






Memory, Trauma and Affect: The Implicated Subject in Anuk Arudpragasam's A Passage North

INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER






About the Journal

Journal DOI	https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha
Journal Home	www.rupkatha.com 
Indexed by	Scopus  Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)  DOAJ 
Journal Metrics	CiteScore 2020: 0.2 SJR 2020: 0.162 SNIP 2020: 0.193 JCI 2020: 0.50

About the Issue

Issue	Vol. 14, No. 4, 2022 "Global Anxieties in Times of Current Crises"
Editor	Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay
Affiliation	Universidad de Guanajuato
Issue DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n4
TOC	https://rupkatha.com/v14n4.php 

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Title	Memory, Trauma and Affect: The Implicated Subject in Anuk Arudpragasam's A Passage North
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Article DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n4.14 Pages: 1-12
Abstract	https://rupkatha.com/v14n414 
Full-text PDF	https://rupkatha.com/V14/n4/v14n414.pdf 
Article History	First Published: 26 December 2022
Article Impact	Check Dynamic Impact 
Copyright	Aesthetics Media Services 
Licensing	Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 

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Memory, Trauma and Affect: The Implicated Subject in Anuk Arudpragasam's *A Passage North*

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Abstract

In *A Passage North*, Anuk Arudpragasam invades the consciousness of the protagonist to reveal the subliminal enmeshed spaces of the personal and the political. The distance between the traumatic events of the Sri Lankan civil war and the alienated individual who has apparently remained aloof, is obliterated through the refracted memories that have embedded the subject in the matrix of his country's political history. The individual memory thus coalesces into the fabric of collective memory as the narrative unfolds. The concatenation of the traumatic realities and the sequestered psyche, untethers the individual from its ensconced private sphere and situates it within the macrocosmic and pervasive sociopolitical structure. The transmutation of subjectivity is attuned to the affective sites of collective trauma. The dichotomy of proximity and distance elucidated by the apprehensive reflections of the survivor is symptomatic of the subterranean intensities that elude corporeal presence and agency. The memories of the individual become resonant with the affective (un)lived experiences of traumatic violence, that deconstruct the tension of presence/absence, and consequently reconfigure the preconceived notions of subjectivity. The theoretical framework of this paper would foreground Michael Rothberg's conceptualization of the *implicated subject*, to limn the trajectory of identities who are indirectly implicated in traumatic legacies. This paper argues that the trauma of the genocidal war and its aftermath is transcribed into affective memories, that bear the potential to reconstitute identity by recognizing and transcending the state of implication.

Keywords: memory, affect, trauma, *implicated subject*, identity, Sri Lankan civil war

"[...] something inside him had been driving him toward it long before the end of the war, something more than just guilt, something like freedom, even if he could not say what exactly freedom was." (Arudpragasam, 2021, p. 283)

Introduction

The transmutation of subjectivities is an epiphenomenon of memories, which are perpetually reconfigured across time and space. This spatiotemporality of memories renders the past as an ongoing process, that bears the potential to rearticulate the contours of identity. The ontological implications can be perceived through the locus of an individual vis-à-vis the collective memories embedded in a specific sociopolitical and cultural matrix. Memories play a pivotal role in determining the collective consciousness of a traumatic event, and in transgressing the hegemony

