

**Traumatic experience and Delayed and Unconscious Responses in David Mitchell's  
*Ghostwritten***

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**Abstract**

Trauma, as it is used in contemporary literary theory, refers to an event or experience that induces inexpressible dread, thereby severing or erasing one's identity. It disrupts the attachments and relationships that define the self, frequently resulting in a fragmented sense of self and the inability to articulate one's experience. Trauma is typically depicted in literature through the interaction of language, experience, memory, and place, and the geographical location of the traumatic event or recollection can serve as a metaphor for its effects on the individual and larger cultural context. The trauma novel illuminates the various ways in which trauma and memory can be portrayed, as well as how they influence the formation and transformation of the self (Balaev 149-166).

**Keywords:** Trauma theory, Cathy Caruth, Delayed and unconscious responses, David Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*

**Introduction**

Trauma is defined by Cathy Caruth in her book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), a prominent scholar in the field of trauma studies, as "This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (4). This line suggests that the truth of trauma, which cannot be completely comprehended or integrated into consciousness, is connected to the unknown aspects of our experiences and the limitations of our language. She argues that trauma is difficult to articulate because it is frequently encountered as a rupture or break in one's sense of reality. She suggests that trauma entails a kind of belatedness or delayed response, in which the traumatic occurrence is not fully registered at the time of its existence, but is instead repeated or relived in the survivor's mind. As a theoretical concept, trauma provides a rich lens for analyzing literary works. *Unclaimed Experience*, a seminal work by Cathy Caruth contends that trauma disrupts our typical processes of understanding and memory, requiring a different form of storytelling and narration in literature (Caruth 3).

David Mitchell (1969) was born in Worcestershire, England, and went on to study English and American literature at the University of Kent. He has received critical acclaim for his imaginative and experimental writing style. After completing his studies, he obtained a qualification in English while in Japan for a year before returning to England to embark on a career as a writer.

The eight novels written by Mitchell are *Ghostwritten* (1999), *Number9dream* (2001), *Cloud Atlas* (2004), *Black Swan Green* (2006), *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010), *The Bone Clocks* (2014), *Slade House* (2015), and *Utopia Avenue* (2020). His work is renowned for its complexity, intricate plotting, and literary form experimentation. His writing has earned him numerous honors and awards, including the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, the Guardian First Book Award, and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Mitchell has also written a novella titled “*From Me Flows What You Call Time*” (2016). The novel *Ghostwritten* is remarkable one of the significant examples of Mitchell’s experimental writing technique (Bradford 503-510).

David Mitchell’s notable nine-part novel *Ghostwritten* is an intricately constructed story that explores the complexities of navigating a globalized world through its fragmented narrative structure and diverse thematic influences. Each of the nine chapters is narrated by a different character in a different setting, highlighting the varied experiences of individuals within a global system. The novel travels from Okinawa to New York and integrates a variety of genres, such as ghost stories, technothrillers, science fiction, romance, and heist stories. The tenth chapter, titled ‘Underground’ functions as a coda that ties together the novel’s themes and settings, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the characters and their struggles. The form and content of the novel emphasize the difficulties of comprehending one’s place in a globalized world and the ways in which globalization both expands and fragments experience. The fragmented narrative structure mirrors the expansive and dispersed characteristics of globalization. (Mitchell 2007).

Patrick O’Donnell, in his book *A Temporary Future: The Fiction of David Mitchell*, argues that David Mitchell’s novel *Ghostwritten* can be viewed as embodying a concept called “hauntology,” originally coined by Jacques Derrida in his work “*Spectres of Marx*”. The novel embodies the idea that the existing is haunted by the past, which resurfaces in fragmented ways, challenging notions of identity and self-identity, as in “Derrida, writing in the face of the putative triumph of global capitalism as the ‘final’ form of history, argues that the seemingly monolithic, totalized present is haunted by a repressed past that resurfaces in fragments” (O’Donnell 45).

According to the analysis, Mitchell’s novel investigates the notion that identity is historicized and consists of a spectral form of self-alienation. The noncorporeal intellect of the novel functions as a metaphor for human identity, incorporating the histories of others and accentuating the connections between individuals and multiple narratives. In addition, the author argues that “*Ghostwritten*” presents a different understanding of history, one that is neither linear nor predetermined, but rather comprised of various components such as memories, illusions, cultural practises, and situated actions. By presenting history as a complex collection of diverse elements, the novel challenges the notion of history as a series of discrete events with causal relationships.

Furthermore, Du Plessis in his paper “Phenomenological writing in the fiction of David Mitchell”, argues that the universe of David Mitchell’s macronovel is intricately interconnected

and should be regarded as a phenomenological structure. According to Plessis, using the novel *Ghostwritten* as an example, Mitchell examines identity, history, and political contexts in a variety of global settings through its nine sections and epilogue. This work also reflects the complexity of human existence, the fragmented narrative structure challenges conventional notions of linear time and causality. Mitchell constructs a comprehensive depiction of the complex tapestry of human experiences and relationships by analysing the interaction between different texts within the macronovel. This study seeks to investigate how Mitchell's macronovel imitates a phenomenological lifeworld by employing phenomenology to compare the fictional world to the theoretical lifeworld developed by phenomenologists. The aim of this analysis is to reveal the distinctive narrative elements in Mitchell's works that engage with and reflect phenomenological concepts, thereby highlighting the innovative character of his writing (Du Plessis 12-13).

In a similar vein, Richard Bradford argues in his book "*The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Literature*" that David Mitchell's debut novel, *Ghostwritten*, displays his distinctive narrative style and thematic exploration. According to Bradford, Mitchell combines philosophical elements with a plot-driven approach, provoking readers to consider the connection between time and space as well as the possibility of numerous identities and parallel worlds. This study explores multiple themes, including government conspiracies, revenge, and natural disasters, while also incorporating supernatural and technological elements. Mitchell's prose combines traditional and postmodern techniques, creating complicatedly detailed settings and dialogues within a framework of multiple time shifts and genre-blending. The findings imply that the author employs an ethereal, immaterial intellect to observe the protagonists as they revive across multiple timelines. Additionally, *Ghostwritten* exemplifies Mitchell's innovative storytelling techniques and thematic depth, paving the way for his subsequent acclaimed works (Bradford 504).

