



Memory and Trauma in *Narcopolis* and *Sleeping On Jupiter*

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ABSTRACT

In *Narcopolis* and *Sleeping on Jupiter*, respectively, renowned modern Indian writers Jeet Thayil and Anuradha Roy examine trauma, memory, addiction, and societal hypocrisy. While poet and musician Thayil wrote *Narcopolis* as a semi-autobiographical account of addiction and urban decay, reflecting his own experiences with substance abuse, journalist and novelist Roy wrote *Sleeping on Jupiter* to reveal the hidden trauma of sexual abuse survivors and the hypocrisies of religious institution. *Narcopolis* is postmodern and transgressive literature, distinguished by its fractured, hallucinogenic narrative; and these novels are classified as literary fiction; *Sleeping on Jupiter* is feminist and psychological fiction, concentrating on the inner conflicts of a trauma survivor. Their themes—trauma, memory, and patriarchal oppression in *Sleeping on Jupiter*, and drug culture, urban marginalisation, and postcolonial critique in *Narcopolis*—strongly correspond with their genres and highlight social realities that are sometimes overlooked. According to a literature analysis, *Narcopolis* is analysed by critics as a commentary on postcolonial urban ruin, drug subcultures, and the effects of globalisation, while *Sleeping on Jupiter* is viewed as an investigation of the long-term psychological effects of abuse and the silence enforced by power structures. Both the novels use multi-perspective narration, vivid imagery, and non-linear



storytelling to reflect fractured psyches through fragmented narratives. Thematically, *Narcopolis* criticises society's blindness to addiction, while *Sleeping on Jupiter* reveals the taboo around abuse. Whether repressed memories or hallucinations brought on by drugs, vision represents a warped world, raising concerns about how trauma and addiction affect perception. Both the novels challenge readers to face uncomfortable social realities. *Narcopolis* and *Sleeping on Jupiter* are powerful indictments of modern civilisation that highlight suffering, addiction, and marginalisation. Both the novels ask readers to consider how trauma, addiction, and social silence affect perception through their fractured storylines, vivid imagery, and multi-layered symbolism. Thayil portrays the numbing effects of drug culture and urban ruin, while Roy displays the psychological scars of abuse and the collusion of power institutions. The novels' treatment of these profoundly disturbing subjects highlights the importance of consciousness, empathy, and justice, finally imploring readers to recognise and face society's and people's hidden wounds.

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INTRODUCTION

Jeet Thayil is an Indian poet, novelist, and musician who was born in 1959. He examines themes of addiction and urban life in *Narcopolis* (2012), which was awarded the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. His struggles with substance misuse and his intense interest in poetry have an impact on his writing. Themes of drug culture, colonial legacies, and existential challenges are frequently explored in his writing. He is a well-known poet in addition to a fiction writer. Anuradha Roy is an Indian publisher and novelist who was born in 1967. Her writings, such as the DSC Prize-winning *Sleeping on Jupiter* (2015), centre on interpersonal interactions and social themes. Her books frequently combine memory, history, and displacement



to create incredibly moving stories. Through the use of intensely personal tales to examine more general societal and cultural themes, her writing combines historical and modern storylines.

Jeet Thayil's experiences in Mumbai's opium dens and his own battles with addiction served as inspiration for *Narcopolis*. Hallucinations, the city's underbelly, and the shifting urban landscape are all explored in the novel. To highlight the pain, cruelty, and hypocrisy in religious institutions, Anuradha Roy authored *Sleeping on Jupiter*. The novel, which was inspired by actual cases, is on a survivor who returns to a temple town where she was assaulted as a child, raising issues of faith, authority, and fortitude in a patriarchal society.

Narcopolis combines psychological drama, historical fiction, and literary fiction. Through a beautiful, dreamlike tale, it examines urban deterioration, addiction, and the opium dens of Mumbai in the 1970s and 1980s. Literary fiction with hints of social reality is what *Sleeping on Jupiter* is. It explores issues of abuse, trauma, and religious institutions' hypocrisy. Memory, survival, and the hidden darkness behind social standards are all explored in this novel through its intensely emotional and vivid storytelling.