of official historiography. Michael Rothberg observes that "As violent histories recede into the past, they do not stop making claims on the present; rather, such distant pasts continue to haunt the present and pose challenging questions for historical redress". (2020, p. 205) The Sri-Lankan civil war was a long-drawn out conflict, lasting for 26 years. The roots of the confrontation can be traced to the animosity between the Tamil minority and the predominantly Sinhalese population in the island. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) demanded an independent separatist state in 1983, and the secessionist movement soon spiralled into one of the longest and most violent wars in South Asia in recent history. The conflict culminated with a violent purge by the military in the North East, in 2009. However, the situation remains volatile to this day, and the country is far from evading the clutches of ethnic oppression and violence. The post conflict reconciliation process is still incomplete and there is an ostensible dearth of accountability on the part of the government regarding the mass atrocities perpetrated during the war. Tens of thousands are still missing and the international human rights organizations have reiterated the lack of accountability and suppression of the actual scale of violence. (*Peoples' Tribunal on Sri Lanka*, 2014; *Justice for Genocide*, 2014) The report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) set up by the Sri Lankan government in 2010 to probe into the human rights abuses, was largely inconclusive, and was vehemently criticised by the international human rights organizations for its partiality and lack of integrity. ("Sri Lankan Civilians 'not Targeted', says Report," 2011; "Sri Lanka MPs Receive Controversial Civil War Report," 2011) A 2015 UN Report has stressed the "need for a comprehensive transitional justice programme...This should include truth-seeking mechanisms, investigations, prosecutions and punishment of alleged perpetrators, reparations and measures to prevent the recurrence of the patterns of violations and abuses." (*Report of the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL)*, 2015, p. 230) The current economic crisis in Sri Lanka has reinvigorated the demand for transitional justice, and has revealed the fault lines of racial inequality simmering under the veneer of an imposed forgetfulness. The September 12, 2022 UN Report has highlighted the lack of accountability and the "need of reparations", even thirteen years after the cessation of the civil war, and has urged the new Government "to steer the country on the path towards justice and reconciliation and to address the legacy of conflict." (Al-Nashif, 2022) J. Mallot has contextualised the genocidal violence through the tension between cultural histories:

In post-independence Sri Lanka the competing practical needs of the Sinhalese and Tamils have produced a parallel, protracted battle over past glories and injustices, each side marshalling archaeology and academics to establish rights to residence and authority...minority voices and experiences remain marginalized by both nationalist forces and the official "histories" constructed to sustain them. (2012, pp. 91-92)

Rothberg's conceptualisation of "competitive memory" is significant in this context, as memories are constantly negotiating with competing narratives of the past. (2009, p. 3) The question of legitimacy therefore becomes paramount in stabilising collective identities. Duncan Bell speaks about the ramifications of traumatic experience on collective identities as "certain harrowing events...generate serious and often catastrophic challenges to communal self-understandings, and that the 'memory' of such 'traumas' play a significant and sometimes elemental role in shaping subsequent political perceptions, affiliations and action." (2006, p. 5) Kennedy categorises

a traumatic event through the “deep and ongoing psychological impact on the affected population, including future generations, which raise issues of responsibility and reparation.” (2020, p. 57) Moradi et al. observe that “The conceptualization, institutionalization, narrativization, and visualization of memory should not render the past as fully understood but rather portray the specific ways in which past violence becomes legible as well as places people can constantly return to.” (2017, p. 8) The urgent need to recover silenced voices and traumatic pasts can be addressed effectively by cultural representations of repressed memories.

Fiction possesses the potential to provide mnemonic counternarratives by denuding the exclusionary politics of official histories. Tameshnie Deane has argued that arts and culture are instrumental in post conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka by “breaking barriers, helping communities grieve, giving identity and breaking stereotypes.” (25) Assmann & Shortt also note “the important role that literature can play in changing deeply entrenched and stereotypical views about the past by practising the art of empathetic listening. As literary representations may achieve the status of shared reflexive images that have the power to impinge on individual memories, values and attitudes, they exert a vital impact on the social imaginary.” (2011, p. 12) Literary narratives can offer the space for ‘empathetic listening’ and thus forge identities that are rooted in shared affective mnemonic bonds. Gregg & Seigworth (2010) define affect as “an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage of forces or intensities...vital forces insisting beyond emotion.” (p. 1) The subterranean affective intensities overdetermine the transmission of traumatic memories. The juxtaposition of affect, trauma and memory would provide a hermeneutic framework for analysing how the space of fiction fosters the reconfiguration and sustenance of identities.