Although David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* has been studied from various perspectives, it has not been analyzed through the lens of trauma. The purpose of this study is to examine how the novel depicts trauma's effects on individuals. Utilizing Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, this study focuses on "delayed and unconscious responses". The analysis indicates that the novel depicts trauma as an experience that defies representation and comprehension, with inadequate language conveying the full extent of such experiences. Thus, the findings of this study contribute to the ongoing dialogue about trauma and its depiction in literature.

Trauma theory illuminates trauma's psychological and social consequences through various writers and works, such as Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* critiques how Virginia Woolf's use of war photographs aims to condemn war, but she argues that these images may not change the views of those who believe in the justness of their cause. Sontag emphasizes the significance of context and how photographs can be manipulated for propaganda purposes (9-11). and Jenny Edkins' *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* argues that trauma shapes political community and subjectivity in the modern Western state. The state seeks to normalize and medicalize survivors, while the concept of trauma oscillates between victimhood and protest. The book explores how violence, trauma, and memory are interconnected and impact political structures and individuality. The authors challenge the conventional narrative of the democratic state and highlight the dispersed nature of power in traumatic situations (Edkins 9-10). The trauma

concept, enriched by lived experiences and insights from diverse sources, offers a comprehensive framework to understand trauma's profound effects, spanning psychological impact, literary portrayal, interpersonal relationships, societal structures, cultural norms, and its influence on collective consciousness and responses as a society.

In *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014), Bessel van der Kolk reveals that trauma can alter brainwave rhythms, particularly in the fear center of the brain, the right temporal part. This excessive activity is coupled with an overabundance of slow-wave activity in the frontal region. As a consequence, their hyperaroused emotional brains dominate their mental life. Variations in brainwave rhythms resulting from trauma can impair executive functioning. Individuals with trauma may experience distress and irregular brainwave patterns when closing their eyes, "Often there is excessive activity in the right temporal lobe, the fear center of the brain, combined with too much frontal slow wave activity. This means that their hyperaroused emotional brains dominate their mental life" (347).

In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth delves into the profound effects of traumatic experiences, not only on individuals but also on entire communities and civilizations. Caruth's writings emphasize the wide-reaching impact of trauma:

If traumatic experience, as Freud indicates suggestively, is an experience that is not fully assimilated as it occurs, then these texts, each in its turn, asks what it means to transmit and to theorize around a crisis that is marked, not by a simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness. (5)

According to Caruth, trauma is more than just an illness; it is also a story spoken about a wound in an attempt to reveal a secret. She believes that this type of mental harm happens too suddenly and abruptly for comprehensive comprehension, and it does not become accessible to consciousness until it continuously imposes itself (Caruth 12–16).

Tancred, a character in Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, the protagonist of Tasso's poem, inadvertently kills his adored Clorinda while she is disguised as an enemy knight, which profoundly traumatizes him. Later, he unwittingly injures a tree containing Clorinda's soul, symbolizing the repetition of trauma that Freud would later refer to as "traumatic neurosis". The tragic effects of trauma on the mind are illustrated by Tancred's story (2). Tancred is an example of someone who is affected by the repetition of his tragedy. In this story, Caruth elaborates on how Tancred's existence reflects his traumatic past by saying that:

the story of Tancred, the repeated thrusts of his unwitting sword and the suffering he recognizes through the voice he hears, represents the experience of an individual traumatized by his own past—the repetition of his own trauma as it shapes his life. (8)

The narrative of Tancred portrays a person haunted by past traumas, characterized by his unconscious use of his sword and the anguish he experiences through the voices he hears. In trauma studies, the concept of trauma repetition is a well-known phenomenon in which a person may

inadvertently recreate the conditions of their initial trauma, typically in an unconscious attempt to integrate or comprehend their past experiences.

In Tancred's narrative, his repeated use of his sword is a metaphor for this reenactment of trauma. He is trapped in a cycle, unconsciously repeating his past trauma, which influences his current actions and, by extension, his life. The voices he hears represent his inner conflict and the psychological pain caused by his unresolved traumatic experiences. His story vividly illustrates how past trauma can control and shape a person's life, demonstrating the profound impacts of unresolved trauma on personal development and functioning. In other words, Caruth asserts that Tancred's existence reflects his past.

The results of Caruth's research push us to evaluate the impact that traumatic experiences have had on our historical perspective, as well as the possibility that narratives about traumatic experiences might give fresh insights into the ways in which it affects individuals. In combat, while disguised as an enemy knight, Caruth claims "It's here, Tancred, unwittingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders' army with terror" (Caruth 2). Tancred kills Clorinda by mistake while she is in disguise, and the tragedy serves as a powerful metaphor for the effect that trauma has on humanity (Caruth 2).

Caruth contends that because neurobiological theories disregard the dimension of time, they cannot adequately explain trauma. Tancred's story exemplifies this critique to perfection. His story demonstrates that trauma is not a static event confined to the past; rather, it continues to have repercussions in the present and the future. The fact that Tancred's past trauma continues to impact his current existence demonstrates that trauma is temporary. Caruth states, "Present neurobiological accounts of triggers (flashbacks caused by triggering elements in the environment) still run up against the temporal dilemma of repetition" (133). This demonstrates the inadequacy of neurobiological theories that fail to account for the long-term effects of traumatic events (Caruth 133). According to Caruth, the link between knowledge and ignorance, as well as the narratives of traumatic experiences, are closely interwoven. She highlights these subjects by using terminology such as "departure," "falling," and "burning," and "awakening," (5).

The novel *Ghostwritten* by David Mitchell provides a new perspective on how catastrophe affects individuals and how they react to the past. Literature's ability to depict traumatic experiences transcends simple textual analysis or theoretical explanation; it serves as a testament to the neglected suffering. *Ghostwritten* embodies the literary aspect of trauma that Caruth examines and resounds with numerous themes that Caruth investigates in her investigation of the cultural and historical facets of trauma (Caruth 7-8). Thus, Mitchell's work demonstrates the profound capacity of literature to illuminate the complexities of trauma, from personal distress to its broader social impacts. Mitchell's use of multiple narrators and perspectives in the novel demonstrates the diverse ways in which trauma can alter a person's understanding and interaction with the past and offers new insights into the effects of trauma.

