

Mapping Trauma and Memory: Physical Journeys and Emotional Landscapes in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*

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Abstract

Conventional trauma studies often explore the psychological aftermath of trauma, focusing primarily on the individual's internal landscape. This study shifts attention to the interplay between trauma, memory, and physical landscapes in Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*, where the protagonist's journey to Jarmuli serves as both a literal and symbolic confrontation with a traumatic past. Set against Jarmuli's sacred temples and serene beaches, this journey reveals repressed memories of childhood abuse, which resurface as the protagonist grapples with the boundaries between reliving trauma and seeking healing. Through a fragmented narrative structure and evocative settings, Roy mirrors the protagonist's fractured memories and internal struggles, depicting trauma as inseparable from space and psyche. Drawing on Trauma and Memory Studies, the article explores how physical journeys function as memory landscapes, mapping the complexities of memory and survival. By juxtaposing external landscapes with internal emotional states, Roy suggests that healing is deeply intertwined with revisiting spaces imbued with painful memories. In a broader context, the study posits that *Sleeping on Jupiter* advances an understanding of trauma that encompasses both personal and societal dimensions, inviting open dialogue in a cultural milieu that often suppresses discussion on traumatic experiences.

Key Words: Trauma, Memory, Journey, Physical Landscapes, Fragmented Narrative, Healing

Introduction

Trauma and memory studies have become central fields in contemporary literary analysis, offering frameworks for understanding how literature represents psychological wounds and the ways in which characters grapple with unresolved pain. Trauma, as defined by Cathy Caruth is not just an event that happens to someone, it is an experience that is "not fully assimilated as it occurs."¹ Caruth posits that trauma resists immediate comprehension and full integration into conscious memory, lingering as what she terms an "impossible history."² This inability to fully process trauma often results in fragmented, intrusive memories that disrupt the continuity of identity and consciousness. In trauma narratives, therefore, the past is not merely recollected but repeatedly relived, and this repetitive reliving - often through dreams, flashbacks, or intrusive thoughts - illustrates how trauma operates outside linear time. Caruth's insights are

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¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 11.

² Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, p. 12.

invaluable for understanding literary representations of trauma, especially those that depict characters whose fractured memories shape their present realities.

Dominick LaCapra further develops the discourse on trauma by distinguishing between “acting out” and “working through.” According to LaCapra, “acting out” involves a compulsive repetition of traumatic memories, where the individual becomes trapped in the past, unable to differentiate between past and present.³ This state can manifest as an inability to move beyond the initial traumatic experience, often creating a cycle of re-enactment. In contrast, “working through” involves actively confronting and contextualizing the traumatic memories within one’s life narrative. For LaCapra, “working through” does not imply forgetting or dismissing trauma but rather integrating it as part of one’s history, allowing for a more cohesive self-identity and enabling the individual to establish some psychological distance from the traumatic event. This distinction between “acting out” and “working through” serves as a critical framework in trauma studies, and helps to analyse how characters either remain trapped in or find ways to move beyond their traumatic histories.

Edward Casey’s work on the phenomenology of place provides additional insights into the relationship between trauma and memory, particularly regarding how physical landscapes serve as repositories of personal and collective histories. In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Casey asserts that place gathers memories in particular configurations that can either constrain or enable personal transformation.⁴ Casey’s theory suggests that locations associated with traumatic experiences are not passive settings but active participants in the process of remembrance, carrying an imprint of the past that influences how individuals perceive and engage with them. Trauma, therefore, can be inscribed on physical landscapes, transforming them into “memory landscapes” or “sites of trauma.”⁵ These locations, haunted by past experiences, often trigger recollections that might otherwise remain dormant, complicating the individual’s relationship with space and self. For Casey, confronting these memory-laden spaces serve as a means of processing trauma, suggesting that healing is inherently tied to revisiting places embedded with painful histories.

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub emphasize the role of witnessing in trauma and memory. They argue that bearing witness to traumatic events, whether individually or through literature, is crucial in acknowledging and processing the past.⁶ Felman and Laub propose that testimony serve as a medium through which fragmented memories are given structure, facilitating the process of “working through” by allowing traumatic experiences to be shared and validated.⁷ This concept aligns with the narrative structure of many trauma novels, which often use fragmented storytelling, unreliable narration, and disrupted chronologies to mirror the process of piecing together a shattered past. Such narrative techniques not only evoke the experience of trauma for readers but also underscore the limitations of language in fully capturing the extent of traumatic suffering.

³ Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

⁴ Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 182.

⁵ Amy L. Hubbell, Natsuko Akagawa, Sol Rojas-Lizana, and Annie Pohlman (eds), *Places of Traumatic Memory: A Global Context* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 8.

⁶ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 57-59.

⁷ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, pp. 69-71.

These theoretical frameworks converge on the notion that trauma is a complex, multilayered phenomenon that is deeply intertwined with memory, narrative, and place. Trauma disrupts the self, shattering any cohesive understanding of time, identity, and reality. Healing, therefore, requires a return to and engagement with traumatic memories, not as a means of reliving them but as a way to integrate them into one's life narrative. "Narratives serve as a bridge between traumatic memory and everyday consciousness, allowing the integration of fragmented memories into coherent stories."⁸ Literature, as a medium, offers a unique space for this exploration, as it allows characters to confront their pasts within symbolic landscapes that reflect their inner emotional states.

Anuradha Roy's novel *Sleeping on Jupiter* encapsulates many of these theories, positioning its protagonist, Nomi, within a narrative that navigates the boundaries between past and present, trauma and healing, personal and collective memory. Trauma are retrieved images of what women have collectively and historically suffered; in some cases, they are instructions for survival.⁹ Nomi's journey to the coastal town of Jarmuli serves as both a literal and symbolic confrontation with her traumatic past, particularly her experiences of childhood abuse. The fragmented narrative structure of Roy's novel mirrors Nomi's fractured psyche, illustrating Caruth's notion of trauma as an "impossible history" that resists coherent understanding. The town of Jarmuli itself becomes a "memory landscape" in Casey's terms; a place where trauma is inscribed on the physical environment, and where Nomi's repressed memories resurface, forcing her to negotiate between "acting out" and "working through" in LaCapra's framework. "Place ... activates memory in survivors and witnesses and has the potential to transmit such memory to others. Place can both amplify and dissipate the memory of trauma."¹⁰ By intertwining Nomi's internal and external journeys, Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* not only highlights the complexities of trauma and memory but also explores how physical landscapes function as sites of both suffering and potential healing. This study highlights how Roy's portrayal of Nomi's journey reveals the complex relationship between trauma, memory, and place, offering a nuanced exploration of how revisiting spaces imbued with painful histories serve as a pathway to reconciling past and present.

Trauma and Fragmented Memory

Sleeping on Jupiter created barely a ripple in the Indian mainstream consciousness, but is notable due to its taboo exposé of the chinks in a priest's armour.¹¹ Roy explores trauma as a fractured, fragmented experience, mirroring how survivors struggle to reconcile painful memories with their present lives. The setting of the novel, Jarmuli, known as a spiritual sanctuary and populated largely by priests and pilgrims, reveals a darker undercurrent where evil and brutality often overshadow goodness and innocence: "Temples. Ashrams. Devotees.

⁸ Laurence J. Kirmayer, "Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and Dissociation," in *Theories of Memory*, eds Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 172.

⁹ Alicia Ostriker, 'The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking', *Signs*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1982), p. 73.

¹⁰ Hubbell, Akagawa, Rojas-Lizana, and Pohlman, *Places of Traumatic Memory: A Global Context*, p. 4.

¹¹ 'Book Review: *Sleeping on Jupiter* by Anuradha Roy', *Frontlist*, 24 February (2021). At: <https://www.frontlist.in/book-review-sleeping-on-jupiter-by-anuradha-roy>.

That's Jarmuli."¹² Roy deftly interweaves a diverse cast of characters into this setting: Nomita Frederiksen, or Nomi, a young woman with braided hair, tattoos, and piercings, who is a refugee from her adoptive Norway; Badal, the temple guide; Vidya, Latika, and Gowri, a trio of elderly Calcutta ladies vacationing together; Suraj, a photographer accompanying Nomi on her filming assignment; and Johnny Tepo, the chaiwala on the beach. Nomi's journey to Jarmuli, ostensibly to film the famous temple, is also a personal pilgrimage to confront the traumas of her past. Straddling two identities - both Indian and not Indian - Nomi reflects on the dissonance of her experiences: "The sun was like a moon in this country, and in its light, I felt as if I was looking at everything through a pearl."¹³ Now, as an adult, she returns to her homeland, hoping to find closure and grapple with the remnants of her trauma. As Nomi explores Jarmuli, her memories merge with the present, and she confronts the darkness of her past, symbolized by the temple that harbours secrets beneath its serene facade.