A Passage North

Anuk Arudpragasam’s debut novel *The Story of a Brief Marriage* delineated a single day in the life of the protagonist, caught in the vortex of the Sri Lankan Civil War. The spatiotemporal dynamics of affect traced through the psychic trajectory of the traumatized protagonist, indicate the condition of “bare life”, devoid of its political autonomy. The prevalent “state of exception” transfigures identities into unrecognizable entities, untethered from reality. (Prozorov, 2014, p. 93) The precarious existence of the civilians caught in the crossfire is amplified by their inability to mourn, to even let the despair sink in. In an interview with Shivani Radhakrishnan, Arudpragasam has observed that his first novel was “an interrogation of what was consonant and what was dissonant with the consciousness of genocide” while *A Passage North* “is about that interrogation, about the everyday life of that consciousness.” (2021b) *A Passage North* traces the traumatic aftermath of the civil war through the sojourns of the protagonist Krishan. While in the other novel, Dinesh is enamoured by the war, here the war is apprehended from a distance. Krishan constructs a frame of reference as he conscientiously studies the reports and testimonies of the survivors. The intensity of the violence affects him, as he becomes gradually engrossed in the events of the war. His vicarious experiences compel him to return to his homeland to work in an NGO in the war-torn areas. The narrative arc vacillates between the reminiscences of his time in India as a graduate student, and the journey he undertakes to the north-eastern village to attend the funeral of Rani, the erstwhile caretaker of his grandmother. Rani’s traumatic past haunts her and eventually leads to her demise. Rani had lost both of her sons to the war. The circumstances of her death are shrouded in mystery, but it had become apparent that her life had become

unbearable after the death of her sons. Krishan dissects his memories, his tumultuous relationship that has evidently left recessive scars. He ponders upon the decisions he has taken, and attempts to come to terms with his past, to reconcile his yearnings with his present situation. Though he has remained at a safe distance from the turmoil, it has affected his life significantly, as the war had claimed his father's life in a Tamil Tiger bombing in a bank in Colombo. The novel is interspersed with detailed references to myths and canonical texts of the subcontinent that magnify the thematic concerns of the narrative. The story of Poosal, a devotee of Lord Shiva, who meticulously constructs a grand temple in his mind, is drawn from *Periya Puranam*, a classic of Tamil literature. A brief account of *The Life of Buddha* reveals the traumatic epiphanies of the Buddha, who had remained ensconced in a chimera before suddenly confronting the harsh realities of mortality. "The Cloud Messenger", an epic composed by Kalidasa, expresses the intense yearning and desire arising from absence and distance. Arudpragasam however indicates the nationalist undertones embedded in the poem. He weaves these intertextual digressions into the narrative by frequently drawing comparisons to them. Arudpragasam contextualises the collective mnemonic and cultural traditions of Sri Lanka through these resonant allusions.

The Implicated Subject

Michael Rothberg has conceptualised the term "implicated subject" to denote the locus of the subject beyond the binary of victims and perpetrators, and the innocuous figure of the bystander, entailing from an event of historical significance such as an ethnic genocide. Rothberg clarifies that

Implicated subjects occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes...Modes of implication—entanglement in historical and present-day injustices—are complex, multifaceted, and sometimes contradictory, but are nonetheless essential to confront in the pursuit of justice. (2019, pp. 1-2)

Implication offers the subject the potential to transcend or redeem the state of being implicated - it is "a position that we occupy in particular, dynamic, and at times clashing structures and histories of power; it is not an ontological identity that freezes us forever in proximity to power and privilege." (Rothberg, 2019, p. 8) Implication is often conflated with complicity, but they differ significantly as implication is a more inclusive and capacious term. Moreover, while complicity indicates direct participation and "presupposes implication, implication does not always involve complicity." (Rothberg, 2019, p. 13) Krishan is an implicated subject owing to his social status and spatial location. He bears the political responsibility and he realizes that the "...choice [of returning] had only been possible...because of the fortune and privilege of his circumstances, the safe distance of his own life from the violence and poverty of the northeast." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 190) He becomes obsessed with the harrowing events during the last year of the war, when the army violently purged the Tamils in the northeast, and indiscriminately bombed thousands of civilians. The guilt "for having been spared" haunts him and eventually he starts to consider the possibility of returning to his roots, of seeking his destiny and redeeming his state of implication - "to help create out of near annihilation the possibility of some new and compelling

future, as though living a life simplified in the way that only war can simplify he too would be able to find something worth surrendering to." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, pp. 16-17) Krishan perceives his position as a graduate student in India, distanced from the anxieties of the war, as a privilege that nonetheless doesn't absolve him from being implicated in the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamil community. Rothberg asserts that "implication allows us to retain our sense that situations of conflict position us in morally and emotionally complex ways and yet still call out for forms of political engagement that cut through complexity to remain on the side of justice." (2019, p. 19) His impressions of the war, mostly derived from affective mnemonic media, are concretised when he comes across a

