



IIT ROORKEE



NPTEL ONLINE
CERTIFICATION COURSE

Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema

LECTURE 09 - HISTORY AND ALTERNATIVE MEMORY WRITINGS

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- Study of popular memory involves two sets of relations:
 - (a) between two dominant memories and oppositional forms across the public field, including academic productions;
 - (b) between public discourse and a more privatized sense of past generated within a lived culture.
- Memory poses as an archive which gives access to untold stories of a “real past”.
- Project of making history does not take into consideration that the ideological systems and categories of representation are not fixed, immutable identities.
- Non-hegemonic histories are recuperative projects challenging normative history. They intend to make visible/heard what the colonial state and national bourgeoisie chose to forget.

- Elizabeth F Loftus(1993) - memory is highly malleable and reconstructive and this indeed leads to the validity of memories.
- Caruth - “What the parable of the wound and the voice thus tells us, and what is at the heart of Freud’s writing on trauma, both in what it says and in the stories it unwittingly tells, is that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (4).
- Trauma in general is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena.
- Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.

- “The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life” (7).
- Trauma creates “flashbacks” and amnesia for overwhelming events, accompanied by emotional numbing (Elizabeth 1070).
- The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all (Caruth 17).
- Inherent latency of the traumatic event paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of the Partitions’ historical experience.
- History of trauma can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence.

- Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, which describes an overwhelming experience of sudden catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder reflects the direct imposition of the unavoidable reality of horrific events on the mind, the taking over of the mind by an event that it cannot control.
- PTSD seems to provide the most direct link between the psyche and external violence.
- A paradoxical relation between destructiveness and survival recognizes the legacy of incomprehensibility at the heart of catastrophic experience (Caruth 58)

- Cathy Caruth - returning traumatic dream of the survivors as the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits ('Traumatic Departures', 59).
- What Freud encounters in the traumatic neurosis is not the reaction to any horrible event but, rather, the peculiar and perplexing experience of survival.
- The relation between trauma and survival arises through the paradoxical structure of indirectness in psychic trauma.

- For the traumatized, the mind cannot confront the possibility of its death directly. So survival becomes an endless testimony to the impossibility of living.
- Caruth - “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”(63).
- A survivor’s life suggests that the history of the traumatized individual is nothing other than repetition of the event of destruction.

- The trauma of the nightmare does not simply consist in the experience within the dream, but in the experience of waking from it. It is the experience of waking into consciousness that is identified with the reliving of the trauma.
- Traumatic experience suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability of knowing it.
- Survivor of chronic trauma sustains a deeper disturbance of self and identity. “She may lose the sense that she has any self at all”(Herman 1992,86).
- Emotional trauma: “subjective experience of being implicated in a destructive experience, including guilt over having violated a powerful taboo” (Haaken 1080)

- Dori Laub - trauma is “an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after and is therefore outside the range of comprehension”(69).
- Trauma is generic to Partition testimonies. Survivors put into words incoherent tragedy as evidenced in Urvashi Butalia’s *The Other Side of Silence* (1).
- Butalia’s realization that a fluid account of partition was impossible ensued the fragmented narratives of remembering.
- Jyotirmayee Devi (1968) - Incomplete stories of abduction and sexual violence draw attention to the limits of language or the gaps in between words or in silences. Language can be chosen and utilized to give voice to memories and ideas, but we must also think about how these memories and ideas are shaped by the availability of language; in response to traumatic events, the inadequacy of language leads to a complete absence of vocabulary, meaning that silences, pauses and gaps prevail.

- In the rush to produce women's recollection as authentic, their faculty of imagination is undermined as this faculty is vital in resisting patriarchal control and imagining a world beyond it (1071).
- The healing and unilinear journey of victims can be illusory and provide a self-help and formulaic answers...and become a quasi-religious quest for the single origin of women's problems, disentangled from the broader confluence of life experiences, both past and present (1073).

- PTSD include relationally complex experiences involving the betrayal of trust (1080).
- Unlike total veracity, or total falsity, recovered trauma memories have possibilities between truth and falsehood in representations of the past, as memory fragments are reconstructed and new meanings created (1081).
- John Hersey , *Hiroshima* : And now each knows that in the act of survival he lived a dozen lives and saw more death than he ever thought he would see. At the same time, none of them knew anything.

- The spatial and narrative manifestations of attempts to contextualise wartime memories of loss, trauma, conflict, victory and suffering are refracted through the emotional and identity-based complexities in the process of post-war remembrances.
- According to Halbwach's formulation, commemoration is a vehicle of collective memory.

- Partition's commemoration can be read into four folds with respect to Durkheimian and Halbwach's theory :
 - i) commemorations of negative events or difficult pasts, wherein commemoration serves to preserve struggles over meaning of the remembered objects ;
 - ii) The role of political organizations and social movements in the making and remaking of commemorative rituals;
 - iii) The fundamentally temporal nature of commemoration, which draws attention to the continuities and discontinuities in the way actors repeat commemorative rituals over time;
 - iv) The rescaling of commemoration from national to transnational arenas and actors, reconfiguring the connection between national identity and collective memory in an increasingly global world.

Thank You