Roy introduces Nomi's traumatic childhood in a series of disjointed memories, mirroring her fragmented psyche. "Memory is an active process of creating meaning from past events."¹⁴ Having lost her family to violence, Nomi is taken to an ashram, where she is subjected to sexual abuse by a trusted spiritual guru. The fragmentation of Nomi's memories reflects her attempt to dissociate from painful experiences. For instance, she recalls parts of her life in the ashram but often has gaps in her memory. This disjunction in remembering and forgetting represents her psychological survival mechanism. It emphasizes how trauma disrupts the continuity of her personal story.

Early in the novel, her return to Jarmuli evokes intense flashbacks of her childhood abuse, particularly when she encounters physical spaces reminiscent of the ashram where she suffered. What one returns to in the flashback is not the incomprehensibility of one's near death, but the very incomprehensibility of one's own survival.¹⁵ On visiting the temple complex, Nomi is suddenly struck by memories of the priest who abused her. Nomi says, "I have read that your memories can be concrete and detailed even about things that never happened to you and places you have never been to. Like fungus that takes birth in warm and wet places, memories ooze from the crevices of your brain: spawned there, living and dying there, unrelated to anything in the world outside, the slime can coat everything until you can't tell the real from the imagined."¹⁶ This experience reveals how physical spaces laden with past trauma disrupt her sense of security and stability, reinforcing Caruth's view of trauma as a phenomenon that remains "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known."¹⁷

In trauma studies, dreams are often viewed as a space where repressed or fragmented traumatic memories resurface, allowing individuals to symbolically process unresolved emotions and experiences. According to Sigmund Freud, "Traumatic neuroses demonstrate to us the structure of the psyche's defences and the persistent, compulsive nature of returning to the site of the trauma in dreams and symptoms."¹⁸ Nomi's dream sequences serve as a poignant reflection of her fractured psyche, where suppressed memories resurface in symbolic and

¹² Anuradha Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015), p. 131.

¹³ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p.11.

¹⁴ Puleng Sega, 'Trauma and Gender', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* (2015), p. 8.

¹⁵ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, p. 69.

¹⁶ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 32.

¹⁷ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, p. 10.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961 [1920]), p. 12.

unsettling ways. Nomi says, “There is a dream I often have ... It was only after I woke from my old dream of the man rocking me as a baby, with the familiar terror suffocating me, that I felt certain I was in the place the boat had brought me to when I was six or seven.”¹⁹ Towards the end of the novel, Nomi reflects on her dreams as a space for unfiltered truth, stating, “In my dreams I tell everyone the truth, I leave nothing out, even if it makes me sick to the stomach.”²⁰ These dreams act as a bridge between her past and present, revealing the depths of her emotional scars and offering a window into the subconscious impact of her traumatic experiences.

Roy also portrays Nomi’s experience of ‘temporal dislocation,’ a common feature in trauma narratives where past events resurface in the present as vivid, sensory memories. According to trauma theorist Roger Luckhurst, trauma narratives often reflect this “dislocation of time”²¹ in a way that makes the past feel perpetually alive. For Nomi, this phenomenon is particularly evident when she finds herself near locations that resemble the ashram where her abuse took place. The temple’s architecture, the sound of chanting, and even the smell of flowers, triggers a flood of emotions and images that transport her back to the traumatic past despite her physical presence in the present: “Nomi gazed out at the sea and thought she had had its sound in her ears forever. Her first memory of the sea was of being alone by the sea, her mother walking away.”²² These sensory details intensify her psychological disorientation, underscoring Luckhurst’s argument that trauma defies conventional temporal boundaries.

Moreover, Roy’s depiction of Nomi’s fragmented memory challenges the notion of a cohesive, singular identity. As trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra notes, the repetition of traumatic memories can lead to an “acting out”²³ phase, where survivors are bound to relive the past without fully processing it. Nomi’s inability to integrate her memories with her present self reflects this struggle, as she constantly oscillates between her adult identity and the traumatized child she once was. The recurring images and sensations of her abuse leave her caught between two states, unable to reconcile her childhood trauma with her current reality. When she feels “disguise, one she had perfected as the eternal outsider, a way to disappear when physical escape was impossible”²⁴ it becomes clear that her past has an indelible hold on her sense of self, preventing her from moving forward.