Channel Four documentary [which] came out in 2011, accusing the government of war crimes and genocide, when later that year the UN published its report giving an estimate of how many civilians had died, that he was finally able to speak about what had happened, to accept that the images he'd become obsessed with...Even now he felt ashamed thinking about his initial reluctance to acknowledge the magnitude of what had happened at the end of the war. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 20)

The shame and guilt of evading the violence and eschewing the past, affects Krishan to the extent, that he vicariously re-enacts the traumatic events, as if he is not a mere witness but an active participant, albeit from a spatiotemporal distance. Cathy Caruth asserts in this context that "Trauma...does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely *registers the force of an experience* that is not yet fully owned." (1995, p. 151, emphasis ours) Krishan discerns an "incongruity between his environment and what was going on inside him...led him to feel that the spaces he inhabited lacked some vital dimension of reality" (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 21) The disorientation of reality is symptomatic of the affective engagements with the mediated traumatic experiences of the war and the reiterative interrogations of his identity. Rothberg explains how the implicated subject "both draws attention to responsibilities for violence and injustice greater than most of us want to embrace and shifts questions of accountability from a discourse of guilt to a less legally and emotionally charged terrain of historical and political responsibility." (2019, p. 20) Krishan subsequently works towards transcending his state of implication after returning to Sri Lanka, and explores the affective bonds with his community:

[...] even if the time he'd spent dwelling in this site had been painful rather than joyful, driven as much by shame as by love, he too had in some way hoped that the object of his thoughts, the suffering of his partly real, partly virtual community, might receive through his labor a recognition it hadn't received in the real world. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 26)

Krishan gradually comes to recognize his implication in the traumatic political history of his country. He is not interpellated as an implicated subject, but rather apprehends his responsibility through affective pathways.

Trauma, Affect and Memory

The nexus of cultural memory and trauma studies can provide a feasible theoretical framework for exploring the affective intensities emanating from the narratives of violence:

Trauma studies has produced valuable insights into the ways in which memory is blocked, silenced and avoided, as well as into the indirect and fragmented paths of memory at both the personal and collective levels...cultural memory studies provides trauma studies with nuanced understandings and analyses of the production of memory and its mediation through cultural forms and genres. (Kennedy, 2020, pp. 63-4)

The traumatic legacies of the war are mediated through the transmission of affective memories. Trauma is more than often non-assimilated as it is transformed into imperceptible affects that constitute and reformulate identities perpetually. However, the circulation/transmission of the affective and non-assimilated traumatic memories bear the potential "to connect subjects across time, space, consciousness, bodies and subjectivities." (To & Trivelli, 2015, p. 312) Bell notes that "It is the absence of temporal distance, the failure to regard the past as past, as something that can be left behind, that has such a profound effect on identity, and which can make the study of trauma illuminating when exploring the contours of politics." (2006, p. 8) Krishan's vicarious experiences are derived from the mnemonic accounts, ranging from documentaries to testimonies, that he immerses himself in. He is obviously entangled in the collective trauma through affective engagements with the (re)mediated memories. He had delved into the media posted on the Internet by diasporic Tamils and survivors that vividly portrayed the genocidal violence perpetrated in the northeast. The images were intensely affective and created indelible impressions upon his mind:

It was impossible to forget these images once they'd been glimpsed, not just because of the violence they showed but also because of their strikingly amateur quality, for unlike the highly aestheticized, almost tasteful shots of war one often came across in books and magazines, the images he found online were of jarringly poor composition. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, pp. 19-20)