Characters in *Ghostwritten* experience trauma in a variety of forms that reflect Caruth's research demonstrates a profound interest in psychology. She hypothesises that trauma is more

than a mere consequence of devastation. She proposes instead a paradoxical relationship between devastation and survival. According to Caruth, this paradox adopts a sense of incomprehension that rests at the heart of catastrophic experiences. Thus, trauma is no longer solely a result of calamity, but rather a complex duality that interweaves the ostensibly opposing forces of annihilation and endurance. This perspective enhances our comprehension of the perplexing nature of traumatic events (Caruth 57-58). Trauma is a complicated and multifaceted thing that happens when violence from the outside and the internal struggle to stay alive in the face of destruction meet. From this point of view, trauma is seen as a combination of two things: the outside forces that cause it and the internal effects of going through and surviving something so terrible. Caruth argues that Freud's works, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), offer significant insights into trauma and historical violence. According to her, these texts present trauma as a theory that encompasses the incomprehensibility of human existence. Reading these works provides enlightenment and satisfaction in fully understanding the intricacies of human experience. These works not only provide a framework for comprehending trauma but also highlight the mysterious aspects of human existence (Caruth 57-58).

Both Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* explore deeply into personal and collective trauma. These works examine the profound impact of trauma on individuals, society, and history. In *Ghostwritten*, Mitchell explores the concept of survival. The characters struggle with the aftermath of traumatic events, searching for meaning in a devastated world. Mitchell shows that trauma is a paradoxical interaction between devastation and survival – a fundamental aspect of the human experience that requires comprehension. Mitchell's narration emphasises "the impure" anticipation of impending funerals, a foreboding warning of the White Nights until His Serendipity triumphs.

This sentiment is overloaded with foreboding, suggesting that "the impure" may be the cause of numerous fatalities. The lack of mourners at these funerals is indicative of the extensive devastation and destruction that has occurred, signifying that the town has been devastated by a catastrophe. Thus, "the impure" functions as a chilling representation of the aftermath of trauma (Mitchell 10).

The act of memorialising the deceased without assistance or acknowledgment emphasises the importance of recognising the trauma associated with such an event. The previous quoted text emphasises the desire for renewal and the opportunity for development after a traumatic experience. The speaker imagines a revival of the Earth, a purification of past trauma, and a return to a pristine state. This desire is consistent with Mitchell's views on the cultural and historical dimensions of trauma and the necessity of a comprehensive examination of these aspects in narratives. Mitchell interweaves multiple storylines in *Ghostwritten* to demonstrate that disasters have far-reaching effects that impact entire communities. Trauma is important to a larger cultural and historical narrative, he argues, as evidenced by its varied effects on individuals. This larger narrative is exemplified by the speaker's desire for a new beginning.

*Ghostwritten* is a compelling exploration of survival and trauma, emphasizing the importance of understanding these experiences and their impact on human existence. Through its portrayal of devastation and hopefulness, personal and public encounters, the novel provides deep

insights into the complexities of the human condition. It is essential reading for those seeking to hold these details.

Trauma, according to Cathy Caruth, is a culturally and historically rooted experience that is frequently neglected or unheard. This viewpoint emphasises the significance of recognising and understanding trauma within a broader sociohistorical context (Caruth 9). David Mitchell's novel *Ghostwritten* centres on unclaimed memories and experiences. It portrays a global cast of individuals united by a mysterious power. As their journeys converge, their memories and experiences interweave, revealing their unclaimed experiences. *Ghostwritten* depicts a tapestry of characters, each of whom struggles with their own unspoken histories that indelibly define their lives. Among them, we encounter Quasar, whose efforts to repress his cultic past exacerbate rather than alleviate his anguish (Mitchell 8-31). Neal Brose's predicament exemplifies how the narrative skillfully explores the impact of personal disasters on individuals. His personal torment and psychological trauma are intertwined as a result of his divorce and a secret financial investigation (Mitchell 58-91).

Similarly, Marco's ghostwriting job for a questionable industrialist renders him disenchanted and estranged from his own existence (210-252). These unspoken experiences profoundly shape the lives of the characters, and *Ghostwritten* is an evocative depiction of interconnected lives and hidden histories. This narrative alignment supports Cathy Caruth's claim that trauma is not merely a pathology, but a narrative of a wound that demands to be heard, communicating a reality or truth that is otherwise inaccessible. The complex intertwining of lives and shared trauma in *Ghostwritten* echoes this idea, emphasising the need to engage with and comprehend these unclaimed experiences in order to completely comprehend the complexities of trauma. The predicament of Quasar is particularly distressing. As a result of his affiliation with His Majesty's sect, his emotional distress and post-traumatic stress disorder are depicted with evocative vigour. His physical and mental suffering is manifest in phrases such as "My fingernails are coming loose" (Mitchell 29).

His journal entries, a reflection of his disorientation and yearning for meaning, reveal his desperation to regain control and resolve lingering uncertainties. The characters in *Ghostwritten* represent David Mitchell's in-depth examination of trauma and its enduring effects. Trauma persists as an unclaimed specter in their lives, manifesting as PTSD symptoms such as isolation, disconnection, and despondency. Symbolised by their meditations on the Holy Mountain, these characters aspire for restoration and rebirth.

Mitchell's use of imagery, such as the desire to transition into a bird or a deer, encapsulates the characters' yearning for change and development. His depiction of trauma, including through dreams and recollections, aligns with Caruth's perspective. The characters' struggles to interact with others and their surroundings demonstrate that trauma can lead to a loss of agency and self-efficacy. According to the narrative, the Holy Mountain presents itself as a potential remedy for past trauma. Overall, the novel *Ghostwritten* explores the depths of human experiences and the devastation of trauma's aftermath.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth argues that trauma is not simply a violent event to be overcome, but rather a repetitive process that can result in devastating consequences. She claims, “From this perspective, the survival of trauma is not the fortunate passage beyond a violent event, a passage that is accidentally interrupted by reminders of it, but rather the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction” (Caruth 62-63).

This suggests that the experience of trauma is basically linked to the act of repetition and that survivors may continue to confront the effects of the traumatic incident repeatedly, as opposed to it being a one-time occurrence. This recurrent experience has the potential to bring about undesirable results. It is as if the traumatic event must be relived and reexperienced to acquire mastery over it.

