process of memory does not necessarily aim at reminiscence but mostly at recollection (Recollection, n.d.). Similarly, in the novel Sujata can be seen mostly recollecting most of her memories regarding Brati, but she also reminisces some of them. Her way of recollecting and reminiscing her memories and her way of creating images out of those memories can be visualised clearly through the lines,

"The whole of the night of the other sixteenth of January she had the pain tearing through her, from consciousness to unconsciousness and back again, the smell of ether, harsh lights, the doctors moving beyond the hazy screen of torpid pain, all night long, then the dawn of seventeenth January and Brati was born" (Devi, 1974, p. 5).

Her recollection of that vague yet magical night was something she cherished throughout her life as that infant even though it made her suffer and almost killed her from the pregnancy pain. But he brought out a magical moment and this strengthened the bond between Brati and Sujata right from the day of his birth. Sujata also recollects the time when she was reading the newspaper about these events but didn't at all know that Brati was also a part of this, *"When Brati was still alive and Sujata was yet to know that Brati belonged in the ranks of the doomed, she would read the papers and feel the shock of every bloody episode reported"* (Devi, 1974, p. 49). While she recollects all these memories she continues to reminisce about the other incidents and her newfound discoveries about life take her to a future where her so far meaningless and imperfectly perfect life ultimately becomes an imperfect life till her death.

Nandini, the love of Brati, who also was a part of the movement recollects and reminisces about Brati to Sujata. After Sujata recollects the memories of her dead son, she sets out on a quest to know more about Brati and his life from other characters one of which was Nandini. Nandini reminisces about the place where she and Brati used to stay together, where he told her about his ideals and his dreams for the country and how he wanted to be a perfect child for his mother. Sujata later finds out that Nandini too was captured and put in prison like her son and she was treated very poorly by the police officers in such a way that she became mentally ill and partially blind. Reminiscence is *"The process of recapturing salient memories from one's personal past"* (Webster, 1993, p. 256). In the novel, Nandini also reminisces her prison experience: *"I too have died a slow death as I thought over the past all by myself in a solitary cell"* (Devi, 1974, p. 78). Then, Nandini reminisces about Brati's opinion on his family members to Sujata;

"Brati's brother and sister admired their father. Brati used to say that they were not human. His eldest sister was a nympho, the other sister a bundle of complexes, impossible to understand, his brother a pimp. That was how he described them. Only you... he loved you. That is why he hadn't left home." (Devi, 1974, p. 82).

By the recollections and the reminiscence of Brati, it can be understood, that *"The more that you can take somebody back to their former experiences, the more you bolster their identity"* (Charlwood, 2018, p. 92). Reminiscing about Brati, Sujata and Nandini in a way bolstered Brati's identity even after his death.

3.2 *Sujata's Journey through Episodic and Semantic Memory*

This subset of memory can be found in various areas in the novel *Mother of 1084* shifts occasionally between Episodic Memory and Semantic memory. Sujata, the bereaved mother of the deceased Brati battles an emotional imbalance with herself when she is haunted by the episodic memory of Brati's death. Endel Tulving, the pioneer of human memory studies distinguishes between Episodic and Semantic Memory in his work *Elements of Episodic Memory*, and he attributes the 'memory of an event' to episodic memory (1984, p. 229) and the 'memory of knowledge' to semantic memory (1984, p. 225).

Mother of 1084 opens with the memory of Sujata when fragments of memory, in this case, episodic memory take Sujata back to the time when she was thirty-one years old and was pregnant with a fourth child and this was the event of the night leading up to Brati's birth; *"That Sujata's face twisted with pain again and again, she clamped her teeth on her lips to check the cry, the Sujata of the dreams waiting for Brati to be born"* (Devi, 1974, p. 1). She also felt at that moment that she would not stay in that house any longer because her husband

was caught cheating with a typist girl, and she did not know what she was going to do next but one thing she was fixed on was “*Sujata would not stay here after tonight. She would no longer stay in a house where Brati was no more*” (Devi, 1974, p. 95). Sujata’s address to her older self was triggered by the present version of Sujata suddenly getting a call asking her to come to the police station to identify her son’s dead body. “*The involuntary mode of episodic memory does this by providing an automatic mechanism for maintaining and re-evaluating memories of the past and adjusting future goals in the light of a constantly shifting present reality.*” (Berntsen, 2009, p. 198).