The narrative recurs to the traumatic memories of Rani, whose tragic despair affects Krishan to the extent that he feels himself to be implicated somehow by not being able to assuage her condition and prevent her death. The implicated subject's "intimate and isolating experiences such as psychic trauma are entangled with diffuse social forces at a multiplicity of scales" (Rothberg, 2020, p. 209) However, Krishan later realises that Rani was beyond the point of being assimilated into a normal existence, and he could not have possibly done anything to prolong her life. The pervasiveness of traumatic memories entails from an understanding of "violence as embedded in the circuits of the social and the structures of the everyday." (Rothberg, 2020, p. 209) Caruth discusses how the traumatic events can only affect through "the *structure of its experience* or reception...in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it." (1995, p. 4, emphases in the original) Krishan's grandmother, Appamma's attitude towards Rani indicates a feasible attempt to engage her in the daily rituals of a normal life, to elude her traumatic memories by exiling them into the recesses of her mind: "Appamma was in a way treating Rani as an equal, as someone who was going through something that was normal and not unusual, someone who didn't have to be stopped and pitied or treated with excessive caution." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 172) In a poignant recollection of a conversation with Rani, he vividly remembers the photographs of Rani's sons who

had perished in the war. The photographs are the only remnants of their brief lives, that Rani possessed, as she had lost everything in the chaos of the war:

[...] two medium-size photographs from the folder and holding them out for him to see, the first of a boy about fifteen or sixteen, wearing a black suit two sizes too big for him, taken in a studio with a sky blue backdrop, the second of a boy about ten or eleven, wearing trousers and a shirt, taken in the same studio with the same blue background. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, pp. 165-66)

Rani is lost in the quagmire of trauma, perpetually mourning for her sons, and clutching on to the vestiges of their existence. The photographs are *Sebaldian* mnemonic elements amplifying the complex affective attachments and projections that entail traumatic experiences. Nigel Hunt describes how traumatic memory is formed by “the overwhelming nature of the event”, and this memory “is at once cognitive, emotional and possibly behavioural.” (2010, p. 7) Trauma is intensified by the spatial affectivity of the sites of memory: “trauma Krishan knew was also indelibly linked to the physical environments in which it was experienced, to specific sounds, images, languages, and times of day, as a result of which it was often impossible for people to continue living in the places they’d seen violence occur.” (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 190) The transmission of trauma through affective memories, unfurls the possibility of reexperiencing the event from a spatiotemporal distance. Caruth therefore argues that “the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another.” (1995, p. 11) The lake Krishan passes by when walking along with Rani’s funeral procession, triggers the memory of a documentary film he had seen several years ago. The film portrays the lives of two young women, Dharshika and Puhai, who were active members of the Black Tigers, an elite division of the Tamil Tigers. Their traumatic pasts which led to the decision to join the movement, are revealed in the film:

[Dharshika’s] father had been a peon at the post office in Jaffna town, and he’d been killed along with twenty-four other people by an aerial bomb that the army had dropped one morning in the center of town, opposite the main bus depot. Some children were able to bear the pain and grief that came as a result of such events, Dharshika’s mother explained, while others lacked the capacity to return to ordinary life afterward. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 240)

The Black Tigers were sent on fatal missions that were meticulously planned beforehand. Dharshika and Puhai had trained together for the last seven years, since they joined the movement, but they declare on camera that they would not hesitate to kill each other if the need ever arose. This lack of intimacy points to the traumatic conditioning that obliterates any possibility of envisioning or returning to a normal mode of existence.

Memory, Affect and Identity

Arudpragasam distinguishes “between the forgetting that takes place as a result of our consent, which is a forgetting we need in order to reconcile our pasts and presents, and the forgetting that is imposed on us.” (2021a, p. 227) However, the seeds of mnemonic resistance flourish whenever the past is systematically erased by power structures. Acts of commemoration and proliferation

of mnemonic media ensure the perpetuation of memories. Marianne Hirsch has coined the term "Postmemory" to describe

[...] the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences 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 affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. (2012, p. 5)

The transmission of affective memories is often intergenerational and they are constitutive of the processes of identity formation: "The predominant associations he'd had of the northeast for most of his life had been formed...from the painfully nostalgic accounts he'd always heard from older relatives living abroad about how idyllic their childhoods in the village had been." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 18) The affective trajectory moulding his changing beliefs facilitate the cognizance of implication and the consequent transmutation of identity.