This concept is movingly portrayed in *Ghostwritten* by the return of one character to the Holy Mountain. The Holy Mountain represents not only Caruth’s theories on trauma and unacknowledged experiences but also the protagonist’s desire for renewal and connection. It represents restoration and regeneration, granting the protagonist the ability to surmount her trauma and reclaim her life. The characters Caspar and Sherry, who are surprised and intrigued by the city of Ulan Bator, provide a distinct perspective on this concept. Their train voyage across the vast Mongolian grasslands is a time of solitude and introspection. As they traverse the sparse landscape, they ponder their existence and purpose, as reflected in their conversation:

Caspar joined her at the window. After a mile had passed: ‘Why are you here?’ She thought for a while. ‘It’s the last place, y’know? Lost in the middle of Asia, not in the east, not in the west. Lost as Mongolia, it could be an expression. How about you?’ (Mitchell 126)

Caspar’s solitude and inquiry reflect Caruth’s theory of unclaimed experiences. It is possible that the vastness and solitude of the train voyage contributed to his disorientation. Sherry’s description of a crane, a locust, and a bat functions as a metaphor for seeking steadiness in an unstable world (Mitchell 127). Loss can alter the path of a person’s life, and Caspar’s story of fate, survival, and quest reflects the human instinct to rationalise unpredictability. Backpackers like Caspar and Sherry may find solace and mastery in their travels despite turbulent conditions. The “Mongolia” chapter in *Ghostwritten* substantiates Caruth’s claim that trauma is both a disease and a wound that cries out to us, disclosing an otherwise hidden truth. Trauma is associated with delayed reactions to traumatic events (Caruth 4). In the “Clear Island” section of *Ghostwritten*, the protagonist, Dr. Mo Muntervary, is a renowned quantum cognition specialist. Throughout the narrative, she struggles with intensifying emotional turmoil and the difficulty of articulating her profoundly rooted fear and distress.

For example, Dr. Muntervary’s interactions with the Texan and the Marines are tense and evoke a sense of emotional turmoil. As in “No, John. I’m too scared to bluff” (Mitchell 301) and “John murmured in my ear. ‘This is dangerous.’ ‘I know.’ ‘But if you pull it off, I have a term of my own I want to suggest . . .’ The Texan stomped back into The Green Man.” (Mitchell 301). These phrases communicate her inner anguish and anxiety. In addition, when she decides to surrender herself to the Texan and his soldiers, she makes a curt declaration, “All eyes were on

me. ‘Everyone. Thank you. But I’ve got to go with them’ (300). The fact that she is unable to verbalise her distress suggests that her actions are motivated by intense pressure and emotional strain. Simultaneously, the protagonist engages in conversations concerning an imminent global nuclear catastrophe. Caruth’s narrative analysis of trauma is consistent with her view of trauma as a severe wound that screams out frantically, seeking to expose a reality or truth that is otherwise elusive and inaccessible to us. In her own words, Caruth emphasises that trauma is always accompanied by a story, a narrative that continuously confronts us in an effort to communicate a reality or truth that cannot be easily accessed through other channels. As trauma narratives work to close the understanding gap between the unthinkable depths of trauma and our common understanding, this viewpoint emphasises the urgency and necessity of trauma narratives. (Caruth 17).

In *Ghostwritten* David Mitchell masterfully employs an excess of symbols and themes to explore the complicated effects of trauma on his characters. In the chapter “Holy Mountain” the Tree serves as a symbolic feature that represents a place of relief from the trauma experienced by the protagonist. The Tree, located near the Tea Shack where the protagonist, a young girl, resides, acts as a protective entity. Mitchell mentions in this chapter “The Tree tells the monkeys not to steal our things. I was singing to myself.” (Mitchell 93). This line produces a sense of safety and security. Additionally, the Tree is associated with the presence of Lord Buddha, providing a spiritual connection and solace for the protagonist as in “Lord Buddha was watching me from his shrine beside the Tree. I asked him for it not to hurt as much as I feared” (Mitchell 95). The hidden side of the Tree, with its hollow that perfectly cradles a young girl’s body, symbolizes a refuge where the protagonist can find relief from the traumatic events she has endured. This image is evident in the context:

The mist had closed in. The mountainside was dark with white. The afternoon became so sluggish that it stopped altogether. The Warlord’s Son stretched his legs and arched his back. He picked at his teeth with a bejewelled toothpick. ‘After drinking tea as bitter as that, I want sherbet ... The silences after his last gasp were sung. (94-95)

In the given passage from the novel *Ghostwritten* by David Mitchell, the atmospheric description establishes a tone of melancholy and stagnation, perhaps reflecting a state of trauma or the result of a traumatic incident. The invading mist and the snow-covered mountainside cause a sense of confusion and obscured clarity. The afternoon’s halting sluggishness suggests a delay or stagnation in time, which can be interpreted as a coping mechanism in response to trauma.

The Warlord’s Son’s actions, such as extending his legs, arching his back, and picking at his teeth with a jewelled toothpick, may be interpreted as attempts to distract or dissociate himself from the traumatic experiences. The mention of consuming bitter tea and subsequently desiring sherbet may represent a desire for something sweet or comforting to counteract the bitterness or distress caused by the trauma. The lyrical phrase “The silences after his last gasp were sung” is a metaphor for the aftermath of a traumatic event. It suggests that the silence that follows a significant moment or gasp contains an unspoken profundity or emotional resonance. This relates to the concept of trauma and its enduring effects, as well as the possibility of healing and expression via artistic or creative means. This passage from the novel alludes to the presence of

trauma, the characters' coping mechanisms, and the possibility of finding solace or release through various forms of expression. It corresponds to the investigation of trauma and its effects on individuals, as discussed in the prior analysis of *Ghostwritten*. The text moves with "together by a blackbird. I lay there, my eyes unable to close. His were unable to open. I listed the places where I hurt, and how much. My loins felt ripped. Something inside had torn" (Mitchell 94-95). In this extract from *Ghostwritten*, the narrator describes an instance of intense pain and weakness following a traumatic event. The inability to close their eyes and the description of physical injuries, including the sensation of having their loins torn and something shredding inside, demonstrate the severity of the physical and emotional effects of the trauma they endured. This passage depicts the enduring effects of trauma on the characters, emphasising their intense anguish and sense of alienation. Or

an old woman came. She laboured slowly up the stairs to where I lay, wondering how I could defend myself if the Warlord's Son called again on his way down. 'Don't worry,' she said. 'The Tree will protect you. The Tree will tell you when to run, and when to hide (96).

and

I was airing my bedding from the upstairs room's window-ledge when I heard their voices. A boy and a girl had arrived without me noticing – my hearing is drawing in. Through a spyhole in the planking I watch them for some moments. Her face is made-up like the daughter of a merchant, or else a whore (96).