Sujata goes on to dream about Brati sitting on the windowsill, eating, chatting, and existing with her. Tulving in his argument puts forth that “*If a person possesses some semantic memory information, he obviously must have learned it, either directly or indirectly, at an earlier time, but he need not possess any mnemonic information of the episode of such learning.*” (Zimmermann, 2014). These episodic memories of the birth of Brati constitute the semantic memory of Brati’s death in Sujata. The recurrence of episodic and semantic memory disrupts the course of action in Sujata’s life. “*When Sujata saw Brati in her dreams these days, a part of her mind would insist that it was just a dream. Brati did not exist. It was just a dream. The other part of the mind went on insisting that it was not a dream, it was real*” (Devi, 1974, pp. 13-14). However, this episodic memory of Brati as conceptualised by Sujata does not provide the complete characterisation of Brati. The other memory subsets also play a role in that.

3.3 Sujata’s Flashbacks into the Past

Sujata’s quest to find the reasoning behind her son’s murder/death begins with her journey from the time she distances from her husband and her children. Sujata was surprised by her family’s unsympathetic behaviour towards Brati as they were keener on hiding the news of Brati’s undignified death rather than conducting a funeral for him. And so, Sujata reaches out of her status of being a submissive wife and a mother to gain access to the unknown truths about Brati’s past which led to his death. Some of Sujata’s memories that facilitate her journey through time to the past and the present are in the form of dreams, but Mahasweta Devi ingeniously plots the narration in specific time markers through vivid and extraordinary flashback scenes.

As a reader, one must go back and forth through the narratives to have an idea about the dynamics of the memories and formulate them in chronological sequence. For this, Mahasweta Devi employs the flashback memory technique to establish the tension which is already prevailing in the novel. The novel opens with a dream, “*In her dreams Sujata was back on a morning twenty-two years ago.*” (Devi, 1974, p. 1). Mahasweta Devi introduces the family members with a description of how they were twenty-two years ago. The flashback goes on to unfold a scene where Sujata can be found lying by her husband Dibyanath’s side in bed on the same day that Brati was born which was January 17 but this time the circumstance was different. This time it was the day she received the news of Brati’s death, the same date that he was born.

A flashback experience can be relatively mild at times when the individual has a momentary sense of the moment reoccurring in the present and can also be to the extreme where the individual loses all connection between themselves and their current surroundings while reliving the moment (Brewin, 2011, p. 212). Sujata’s memories constantly go to the flashbacks of the sight of Brati’s dead body which was put along with other dead bodies in the morgue in a raw way re-invoking those painful moments in her; “*There were three bullet holes on his body, one on the chest, one on the stomach, one on the throat. Blue holes... The skin around the hole was blue... Chocolate coloured blood*” (Devi, 1974, p. 11). Sujata loses herself in the process and also loses her connection with her surroundings for a while as to her all these were happening in the present. Later as the story progresses even though Sujata fulfils her motherly duties by participating in the ring ceremony of her daughter Tuli, she reminisces and goes to the memories of what she suffered in the last two years. Sujata tames these painful memories as she can be seen ‘drinking ice water’ and ‘had a cold bath’ so that the ceremony does not face any interruptions. She then has a flashback of the time she was with Brati before his death and how on that particular day his fingers and his eyelids were too cold to touch and that there was nothing colder than his body as everything flashes before her eyes. She is reminded of it by the constant reminder, “*She had been with Brati the whole day*” (Devi, 1974, p. 104).

According to Hellawell and Brewin, flashback memory is different from other memories such as recollections, which one can recall at will but flashback memory cannot be retrieved at will (2002, p. 1143). Similarly, certain memories of Sujata are not recalled at will all the time and are only more coherent when these retrieved flashback memories are associated with multiple mini-episodic memories.