Through non-linear storytelling, Roy vividly captures Nomi’s fragmented consciousness, where the boundaries between past and present dissolve, mirroring the way trauma manifests in unexpected, intrusive memories. While attempting to enjoy the beach with fellow travellers, she is overwhelmed by the sensory memory of the “smell of incense and sweat”²⁵ from the ashram. This stark contrast between peaceful surroundings and disturbing recollections underscores the enduring grip of trauma, revealing how her past continues to shape and intrude upon her present. By structuring the novel in a fragmented, non-linear

¹⁹ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 29.

²⁰ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 201.

²¹ Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 89.

²² Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 182.

²³ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 144

²⁴ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 68.

²⁵ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 105.

manner, Roy captures the psychological impact of Nomi's trauma, illustrating how memories resurface without warning, triggered by physical spaces and sensory details.

Physical Journeys as Pathways to Emotional Reconnection

Nomi's journey to Jarmuli unfolds as a deeply interwoven narrative, where the physical and emotional landscapes intersect to reveal the complexities of healing and identity. The act of returning to a place so deeply tied to her childhood pain is not simply about confrontation but also about reclaiming control over her story. Jarmuli, with its deceptive tranquillity and undercurrents of buried suffering, mirrors the tension within Nomi herself; a woman navigating the pull between erasure and remembrance. Nomi recounts her arrival at the ashram, vividly portraying her initial impressions of the strange and unfamiliar surroundings: "The room had many pictures of a long-haired man. There was one that covered most of the wall on one side. It was much taller than any of us. I could not look away from it because his eyes in that picture seemed to follow me around."²⁶ Each corner of the village reverberates with echoes of her lost innocence, pushing her to face the fragmented yet indelible scars of her past. The ashram, initially seen by Nomi as a sanctuary amid the chaos of war, is starkly revealed as a place of betrayal and horror. Taught to believe it was the safest refuge - "Stay inside the line, never go out ... Outside we would be killed or locked up in jail"²⁷ - Nomi's trust is shattered when the same ashram becomes the site of her deepest trauma. The brutal rape by Guruji, a figure she trusted, is a horrifying betrayal: "My body felt as if it would tear into two when he forced my legs apart."²⁸ The ashram stands as a haunting monument of anguish, compelling Nomi to confront the enormity of her trauma and the possibility of strength from vulnerability.

Despite being twenty-five, Nomi remains haunted by the brutal rape she endured, with every detail etched into her memory. The scars of this betrayal by a trusted father figure, Guruji, linger as an unresolved trial within her. The public image of his "fatherly smile" masks the predator behind her torment: "I remember I could feel his flappy belly ... pushing against me."²⁹ The haunting imagery, of Guruji's 'fatherly smile' interrupted by his bodily present, masking his true nature, underscores the complex dynamics of trust, power, and violation. The brutal act she endured remains imprinted on her psyche, shaping her identity and relationships. Seeking release, she revisits the ashram and, in the stillness of midnight, immerses herself in the lake's calming waters. Dropping a small statue of a girl into the depths, Nomi symbolically confronts her pain, embracing a fragile sense of peace.³⁰ The act of immersing herself in the lake and releasing the statue is deeply symbolic. The lake, with its serene and calming waters, serves as a metaphorical space for purification and renewal. Dropping the statue - a representation of her younger, violated self - its depths suggest an attempt to let go of the pain, reclaim agency, and achieve catharsis. While this act offers Nomi a fragile sense of peace, it also highlights the ongoing, non-linear process of healing from trauma, a theme central to Roy's narrative.

²⁶ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 30.

²⁷ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 34

²⁸ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 144.

²⁹ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, pp. 144-145.

³⁰ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 209.

Furthermore, Nomi's deliberate visit to the ashram, despite its association with profound pain, reflects a therapeutic endeavour to reclaim agency over her narrative. This act resonates with Judith Herman's stages of trauma recovery, particularly the phase of "reconnection,"³¹ where survivors "reclaim their world"³² by confronting and integrating traumatic experiences. Herman asserts that "the survivor must rebuild a sense of control and empowerment."³³ Nomi's confrontation with the ashram symbolizes this reclaiming of power, transforming a site of victimization into one of personal strength. Nomi's physical journey through Jarmuli is intricately linked with her psychological quest for healing. By revisiting the scenes of her trauma, she engages in a process of confronting and integrating her past, embodying the therapeutic principles outlined in trauma studies.