These lines depict the presence and significance of the Tree as a symbol of relief and protection from the trauma experienced by the protagonist in the chapter "Holy Mountain"

The protagonist, a young girl, finds solace and healing in her connection with the Tree and an encounter with an old woman on the "Holy Mountain". Both the Tree and the old woman symbolize a journey towards recovery and renewal, offering refuge from the girl's traumatic past.

In addition, Mitchell's vivid depiction of a train journey through the vast "Mongolian" chapter captivates the reader. The protagonist, Caspar, experiences feelings of isolation and disorientation as he finds himself surrounded by strangers from different countries, each with their own stories and backgrounds. The Australian girl, Sherry, the Swede, the Irish woman, and the Israeli team all exist in their own worlds, disconnected from one another. This diverse group of individuals highlights the transient nature of backpackers, who are often searching for something and drifting from place to place. These characters' distinct experiences and cultural differences contribute to a sense of isolation and disorientation as they navigate a foreign land and encounter new experiences. Here are some examples from the chapter:

"Backpackers are strange. I have a lot in common with them. We live nowhere, and we are strangers everywhere. We drift, often on a whim, searching for something to search for." (128).

...

“We are both parasites: I live in my hosts’ minds, and sift through his or her memories to understand the world” (128).

...

“To the world at large we are both immaterial and invisible. We chew the secretions of solitude” (128).

As Caruth emphasizes the paradoxical link between strangers through their lack of comprehension in her quote “Paradoxically, these strangers are linked to the lovers precisely through what they do not comprehend” (Caruth 45), it highlights the importance of connection and understanding in the film *Hiroshima mon amour*. This aspect adds intrigue and fosters a shared experience among the film’s characters. In the subsequent section, viewers are introduced to multiple languages and perspectives through the interactions between characters from diverse backgrounds and countries.

Both Caruth and Mitchell emphasize looking, listening, and understanding outside one’s own language and perspective. The film’s characters and the protagonist’s backpackers travel to unexpected places and meet people who speak different languages. These interactions highlight the difficulties of communicating across languages and cultures. Both characters and viewers must go beyond what can be seen and comprehended visually and embrace the range of languages and voices that help them understand their surroundings. The juxtaposition of languages and investigation of communication hurdles generate a sensation of confusion and emphasises the necessity of open-mindedness and cultural exchange in connecting and overcoming isolation.

The symbolic depiction of trauma and the search for meaning and recovery in the works of Mitchell and Caruth results in a compelling examination of the human condition. The “Night Train” segment, for example, corresponds to Caruth’s concept of the “trauma of witnessing,” as the characters contend with political instability juxtaposed with anniversary celebrations. For example, the 9/11 national mourning is commemorated by the New York pyrotechnics display as a communal catharsis (Mitchell 340).

Bat Segundo’s radio program provides a sense of calm and relief as one of the listeners says “I’m a big fan of your show, Bat. I’m listening on my transistor radio, while the batteries hold out.” (321)

In the meantime, the zookeeper utilises PinSat technology to reclaim control over his animals:

“All the designers were present”.

I powered up the PinSat.’

‘A WhatSat?’

‘A PinSat.’ ‘What does one of those do?’

‘That’s classified information, Bat.

‘And the rest of this isn’t?’

‘It is only for my actions that I am accountable, Bat (Mitchell 309).

In conclusion, *Ghostwritten* is a powerful embodiment of Caruth’s trauma theories, demonstrating how past traumatic events can affect time, place, and the self. The novel provides a compelling examination of trauma’s psychological complexities and the long-lasting effects it can have on an individual’s identity and behaviour.

According to Cathy Caruth’s theory of delayed response of the unconscious, traumatic experiences are not completely processed at the time they occur and have the potential to resurface in the future. In her book *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth suggests that Freud also proposed a similar concept, whereby traumatic experiences are not fully adapted into a person’s consciousness at the time they occur. Trauma, for Caruth, is characterised by a paradoxical knowledge state. She writes,

If traumatic experience, as Freud suggests, is an experience that is not fully assimilable as it occurs, then each of these texts asks what it means to transmit and theorise around a crisis that is marked not by simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness. (5)

Caruth illuminates the complex and illusive nature of trauma, as well as its enduring effects on individuals. Trauma, according to her, is unique in that it both resists and requires our testimony. She argues that navigating a traumatic event frequently requires giving expression to a previously hidden or incompletely understood reality at the time the event occurred. She believes that this action is necessary for an individual to endure a traumatic experience. Sadly, the act of bearing witness is frequently overlooked or misunderstood until much later (5).

Expanding on this, Caruth asserts that surviving trauma frequently involves testifying to a reality that was initially obscured or not fully comprehended at the time the event occurred. She argues that this act of witnessing is essential for survival, despite the fact that it is frequently neglected or misunderstood until much later. In this way, Caruth emphasises the multifaceted and elusive nature of trauma, highlighting its ongoing and frequently delayed effects on individuals.

Caruth writes:

My main endeavor is, rather, to trace in each of these texts a different story, the story or the textual itinerary of insistently recurring words or figures. The key figures my analysis

uncovers and highlights—the figures of ‘departure,’ ‘falling,’ ‘burning,’ or ‘awakening’—in their insistence. (5)

She argues further that traumatic experiences resist simple comprehension and require a more "literary" form of language. She emphasises the significance of motifs such as “departure,” “falling,” “burning,” and “awakening,” which represent the persistent presence of trauma.

David Mitchell’s novel *Ghostwritten* includes these traumatic ideas. In particular, as the story progresses, the protagonists face difficult events that they are unable to fully understand or accept. There are several narrators in this story: Quasar, who is haunted by his past actions, including the release of nerve gas in a subway; the noncorpum or spirit, who recounts its past inhabitations of various human hosts; the unnamed female of the clear Island, who experiences flashbacks in the form of recurring memories and nightmares; and Bat Segundo, the late-night radio DJ from the town of Thieves. As a result, Narrators start displaying symptoms of trauma, such as difficulty sleeping and flashbacks. Even if they do not fully understand what is going on at first, it seems like the characters could have to testify about what happened. From this standpoint, the concept will be discussed in a way that can illuminate the novel *Ghostwritten* by David Mitchell and its characters and events.