There is another concept of memory that is loosely associated with flashback memory. The Weapon effect memory was studied by Johnson and Scott in the year 1976. The Weapon Effect memory ensouls the memory and it pictures the incident that occurred especially that of a tragic event, especially during a harmful emergency in the presence of a weapon. In the novel, this memory can be seen in Somu’s mother who had witnessed the killing of her son along with Brati and the other comrades with guns and knives, “*Stench of gunpowder on the still winter air – the stink of gunpowder – the dark faces receding...*” (Devi, 1974, p. 66). This Weapon Effect memory aids in the memory of Somu’s mother as she tells her about the last dying moments of Brati.

4. A Journey via Sujata’s Memories: Brati’s Historicization

Every memory has a history of its own. Every culture remembers its past, however, each culture’s way of recollecting these memories and sustaining them is different. With this, an individual keeps alive the history of their deceased family member by their frequent recollections either through the help of the photographs or through the memory of the deceased. In the cognition of memory, the most important role is the communication of information. Proper and detailed communication of information is necessary for forming an identity in the memory. Jan Assmann, a German Egyptologist in his work “*Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*” states the

significance of communication that it necessitates memory and that it further leads to the formation of an identity and it is this identity that is inherited by that community as their cultural identity (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 128). The grand narratives of history and power to the writers dealing with memory studies are destabilised by the concept of memory as, “*memory, remembering and recording are the very key to existence, becoming and belonging*” (Garde-Hansen, 2011, p. 18).

Sujata, after she visits Somu’s mother’s house and Nandini, decides not to ever visit them again. She then contemplates what she could do to remember Brati, “*Where would she go, then, searching for Brati? Or would she, too, stop searching for him some day?*” (Devi, 1974, p. 104). She also begins to question whether she in the future would have someone to sit beside and cry uttering Brati’s name this thought chilled her and she questions herself again, “*Was that when Brati would finally die? Was he not still alive, immured within her inconsolable grief?*” (Devi, 1974, p. 105).

But it is through Sujata’s episodic, semantic and flashback memory which restructured with the recollections and reminiscent memories of Nandini along with the weapon effect that Somu’s mother encounters, all these memories lay the base to construct the structure which historicizes the memory of Brati. The disappeared history of Brati which was carried out by Dibyanath, who exercised his economic power to erase the history of Brati by not allowing any news of Brati to be printed in the newspapers, is reverted and brought back to life by the historicized memories of these characters.

Brati’s name and information about his involvement in the movement not being mentioned in any of the newspapers nullify the history of his existence and non-existence. Even to the other family members, the news of Brati’s death did not mean much as Tuli, Brati’s sister does not show any emotion and is insensitive to how Brati’s memory and identity were being treated by her father contrary to the pain of grief that Sujata was going through. Tuli further erases the identity of Brati by fixing her engagement on the same date of her brother’s death which was also his birth date. She considers her father’s act of hushing the death of her brother as ‘natural’ and in an argument with her mother asks her to behave in a normal way to her fiancée Tony and his friends showing that the erasing of her brother’s identity did not concern her at all. But this game of existence and death of Brati is revived through the memory and the dreams of characters like Sujata, Somu’s mother, and Nandini. This historicizing of a person through communication as per Jan Assmann is done through the communicative memory of Somu’s mother and Nandini who collectively constitute historicizing the memory of Brati.

To Danziger, the crucial development in the history of human memory requires the involvement of materials apart from the individual’s body for the means of representation (2008, p. 1). Meaning that acts of remembering can be triggered by other factors or an external factor apart from the individual memory of a person (Sujata). It was Somu’s mother who revealed the incident or the moment to Sujata when Brati was murdered along with his other comrades. Nandini on the other hand sheds light on the background details of Brati about who was his favourite member in the family and of his aim and narrates the betrayal due to which Brati lost his life. It is through these two that Sujata learns and gets to know more about Brati in detail apart from her episodic and semantic and flashback memories. In the end through all these Sujata transcends into a new person, a mother who finally understood her son after his death, and ultimately ends her search for the proximity of Brati’s motive to join the Naxalite Movement. After understanding the struggles of the entire family carried by Brati, Sujata then expresses to her Brati, “*Where will you lose yourself again? Don’t run away, Brati. Come to me, Brati, come back. Don’t run any more*” (Devi, 1974, p. 126). Stating that she had finally found her son, her real son, not the one she assumed at the beginning of her journey. Ultimately, Sujata dies not as a negligent mother but by having a sense of belonging to her son. The Brati that she had lost at the beginning of the novel was found at the end, “*Sujata had found him again after searching all day, he was in the midst of everything, he was everywhere*” (Devi, 1974, p. 126).