In *Narcopolis*, since the novel's dreamlike narrative is shaped by fragmented memories of addiction and Mumbai's opium dens, the issue of memory and trauma is consistent with both psychological and historical fiction genres. Its examination of self-destruction is deepened by the hazy boundary between the past and present. In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, the impact of trauma is increased by the literary and social realism genres, as a survivor returns to the scene of previous assault. The contemplative tone and nonlinear storytelling of the book illustrate how memory can haunt, heal, and distort people.

Both *Narcopolis* and *Sleeping on Jupiter* revolve around the theme of memory and trauma, which influences their plots and character development. Addiction causes memory to become fragmented and warped in *Narcopolis*, mirroring the fuzzy, dreamy condition of memories brought on by opium. Through self-destruction and Mumbai's shifting cityscape, the novels examine trauma. The story uses drug usage and Mumbai's change to examine both individual and societal pain. Trauma is very personal in *Sleeping on Jupiter*, as a victim navigates a culture that rejects its existence while facing her previous assault. Memory is a source of resilience as well as a weight. The protagonist uncovers latent pain when she returns to the



temple town where she was abused as a child. Both the novels illustrate how trauma persists and moulds identity through nonlinear storytelling.

In *Narcopolis*, Jeet Thayil examines the intricacies of addiction and Bombay city life, considering how social and personal hardships are intertwined. His ambition to shed light on the more sinister facets of human existence and the effects of drugs on identity is what drives him. Anuradha Roy explores trauma, displacement, and the need for belonging in *Sleeping on Jupiter*, motivated by her dedication to addressing societal concerns and elevating under-represented perspectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* examines postcolonial themes, drug culture, and urban marginalisation in Mumbai. The novel challenges stereotypes while offering an in-depth examination of addiction, subcultures, and social marginalisation. It depicts cultural hybridity, challenges colonial legacies, and emphasises the tenacity of marginalised populations. Its literary value is increased by Thayil's inventive storytelling, multi-perspectives, and captivating narrative style. Its issues are relevant outside of Mumbai and spark conversations on social justice, addiction, and urban difficulties. *Narcopolis* is a powerful piece that makes one think about the intricacies of modern society.

Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* uses dream sequences, evocative imagery, and a disjointed narrative to clearly depict the psychological ramifications of trauma. The novel examines childhood trauma, reflecting the individuals' shattered psyches through flashbacks and present-tense scenes. Roy illustrates the lasting effects of trauma through repetition, metaphors, and stillness. The essay focusses on how literature might help end the taboo around abuse and promote justice. The story emphasises the need for societal transformation and increased empathy for survivors by criticising long-standing power structures.

THEMES

Fragmented Memory and Disjointed Narratives- In order to reflect the fractured nature of memory in trauma survivors, both novels use fragmented storytelling. While *Narcopolis*' fragmented narrative portrays drug-induced haze and lost time, *Sleeping on Jupiter*'s shifting



timeframes and dream sequences highlight the protagonist's struggles to put together a horrific history.

The Persistence of Past Trauma- Trauma persists in the characters' lives, influencing their present experiences. *Narcopolis* presents addiction as a mechanism to escape terrible memories, while *Sleeping on Jupiter* investigates how childhood abuse impacts Nomi's relationships and identity, illustrating how trauma resurfaces despite efforts to forget.

Silence and the Inability to Express Trauma- Survivors in both the novels find it difficult to express their pain. While *Narcopolis* features characters who are drugged up and unable to face their suffering head-on, *Sleeping on Jupiter* emphasises the social hush surrounding sexual assault and shows how trauma is frequently repressed rather than addressed.

Urban Spaces as Sites of Collective Trauma- The settings of Mumbai in *Narcopolis* and Jarmuli in *Sleeping on Jupiter* represent both individual and societal suffering. The cities serve as both havens and prisons, confirming the notion that trauma and memory are embedded in both people and the environments they live in.