The first chapter of *Ghostwritten* depicts the perils of blind allegiance to a charismatic leader and the extremes to which a cult may go to complete its objectives, including the execution of a chemical attack. Both of these dangers are depicted in the context of a cult. Quasar, the protagonist in David Mitchell’s narrative, is portrayed as a devout follower of the cult named “The Fellowship”. His unquestioning obedience to the cult’s charismatic leader, His Serendipity, is evident in his responses: “Naturally, sir. I obey His Serendipity in all things” (Mitchell 17), and “Yes, sir. But I received the alpha-wave messages sent from my brothers and sisters through the news broadcasts. And His Serendipity speaks to me words of comfort in my exile as I meditate” (Mitchell 17). He faithfully adheres to instructions from fellow cult members to retreat and conceal himself in a remote location. Quasar’s unquestioning compliance showcases the power of the cult’s influence and the depths of his indoctrination, painting a vivid picture of his character and the life he leads within “The Fellowship”.

Devoutness, or deep dedication to a cause or belief, can indeed be related to the argument of delayed and unconscious response, particularly in the context of psychological and behavioral perspectives. When a person is extremely devoted to a belief system, ideology, or leader, they may display delayed or unconscious reactions to situations that contradict their beliefs. This can occur owing to a number of psychological mechanisms and Obedience and Conformity is one of these points.

**Obedience and Conformity:** In a cult or similarly structured group, obedience to authority and conformity to group norms can overshadow individual critical thinking. This may lead to a delayed or suppressed response when the group’s actions are harmful or unethical. In the context of *Ghostwritten*, Quasar’s devoutness to his cult and its leader results in a delay in questioning the morality and consequences of his actions. He unconsciously follows the instructions given to him

without fully understanding or acknowledging the implications, illustrating the dangerous influence of blind obedience and fervent.

Quasar believes in the teachings and mission of the Fellowship, which is presented as a peaceful organization focused on liberation and life rather than doom. Quasar considers himself one of His Serendipity's chosen messengers as in quote "'Who knows,' said my Master, 'if you continue your alpha self-amplification as rapidly as the Minister of Education reports, you may be entrusted with a very special mission in the future'" (Mitchell 13).

Indeed, the analysis of Quasar's experiences within "The Fellowship" aligns with Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma and its delayed consciousness. Quasar's complete surrender to the cult leader, His Serendipity, reflects a potentially traumatic past that was never properly addressed. He may be unconsciously employing dissociation and detachment as coping mechanisms to manage his past traumas, and his belief in the mission of the Fellowship could represent an attempt to restore some semblance of order and meaning in his life.

One could argue that the traumatic gas attack, which is carefully orchestrated by the Fellowship as mentioned (17) and led by Quasar, showcases his disconnection from reality. Quasar is so deeply indoctrinated by the cult that he justifies such a terrifying act of violence, possibly because it offers him a sense of purpose and control. As per Caruth's theory, this act might represent an unprocessed traumatic event that could resurface in Quasar's consciousness later, inducing symptoms of trauma such as flashbacks, nightmares, or disruptive thoughts as Mitchell declares in this quote:

The old woman who ran the inn was clearly holding court. 'I still remember the television pictures on the day it happened. All those poor, poor people stumbling out, holding handkerchiefs to their mouths . . . a nightmare! Welcome back, Mr Tokunaga. Were you in Tokyo during the attack?'. (22)

Similarly, the manipulative tactics used by the cult are not immediately recognized by Quasar due to his unquestioning faith in the cult's teachings "Have our yogic fliers been despatched to the parliament building to demand the integration of His Serendipity's teachings into the national curriculum? If we leave it too long, then the unclean might--" (17). This blindness to manipulation and potential harm is another example of how Quasar's mind might be delaying the comprehension of these traumatic events. According to Caruth, these experiences are likely to surface later, forcing Quasar to grapple with the implications of his actions.

It is evident from the strong faith in the teachings and mission of the Fellowship, as conveyed by Quasar in his speech about the cult: "The Fellowship are my true family" (27) and "I daren't risk bringing attention to myself. My last defence is my ordinariness" (27) is consistent with Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma and delayed consciousness. His total submission to His Serendipity, as in "I replied to His Serendipity that I was ready to die for Him. That I loved Him as a son does his father and would protect Him as a father does a son" (25). As he justifies the cult's gas attack by stating, "Officially, we are denying complicity in your gas attack. This will win us more time to strengthen the Fellowship with new brothers and sisters" (17), it becomes

evident that Quasar's beliefs and actions are rooted in his unaddressed traumas. This suggests a disconnection from reality and a reluctance to confront the true nature of his past experiences has not yet been completely processed. Quasar's unwavering faith and devotion to the Fellowship may be viewed as a coping mechanism that enables him to dissociate and disassociate from his past traumas. In his justification for the traumatic gas attack orchestrated by the Fellowship, Quasar's disconnection from reality becomes evident.

His profound belief in the cult's mission compels him to defend and participate in this act of violence despite its horrific consequences. Quasar's indifference to the moral repercussions of his actions demonstrates his detachment from reality, he seeks a sense of purpose and control within the cult's ideology through his explaining "We were heroes! Just a few months before the end of the unclean world! Paradise had been so near for them!" (24). In addition, Quasar's blindness to the cult's manipulative strategies "This tactic worked for our cleansing experiment in Nagano Prefecture last year. How easily misled are these dungbeetles!' 'Indeed, sir.'" (17) demonstrates his delayed comprehension of the traumatic events that were unfolding. He is unquestioning and oblivious of the potential harm the cult's actions could cause. Quasar's belief in His Serendipity's ability to travel into another body as easily as changing lodgings and islands demonstrates his disconnected mindset.

According to Caruth's theory, these traumatic events and their repercussions are likely to reappear in Quasar's consciousness in the future. Eventually, he may be forced to confront the repercussions of his actions and deal with the delayed or suppressed traumatic effects within his psyche. Quasar's reflections on the fate of Mr. Ikeda and the individuals who seem to vanish off the edge of his world suggest that he may be coming to terms with the possibility that the reality he has subscribed to is crumbling as in his speech "I wonder, to Mr Ikeda? Where do people who drop off the edge of your world end up?" (Mitchell 30).

By analysing Quasar's beliefs, justifications, and statements about the cult, we can observe his disconnection from reality and the role that delayed consciousness plays in his voyage within the Fellowship. The tension between his initial sense of belonging within the cult and the disquieting reality of its practises defines his experiences. Quasar's struggles with disorientation, detachment, and dissociation, as well as his own beliefs and actions, appear to indicate that his traumatic experiences have caused a consciousness delay. The disconcerting manifestation of these difficulties is evident in his obsessive behaviour, as he states, "My palms have become blotchy. I clean myself eight or nine times a day, but something is wrong with my skin" (Mitchell 26).