5. Discussion

In literary texts, the author’s goal, and intention for creating a character is to satisfy the readers. It is the full responsibility of the readers to understand the author’s motivation behind a character and they must fill the ‘gap’ between the character and the plot (Newton, 1997, p. 198). According to Psychologist Wayne Weiten, Art like Sigmund Freud’s Dream theory is a, “*wish fulfilled in a physical, tangible way*” (McPherrin, n.d.). Freud in his opinion of art believed that art was way too close to being considered reality, hence making art an ineffective tool to satisfy the id (Palmer, 1991, p. 446). Similarly, in *Mother of 1084*, Mahasweta Devi bases it on the Naxalite movement which happened in India, but the storyline of the novel with the characters is ambiguous. Several important factors are left unexplained in the novel. There are certain characters like Somu’s mother who is not given a name till the end, nor Brati’s death is explained in detail. This writing style of Mahasweta Devi reflects Sigmund Freud’s idea states that the writers drift away from reality and go on to write with their libido all the while focusing on the “*creation of wishes in the life of phantasy, from which the reader may readily lead to neurosis*” (Archie & Archie, 2006). It is the aftermath of the memory of literature that ultimately emphasizes Somu’s mother, through repetitive quest on the failure of the author to nomenclate a name. Thereby denying Somu’s mother of having her own identity and leading a life destined with her sufferings whereas on the other hand, the sufferings undergone by the protagonist Sujata are given much attention. Devi employs the tool of memory as a sign to signify the amplified happenings of the Naxalite Movement through the ambiguous narration of Brati’s death.

Mahasweta Devi in this novel only historicises the memory of Brati who belonged to the middle class whereas the memories of the underprivileged people like Somu and the other fallen comrades who endured the same sufferings and fate as Brati were not historicised. This failure of Mahasweta Devi to historicise the memories of the underprivileged has led to the epistemological debate to emphasise the ‘voice for the voiceless.’ Mahasweta Devi’s failure to address Somu’s mother by her name has memorialised her strong presence through

intellectual activities. Memory with the help of literature plays a crucial role in the readers' critique and trace of the semantic gaps that are found in the text.

6. Conclusion

By analysing the entirety of *Mother of 1084*, Mahasweta Devi employs 'memory' as a powerful tool in historicising the past life of Brati. Through this historicising, Brati is attributed with new characteristics. Apart from being addressed as 'Prisoner No. 1084', there is no evidence of the life he lived after his father destroyed everything. It is Sujata who revamps more of Brati, of his actions, of his thoughts, and of his beliefs, after his death through the process of memorialising memory. Sujata here very much keeps the memories of her son alive like the character of Chandi in *Bayen*, a short story by Mahasweta Devi. In *Bayen*, Chandi a mother is suspected by the entire village she lived in, to have raised deceased children from the grave through forms of black magic and then nursing and fostering them, for this Chandi is shunned from the entire village and her son, Bhagirath. Similarly, to Chandi who is referred to as a 'bayen' (a witch), Sujata too is considered as a 'bayen,' more in a metaphorical sense, as she stubbornly revives her dead son of twenty-seven years, who was declared dead by both the government and his family members through memory. Just like Bhagirath, who was the only person in the story to fully understand his mother and disprove the claims of her being a bayen, Brati also recognises his own mother's suffering which can be seen through his conversations with her and in the recollections of Nandini.