Mary Harvey's seven criteria for the resolution of trauma closely align with Nomi's journey in the narrative. Harvey's seven criteria for trauma resolution include managing PTSD symptoms, bearing the feelings linked to traumatic memories, gaining authority over those memories, and forming a coherent narrative tied to emotions. Additionally, they involve restoring self-esteem, rebuilding significant relationships, and reconstructing a system of meaning that integrates the trauma into one's life story.³⁴ Nomi's return to Jarmuli marks a pivotal step in managing her PTSD and confronting the feelings associated with her traumatic memories. Through this journey, she begins to exert authority over her memories, choosing to engage with them rather than suppressing them. Her efforts to construct a coherent narrative, linking her fragmented recollections with the emotions they evoke, reflect her attempt to make sense of her past. While rebuilding self-esteem is a gradual process for Nomi, her professional role as a filmmaker and her ability to assert herself signify progress in reclaiming her identity. Additionally, her relationships, particularly with Suraj, highlight her struggle to reestablish trust and intimacy, despite the lingering effects of trauma. By revisiting Jarmuli, Nomi starts to reconstruct a system of meaning that integrates her painful experiences into a broader understanding of herself and her world. Her nonlinear journey echoes Harvey's assertion that recovery often involves revisiting and deepening one's integration of trauma, ultimately moving toward healing and resilience.

Through this journey, Nomi transforms the act of remembrance into a radical form of resistance against the silencing forces of shame and exploitation. As she walks the streets of Jarmuli, the physical spaces become a canvas for her evolving understanding of survival and resilience. The seaside, often symbolic of freedom and eternity, becomes both a refuge and a space of reckoning - a reminder that healing is not linear, but rather cyclical and deeply personal. Her pilgrimage is steeped in contradictions: pain intertwined with hope, memory tangled with longing, and destruction paving the way for renewal. In facing the abyss of her past, Nomi reclaims her narrative not as a victim but as a survivor navigating the complexities of her own healing.

³¹ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p. 110.

³² Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 140.

³³ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence*, p. 144.

³⁴ Mary Harvey, "An Ecological View of Psychological Trauma and Trauma Recovery," *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1988), pp. 13-26.

Interwoven Lives and Landscapes

The narratives of Vidya, Gouri, and Latika - three elderly friends from Kolkata - unfold as they undertake a transformative pilgrimage to the serene yet enigmatic coastal town of Jarmuli. The three of them, close friends, were going on their first outing together.³⁵ Each woman carries a unique history that shapes her perspective and adds depth to their shared journey. Gouri, facing the early stages of dementia, experiences frequent lapses in memory and moments of disorientation, which make her increasingly reliant on her friends. Her condition adds a layer of poignancy and serves as a reminder of the fragility of aging. Gouri forgets the purpose of their visit to Jarmuli and is overcome by a sense of dread, underscoring how dementia steals not just memory but one's sense of self. Despite this, her moments of clarity offer glimpses of the vibrant woman she once was. The tenderness with which Vidya and Latika support her highlights the strength of their friendship, with Jarmuli's tranquil yet unsettling environment mirroring her internal chaos.

Latika's outwardly spirited demeanour masks an inner world of melancholy and regret. Her narrative unveils the unspoken longings and missed opportunities that haunt her, creating a layered portrait of a woman caught between societal expectations and personal aspirations. For Latika, the journey to Jarmuli serves as a subtle rebellion against the monotony of her life. When Latika watched the sunrise over the ocean, her thoughts drifted to a past love she sacrificed for familial duty. Latika recounts her forbidden love with a married neighbour from a wealthy, traditional Konkani family, a relationship that began innocently but evolved into secret meetings filled with passion. When rumours spread and her family learned of the affair, she was sent away to Bhopal under her brother's watch to protect the family's honour. She says, "I was packed off to Bhopal to live with an aunt. It was an overnight train I had to take and my brother was sent with me to guard my chastity."³⁶ Through her interactions with strangers and her quiet moments of reflection, Latika's story explores how unfulfilled dreams can become both a source of pain and a driving force for resilience. Meanwhile, Vidya, the maternal figure of the trio, embodies responsibility with a pragmatic, nurturing nature, serving as a stabilizing force, especially for Gouri. Her stoic exterior masks her exhaustion and quiet fears of aging, as societal expectations demand she shoulder emotional and physical labour, even within friendships. In Jarmuli, the sacred temples and spiritual ambiance prompt Vidya to confront her mortality and reflect on the sacrifices she has made for others. A pivotal moment unfolds when, overwhelmed by her role as leader, she breaks down, exposing the depth of her emotional burden and the vulnerabilities she rarely allows herself to share.