His experiences highlight the significance of recognising potential symptoms of delayed and unconscious responses, such as dissociation and flashbacks, in order to better assist individuals in recuperating from traumatic situations as it shows in the context "He will scan for my alpha signature, and find me during one of my rambles around the island, when I am alone, or asleep in a grove of palm trees. He will be there when I awake, glowing, perhaps, like Buddha or Gabriel" (27). The feeling of sorrow makes him cry on his bed as in "I lay on my bed, and wept" (24).

In conclusion, David Mitchell's portrayal of Quasar in *Ghostwritten* provides a compelling exploration of the intersection between cult indoctrination and trauma. By viewing Quasar's

experiences through the lens of Caruth's theory of delayed consciousness, we gain a deeper understanding of how trauma can remain unconscious and resurface later, disrupting an individual's life and shaping their actions in profound ways.

Moreover, in the second chapter of David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten*, we meet Satoru, a Tokyo-based 18-year-old. His personality resonates strongly with Caruth's concept of latent trauma. Satoru was orphaned and reared by Mama-san after being born to a Filipino mother who was subsequently deported and an unidentified Japanese father. As a latent trauma, his ignorance regarding his father's identity influences his thoughts and actions in a subtle but significant manner. Satoru ponders, "Mama-san told me my father was eighteen when I was born. That makes me old enough to be my father. Of course, my father was cast as the victim" (Mitchell 36). This depiction corresponds precisely with Caruth's interpretation of Freud's theory regarding delayed reactions to traumatic events. Satoru's recurring reflections on his anonymous parents, their history, and their emotions reveal his trauma. His ignorance functions as a form of repressed trauma. Caruth copies Freud words in her book *Unclaimed Experience* when she writes "the person gets away, Freud says, "apparently unharmed." The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (Caruth 17).

According to Freud, one is "apparently unharmed". This indicates that the trauma experience, with its inherent delay, does not entail forgetting an unknowable reality. Instead, it embodies the inherent latency of the experience (Caruth 17). Satoru's experience influences his thoughts and actions in subtle yet significant ways. This is consistent with Caruth's clarification of Freud's theory of delayed reaction to traumatic events. Like Satoru, Mitchell's characters illuminate the complexity of trauma and the necessity of addressing its impacts on mental health. They emphasize latent trauma as a crucial factor in understanding the human psyche, echoing Caruth's concept of delayed unconsciousness. Mitchell unearths the complex layers of trauma through his nuanced characterisation, revealing how our ignorance - our repressed traumas - may not cause visible damage, but are intrinsic to our existence and shape our perspectives and actions.

The narrative of Satoru provides a compelling examination of Freud's concept of trauma, as evidenced by his delayed reaction to recognising a customer who might be his father "That makes me old enough to be my father" (Mitchell 36). This late realisation embodies what Freud called the "recurring image of the accident" (Caruth 6). Trauma, which Freud defined as an incomprehensible event, is characterised by a delayed response to a startling occurrence. Satoru is perpetually haunted by the mystery surrounding his existence, his birth, and the precipitous departure of his parents. Satoru immerses himself in the world of jazz music as a means of coping with his unsettling impulses. He asserts, "My place comes into existence through jazz. Jazz makes a fine place. The colours and feelings there come not from the eye but from sounds. It's like being blind but seeing more ... Not that I could ever put that into words." (Mitchell 35). His interest in jazz CDs and his employment at Takeshi's jazz record store function as a protective shield, a form of reaction formation in which negative thoughts and emotions are transformed into their opposites. Within the city, the music creates a unique, non-physical space where he can seek solace, ruminate, and make sense of his experiences.

Another character in this manner is Neal in Hong Kong chapter. The traumatic event in Neal's account is the dissolution of his marriage to Katy. His comprehension of the gravity of their final farewell at the ferry terminal is delayed. Rather, he experiences a delayed reaction as he reflects on it later: "it was horrible, horrible. She was leaving me" (Mitchell 68). His regret for the parting words he spoke is profound: "I instantly regretted those words, and I still do. It sounded like a parting shot. She turned and walked away" (68-69), but he does not feel the full impact of their separation until much later. This delayed response causes him to reflect on his past relationship with Katy and provokes feelings of loss and longing, especially when he observes a young couple in a café (68). This scenario provides a compelling illustration of Cathy Caruth's concept of "delayed response," which posits that traumatic events are rarely completely comprehended or treated at the time of their incidence. Rather, it frequently takes a substantial amount of time for the individual to fully experience and comprehend the impact of the event.

The chapter titled "The Holy Mountain" introduces us to a juvenile girl who endures multiple traumatic events. "The war had nothing to do with us. Many of the village sons were conscripted by the Warlord, and sent to fight on the side of some kind of alliance, but that was beyond the Valley" (Mitchell 98). Her interactions with the Warlord's Son, the subsequent birth of her child, and their subsequent separation highlight the significance of trauma reactions and responses. In both instances, the fathers' responses to unfolding traumatic occurrences are delayed. While Freud's father does not immediately awaken from his distressing dream, the protagonist's father fails to defend his daughter and hesitates to act against the invading soldiers. Both accounts incorporate dreams, visions, and spirituality as coping mechanisms for traumatic events. Freud's analysis suggests that dreams serve as a means for the subconscious to process and understand traumatic experiences.

In this process, a departed child may be transformed into a living one, fulfilling the father's wish for the child to still be alive. This transformation in the dream, from a distressing reality to a more comforting scenario, aligns with Freud's theory of wish fulfillment. It displays the power of the subconscious mind to reconstruct reality in response to our deepest desires, as further exemplified in the line, "The dream fulfills, therefore, the father's wish that the child be still alive" (Caruth 107). This demonstrates how dreams, according to Freud's theory, may serve to fulfill our unconscious wishes, even if these wishes are in stark contrast to the harsh realities presented within the dream itself. Similarly, Mitchell portrays the girl's vision of a guardian spirit and her faith in the Tree represents her efforts to find solace and make meaning of her traumatic reality. This scene displays in the quote:

When the Holy Mountain is windy, sounds from afar are blown near, and nearby sounds are blown away. The Tea Shack creaks – my lazy father never lifted a hammer in his life – and the Tree creaks. That's why we didn't hear them until they had kicked the windows in. Both the Tea Shack and the Tree groan, but my slothful father never lifted a hammer. This prevented us from hearing them until they broke the windows. (98)

Therefore, this quote exemplifies the complex role of spirituality and belief systems in navigating and making meaning of traumatic experiences. The dynamics of power, exploitation, and submission are prominently depicted in both examples. In Freud's dream, the father's inability to

rescue his infant from the flames symbolises his helplessness in the face of harsh realities (Caruth 107). Similarly, in the second example, a girl is subjected to the oppressive rule of the Warlord's Son and the advancing soldiers, demonstrating how power structures can perpetuate trauma (Mitchell 93).