Sujata, through the memory of her body, invokes multiple times the traumatising murder of her beloved son Brati and manipulates numerous times in episodes and flashbacks of the experience of loss and pain. She then teases out of these memories ethical and serious issues that her family, the people belonging to the upper class, and the government try to avoid. In doing so, Sujata ends up documenting her memories and later it leads to her memorialising the memories. The past is re-lived in the present through various means of memory elements as discussed in the paper. Memory aided with its subsets like recall, reminiscence, episodic, semantic, and flashback help in the construction and recognition of Brati's hidden life.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Authors' contributions

Both authors have contributed regularly to the concept and objectives of the study.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Not applicable.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

Archie, L., & Archie, J. G. (2006). "Art as Unrepressed Wish-Fulfillment" by Sigmund Freud. In *Readings in the History of Aesthetics: An Open-Source Reader*. Retrieved from <https://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/artbook/x8724.htm>

[Unpublished Manuscript].

- Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective memory and cultural identity. *New German Critique*, 65, 125-133. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>
- Berntsen, D. (2009). *Involuntary autobiographical memories: An introduction to the unbidden past*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511575921>
- Bosch, T. E. (2016). *Memory Studies, A brief concept paper*.
- Brewin, C. R. (2011). The nature and significance of memory disturbance in posttraumatic stress disorder. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 7(1), 203-227. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-032210-104544>
- Charlwood, C. (2018). "Stop ... and Remember": Memory and Ageing in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels. *American, British and Canadian Studies*, 31(1), 86-113. <https://doi.org/10.2478/abcsj-2018-0018>
- Danziger, K. (2008). *Marking the mind: A history of memory*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511810626>
- Devi, M. (1974). *Mother of 1084* (S. Bandyopadhyay, Trans.). Seagull Books.
- Garde-Hansen, J. (2011). *Media and memory*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748647071>
- Hellawell, S., & Brewin, C. (2002). A comparison of flashbacks and ordinary autobiographical memories of trauma: Cognitive resources and behavioural observations. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 40(10), 1143-1156. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7967\(01\)00080-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0005-7967(01)00080-8)
- Hoelscher, S., & Alderman, D. H. (2004). Memory and place: Geographies of a critical relationship. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 5(3), 347-355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936042000252769>
- McPherrin, J. (n.d.). *The Biology of Art*. Retrieved from <https://public.wsu.edu/~kimander/biologyofart.htm>
- Newton, K. (1997). Wolfgang Iser: 'Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response'. In *Twentieth-century literary theory: A reader* (2nd ed., pp. 195-199). Bloomsbury Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25934-2_39
- Olick, J. K., & Robbins, J. (1998). Social memory studies: From "Collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 105-140. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.105>
- Palmer, D. (1991). *Does the center hold?: An introduction to western philosophy*. WCB/McGraw-Hill.
- Recollection. (n.d.). *No Subject - Encyclopedia of Psychoanalysis*. Retrieved June 3, 2023, from <https://nosubject.com/Recollection#:~:text=Jacques%20Lacan&text=Whereas%20remembering%20is%20the%20act,event%20or%20signifier%20is%20recalled>
- Roediger, H. L. (1985). Remembering Ebbinghaus. *Contemporary Psychology: A Journal of Reviews*, 30(7), 519-523. <https://doi.org/10.1037/023895>
- Samuel A, S., & Priscilla B, E. (2023). Spatial identity: Identity through memory and space in John Banville's *The Sea*. *World Journal of English Language*, 14(2), 83-89. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v14n2p83>
- Sen, N., & Yadav, N. (Eds.). (2008). *Mahasweta Devi: An anthology of recent criticism. The naxalbari uprising*. (2010, October 31). *Wayback Machine*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20101031003912/www.bannedthought.net/India/PeoplesMarch/PM1999-2006/publications/30%20years/part1.htm>
- Tulving, E. (1984). Précis of elements of episodic memory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 7(2), 223-238. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0004440X>
- Webster, J. D. (1993). Construction and Validation of the Reminiscence Functions Scale. *Journal of Gerontology*, 48(5), 256-262. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronj/48.5.P256>
- Zimmermann, K. A. (2014, January 29). *Semantic memory: Definition & examples*. livescience.com. Retrieved from <https://www.livescience.com/42920-semantic-memory.html>