Suraj, a production assistant collaborating with Nomi - who is also a transgender individual from a marginalized caste, a young filmmaker who has returned to Jarmuli to confront her traumatic past - emerges as a pivotal character whose connections tie together the novel's generational and thematic threads. Suraj is revealed to be Vidya's estranged son, now daughter, adding a layer of familial tension and complexity to the narrative. She grapples with personal demons, including the emotional toll of an ongoing divorce, which shapes her interactions with both Nomi and her mother. Suraj's presence becomes a conduit for exploring

³⁵ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 17.

³⁶ Roy, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, p. 203.

intergenerational dynamics, as her struggles with identity and relationships echo the broader themes of memory, loss, and reconciliation. Her interactions with Vidya bring unspoken familial tensions to the forefront, while his rapport with Nomi underscores the nuanced ways in which trauma and personal history intersect across different lives. As reviewer Rebecca K. Morrison points out in her review, “[t]he tea-seller by the beach, Johnny Toppo, acts as the unwitting point of connection between the ... characters, each drinking his chai and allowing its taste and his songs to unlock memories and daydreams.”³⁷ In Jarmuli, a place laden with spiritual significance and haunting memories, the lives of Vidya, Gouri, Latika, Nomi, and Suraj are deeply interconnected, offering a rich exploration of the human condition through the lenses of age, trauma, and resilience. Through their interconnection, recovery takes place from traumatic experience: “Recovery therefore is based upon empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections ... In renewed connections with other people, the survivor recreates the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience.”³⁸

Conclusion

Sleeping on Jupiter by Anuradha Roy traces a powerful story that charts the points of intersection between trauma, memory and physical/emotional journeys. But it is also an exploration of identity, trauma - both personal and collective - the links between physical and emotional journeys, and healing that uses complex characters and layers of storytelling. Central to this research is an understanding of trauma as a complex, collective experience that extends beyond individual suffering to encompass social injury. In the novel, trauma is depicted as both a psychological dilemma and something that translates into external forces; displacement, broken families, disrupted communities. Nomi’s experience, the very fact that she has survived abuse forms the plotline around which Roy spins a complex web of memory and its contribution to self. The tension between acceptance and erasure is captured in her fractured memories, each a reminder of memory’s contradictory duality: catharsis-inducing yet painful.

By adopting a unique storytelling technique, one that alternates between Nomi’s individual trauma and the lives of characters including Gouri, Vidya, and Suraj whose fates become overlapped in ways they cannot predict or control at first, it reminds us all that suffering is universal while also emphasizing how different societies react to their pasts and memories. The physical locations these women travel through trains, temples and towns become not only a backdrop but also a metaphor for the emotional landscapes of their journeys. The temple town of Jarmuli, resting place between peace for some and predation for others, epitomizes such both/another messiness of sacred/profane; where trauma warps the meaning in those spaces so intimately worshipped to be another site of suffering. Roy reflects the multifaceted nature of trauma recovery by allowing her characters to share, suppress, or reinterpret their pasts. Its non-linear structure simulates the fractured nature of traumatic memory, creating a narrative quilt that does not lead to tidy endings, just as recovery seldom does.

³⁷ Rebecca K. Morrison, ‘*Sleeping on Jupiter*, by Anuradha Roy - Book Review: Tale of Innocence Lost Is a Masterclass in the Art of Restraint’, *The Independent*, 28 April (2015).

³⁸ Judith L. Herman, ‘Recovery from Psychological Trauma’, *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, vol. 52, no. S1 (1998), p. S98.

Sleeping on Jupiter is a deep reflection on the relationship between the physical and emotional journey in context of trauma. Through its vividly painted characters, evocative spaces, and innovative narrative techniques, this novel not only depicts the lingering scars of trauma but also sparks flashes of resilience and hope. This prompts readers to ponder the transformational nature of memory, and how with human spirit one can overcome their worst terrain. Roy provides a literary cartography that reveals the borders between trauma and memory, illuminating the contradictions of healing, belonging, and peace.