In the "Mongolia" chapter of *Ghostwritten* the narrative, extensively covers Caspar and Sherry's expedition across Mongolia's vast landscapes, in addition to illuminating Sherry's experiences. This journey, while a physical exploration, also runs parallel to a deep introspective investigation, specifically surrounding the theme of trauma. The voyage stands as a metaphor for the delayed comprehension of trauma. In reference to Freud's dream interpretation, the father's awakening is a double-edged sword - it signifies both a connection with his child and the inevitability of an insufficient response. This idea is reinforced by his continuous realization that he woke up too late to prevent the disaster, as encapsulated in the line, "Yet the very directness of this dream, Freud remarks, does not, surprisingly, wake the father and permit him to rush to save the burning corpse, but rather delays his response to the waking reality" (Caruth 94).

This narrative, therefore, not only presents a detailed exploration of trauma but also links it with the broader motifs of time and delayed reactions. Caspar and Sherry's disorientation and unfamiliarity imply that, similar to the father in Freud's dream who does not comprehend his child's death until he awakens, their complete comprehension of their experiences does not emerge instantly but rather over time.

As their voyage progressed, Caspar's isolation and longing for home intensified, creating a narrative fraught with obstacles. This is an examination of how progressively individuals come to comprehend the gravity of traumatic events. Mitchell depicts the placid scene of horses grazing and elderly men smoking pipes with skill. Meanwhile, indifferent local children disdain Caspar's friendly gesture, and vicious dogs attack the passing train with their barks. Upon observing their behaviour, their vigilant gaze resembles that of their progenitors (Mitchell 125).

Mitchell vividly depicts the gloomy atmosphere. Horses grazed; old folks squatted smoking pipes. Kids watched as vicious-looking canines growled at the train. They never returned Caspar's wave, simply watched like their grandfathers "horses serenely grazing, elderly men squatting on their haunches while leisurely smoking pipes. Meanwhile, menacing dogs bark fiercely at the passing train, and the local children observe in silence, devoid of any response to Caspar's friendly wave. They merely watch, much like their grandfathers before them" (Mitchell 125). Caspar's loneliness and longing for home intensify. Instead of anticipation, Mitchell feels limitless (Mitchell 125). However, "Caspar was feeling lonely and homesick. I felt no anticipation, just endlessness". Yet, Caspar joins Sherry by the window for company despite the misery. She asks why after a mile. She reflects on the final spot, lost in Asia, without linked to east or west. Mongolia represents being lost to her. She asks Mitchell to explain his motives "Caspar joined her at the window. After a mile had passed: 'Why are you here?' She thought for a while. 'It's the last place, y'know? Lost in the middle of Asia, not in the east, not in the west. Lost as Mongolia, it could be an expression. How about you?'" (Mitchell 126).

Mitchell contemplates his great loneliness very early in their journey “But even back then, I was wondering: Why am I alone?” (127). Introspection deepens the story, showing how their awareness of trauma evolves. Mitchell uses vivid passages and tight conjunctions to show how horrific situations lead to understanding. Their path inspires introspection and self-discovery, proving that trauma understanding takes time.

A metaphorical entity that embodies the unconscious mind travels across several hosts and stores memories and emotions like the unconscious mind stores traumatic events. Sherry’s yawn shows her fatigue and probably fury. It symbolises her mental and emotional exhaustion after three years of dealing with the “hopeless case.” “Sorry, I’m exhausted” signifies that she needs a break from the situation’s tension ““Three years! Oath, you are a terminal case!” Sherry’s face turned into a huge yawn. ‘sorry, I’m bushed. Being cooped up doing nothing is exhausting work.” (126). Caruth’s temporal delay and the entity’s accumulation of experiences show that the unconscious mind needs time to digest trauma. The entity’s alteration into different vessels resembles trauma’s haunting. The reoccurring dream of the burnt infant symbolises the unconscious mind’s desire to accept and process trauma. The creature haunts the hosts, forcing them to acknowledge and process traumatic memories and this can be seen in quote in Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience*:

For showing, in its repetition, the failure of the father to see even when he tries to see, the dream reveals how the very consciousness of the father as father, as the one who wishes to see his child alive again so much that he sleeps in spite of the burning corpse, is linked inextricably to the impossibility of adequately responding to the plea of the child in its death. (103)

In the chapter “Mongolia”, Sherry expresses her uncertainty regarding her comprehension of the significance of things by stating, “I don’t know, yet. It’s very long” (Mitchell 126). She reflects further on Mongolia as a place in the midst of Asia that neither belongs to the east nor the west. She emphasises the idea of being lost by stating, “Lost as Mongolia” (Mitchell 126). Sherry asks Caspar the reason of being here out of curiosity. Caspar’s response is, “I don’t really know. I was on my way to Laos, when this impulse just came over me. I told myself there was nothing here, but I couldn’t fight it. Mongolia” (Mitchell 126). Despite Caspar’s inadequacy as a storyteller, the act of telling a tale becomes a form of release from their troubling recollections. Mitchell states, “Caspar was not a natural storyteller” (Mitchell 126). Sherry, however, expresses interest in hearing a story: “I’d love to hear it,’ Sherry smiled, and Caspar’s heart missed a gear” (Mitchell 126). This suggests that sharing stories is a means of finding solace and connection, regardless of the storyteller’s skill. By incorporating these details, the narrative maintains cohesion by highlighting Sherry and Caspar’s quest for meaning, their fascination with Mongolia, and the therapeutic nature of storytelling as an escape from their burdensome memories.

Trauma is unfathomable, and the characters suffer unforeseen happenings. Understanding these memories is delayed, like processing a painful event, and they plague the protagonists as they seek meaning and identity. This anecdote powerfully illustrates how trauma’s delay and subconscious responses distort people’s vision of the world and themselves, as per Caruth’s interpretation. By integrating these components, the story captures trauma’s complex impact on

the characters. The metaphorical creature, characters' interactions, and research of known and unknown features portray trauma's intricacies and the long process of understanding and healing.

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