CONCLUSION

Beyond addiction, *Narcopolis* critiques colonial legacies, globalisation, and societal decay. Through a series of interconnected stories, Thayil introduces characters such as Dimple, a eunuch and opium addict, and Rashid, an opium den owner. Using lyrical prose and immersive storytelling, Thayil paints a haunting portrait of a city that teeters between beauty and destruction. *Narcopolis* explores the dark underbelly of Bombay in the 1970s and 1980s, showcasing drug addiction, as well as marginalised communities. Nomi, a survivor of childhood abuse at an ashram in Jarmuli, is followed in *Sleeping on Jupiter* as she returns years later to face her past. Her journey is interwoven throughout the book with the stories of Suraj, a local guide, and three elderly women who are visiting the temple town. Roy investigates themes of trauma, memory, and violence concealed by spirituality through varying points of view and disjointed narrative. The novel exposes the taboo around sexual abuse and criticises India's patriarchal systems and religious hypocrisy. A moving story about resiliency, identity, and the pursuit of closure, *Sleeping on Jupiter* is written with vivid prose and much symbolism.



Both Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* and Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* use fractured narratives to depict the psychological anguish of their protagonists as they examine themes of trauma, memory, and societal hypocrisy. *Narcopolis* explores colonial legacies, addiction, and urban marginalisation. Bombay's opium dens showcase the tragic cycle of substance misuse by providing a backdrop for lost souls looking for escape. The story depicts a city engulfed in immorality and ruin while also criticising the effects of poverty, historical oppression, and globalisation. *Sleeping on Jupiter* explores the illusory holiness of religious organisations, silence, and childhood trauma. As an abuse survivor, Nomi battles with jumbled memories and the after effects of violence. The novel highlights the challenges of justice and healing while exposing the role that patriarchal and religious systems play in sustaining abuse. Both the novels show how trauma is embedded in both individual and societal history by using urban settings—Bombay and Jarmuli—to represent imprisonment and suffering. *Narcopolis* depicts memory lost in addiction, whereas *Sleeping on Jupiter* depicts memory as a haunting force. Both the novels force readers to face difficult realities by criticising society's disregard for its weakest members through their unvarnished, beautiful style.

Both *Narcopolis* and *Sleeping on Jupiter* explore trauma, memory, and societal degradation through the use of both literal and metaphorical vision. The novels highlight the fallibility of vision by reflecting the psychological states of their characters through skewed, fractured viewpoints. In *Narcopolis*, the opium-induced foggy, dreamlike vision is both prison and escape. The novel's smooth, non-linear narrative reflects the changed consciousness of addicts, indistinguishable between reality and hallucination. This skewed vision brings out the way addiction warps memory, making it untrustworthy and fragmented. In this way, Thayil criticizes a substance-abuse-addled society that is also historically forgetful, where individuals opt to be blind to suffering and decay. In *Sleeping on Jupiter*, sight is connected to the experience of observing trauma. Nomi goes back to Jarmuli to face her past, but the memories she holds are broken, so her own vision is unreliable. The novel also investigates how society deliberately blinds itself to abuse, since religious leaders who are supposed to represent moral awareness are themselves perpetrators of violence. The tension between holy images and concealed cruelty underlines the discrepancy between what is visible and what is not. In conclusion, Whether as a result of suppressed memories or drug-induced hallucinations, vision is a potent metaphor for reality, perception, and trauma. While Roy uses fragmented memories to examine the after effects



of abuse, Thayil's novel uses altered states of consciousness to illustrate the hazy boundaries between addiction and existential dread. Both stories show how people use warped realities to deal with suffering, survival, and self-discovery. The novels challenge readers to face the psychological and social realities that underlie human experiences and historical memory by highlighting vision as a tool for comprehending individual and communal pain. Both the novels employ vision as a metaphor for sight, whether or not it is possible to ever actually see and comprehend trauma, addiction, and institutionalized oppression.

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