In his seminal work *Multidirectional Memory*, Rothberg has argued for the intersectionality of different discourses of historical memory across cultures. He considers "memory as *multidirectional*, as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative." (2009, p. 3) This highlights the malleability and dialogic nature of collective memory and its consequent implications for reassessing identities. Arudpragasam delineates the precarity of the identities which are sustained through memories, as "there were so many diasporic Tamils who haunted the internet in such ways...people who spent their free time trying to convince themselves that their pasts on this island really had taken place, their memories more than fantasies or hallucinations". (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 68) Rajah discusses how "Sri Lanka's biopolitics has been inextricably linked to the production of a narrative of 'truth' about the island's 'rightful' occupants." (2017, p. 3) The Foucauldian *regime of truth* sustains the alternative and distorted histories that legitimise the dominant narrative. Rajah further notes that "...some of the techniques of government used in Europe before modernity and applied in Ceylon during British colonial rule have been incorporated in the biopolitical practices of the island-state in the postcolonial period." (2017, p. 7) Memories are crucial to the formation of collective identities and sense of community as Bell observes:

[...] group identities require a relatively widely shared understanding of history and its meaning, the construction of a narrative tracing the linkages between past and present, locating self and society in time. It is this understanding that helps to generate *affective bonds*, a sense of belonging, and which engenders obligations and loyalty to the 'imagined community'. (2006, p. 5, emphasis ours)

Hirsch asserts that memories are "shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present." (2012, p. 5) Krishan reconstructs the theatre of war through mediated memories that affectively reconfigure the notions of his own identity and express his intense yearning to commemorate the trauma, to engage and contribute through memorialisation:

He did his best to obtain every little piece of information...re-creating those sites of violence in his mind so meticulously that his intention could only have been to personally inhabit them somehow...as though he was trying to construct, through this act of imagination, a kind of private shrine to the memory of all those anonymous lives. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 22-3)

In this context, Assmann and Shortt have noted the transformative potential of media in harnessing public interest and forming collective memory: "The most salient change is certainly that *from silence to speaking out*...In the transition process, the repressed voices of the victims move from oblivion to the centre of society. Individual memories of the victims create a new authoritative account of the nation's past." (2011, p. 8, emphases in the original) Pierre Nora's project of *lieux de memoire* has asserted that "national identities are constituted in part by a shared lexicon of cultural referents" (Olick, 2019, p. 46). By conscientiously retracing the events of the war, Krishan not only recreates the affective memories, but inhabits the *sites of memory*, albeit from a temporal distance: "Like most Tamils his age living outside the war zone...he'd watched the documentary and read the report several times...His initial disbelief gave way first to shock, then to anger, and then to shame at his own easy existence." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 21) The spatial markers of memory are attuned to the identities of the inhabitants. The spatial dynamics of memory is intimately dependent upon specific tangible markers

[...] memory requires cues from the environment to operate, can function only by means of associations between things in the present and things in the past, which meant that remembering became far harder when all the cues that an environment contained were systematically removed. Without the physical objects that allowed it to operate organically, memory had to be cultivated consciously and deliberately. (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 226)

The systemic erasure of memory effectively obliterates the traces of a violent event and alters the historical narrative: "The purpose of all the government's demolition and renovation in the northeast had, of course, been to erase any memory that might spur the Tamil population back toward militarism...one hardly heard anyone giving them more than a passing thought." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, pp. 225-26)

The mythopoeic collective memory is integral in the formation of collective identities, especially in the context of competing narratives. The ethnic relations are based upon the identities formed by Tamil and Sinhala Buddhist histories, which have been appropriated and manipulated by political agendas. Mallot notes that "Sri Lanka has fashioned multiple narratives relying on creative emendation and strategic amnesia." (2012, p. 95) Arudpragasam's digressions into the mythic pasts of Tamil and Buddhist identities indicate the need to comprehend the cultural dynamics underlying the struggle for dominance. Mallot historicizes the ethnic conflict between the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sinhalese majority through their religious and linguistic identities:

The Sinhalese trace a substantial proportion of their collective identity to their injunction to protect Buddhism; over centuries, Sri Lanka has been understood not only as a unique preserve of Buddhist belief but the single home of the Sinhala language as well. Tamils, on the other hand, could elect to delineate some ties—in religion and language—to the Tamils of south India. (2012, p. 97)

The Buddhist majority derives its legitimacy from the cultural and religious history that they have appropriated according to their political needs. The distortion of history is felicitous to their assertion of dominance. Krishan comprehends the essence of Buddhism by only isolating it from the politico-theological lens: "Growing up he'd associated Buddhism mainly with the Sri Lankan government and army, with the statues they constructed all over the country to remind Muslims, Tamils, and other minorities of their place." (Arudpragasam, 2021, p. 181) Bell asserts that "memory plays a major role in determining the dynamics of individual and collective identity formation, which in turn shape both perceptions and political action." (2006, p. 29) The erosion of the past renders the collective identities as precarious, uprooted from their specific spatiotemporality and sites of memory: "Deliberately or not the past was always being forgotten, in all places and among all peoples, a phenomenon that had less to do with the forces that seek to erase or rewrite history than simply the nature of time". (Arudpragasam 226-7) The community which possesses a deeper connection to legitimate histories, is in control of the present political narrative by projecting a mythic nationalist identity, tailored to fit into their claims of authenticity.

Conclusion

The locus of the subject emanating from the dichotomy of history and memory is symptomatic of the perceptual framework of individual memories embedded in the collective past. Duncan Bell observes in this context that the realms of history and memory should be discerned as "memory is an individual psychological phenomenon separable from other modes of representing the past. Too much is lost in collapsing them." (2006, p. 26) Rothberg delineates that

Thinking in terms of implication also helps draw further attention to how practices of memory...intersect with power dynamics, forms of complicity and distancing, and risks of forgetting. Yet, tracking the multidirectionality of memory also illuminates the position of implicated subjects, because the border-crossing nature of remembrance alerts us to unexpected layerings of history and indirect forms of responsibility. (2019, p. 26)

Krishan recognizes his state of an implicated subject through the affective registers of guilt and shame, and subsequently embarks on a transformative journey to redeem himself, to trace the roots of cultural identity, and to seek the ineffable intensities impelling him towards his destiny: "It was true that guilt had played some part, guilt for the relative ease of his life growing up...but there was also...something that made him dream of a possible fulfilment without knowing how or from what source." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, pp. 193-94) The psychic trajectory of Krishan's journey across Sri Lanka can be perceived through the epiphanic revelations that redeems his state of implication to some extent, as he perceives that "he'd traversed not any physical distance that day but rather some vast psychic distance inside him, that he'd been advancing not from the island's south to its north but from the south of his mind to its own distant northern reaches." (Arudpragasam, 2021a, p. 205)

The multivocality of the past is refracted through the cultural sphere which resists the erasure of collective identities in the wake of a genocidal violence as "Narratives, writings, performance, and visualizations illuminate and substitute for annihilatory violence and multiple losses...they reach out to the whole world and foster plurality of memories beyond the eyewitness narratives and the border of the modern nation-state." (Moradi et al., 2017, p. 1) Moreover, the traumatic history,

accessed through the transmission of memories of an individual or a community, is crucial to the formation and sustenance of a coherent identity. Arudpragasam foregrounds the necessity of commemorating, of resisting oblivion: "Even if sharing what happened during the war was painful...suppressing their memories of the world they'd helped construct and the violence that had destroyed it, even so people would remain who insisted on remembering." (2021a, p. 228) Memories are transmitted through affects that bear the potential to not only implicate, but rather reconfigure identities as the shunned away past impinges upon the exclusionary politics of history. The authenticity of lived experiences are legitimised through the affective mnemonic traces, that undermine the hegemonic and homogenising discourse of official historiography, and thus foster identities that recognise and transcend the state of implication.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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