OF CATHY CARUTH AND TRAUMA: A STUDY OF THE WORKS OF SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

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in

English

By

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled "Of Cathy Caruth and Trauma: A Study of the Works of Svetlana Alexievich" in fulfilment of degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Ajoy Batta, working as Professor & Head, in the Department of English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts, of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled "Of Cathy Caruth and Trauma: A Study of the Works of Svetlana Alexievich" submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English, School of Liberal and Creative Arts, is a research work carried out by Garima Sharma, Reg No-11816042, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.

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Introduction

The present research titled "Of Cathy Caruth and Trauma: A Study of the Works of Svetlana Alexievich" explores trauma; that is related to the psychological disorders caused by violence, genocides, political repression and some other forms of social-political disruptions and instabilities depicted through the oeuvre of Svetlana Alexievich. The diverse characters and their voices depicted in the novels have experienced the profound anguish of belonging to a society that has, throughout its history, faced wars in various manifestations, alongside a catastrophic nuclear disaster. All the texts of Alexievich can be collectively considered as a long-drawn tale of the people of Soviet Union speaking about their struggles, that has traumatized, dehumanized, and demoralized them. The psychological impact these events have caused on the minds of the sufferers has resulted into fractured and deep-rooted psychical problems. The repercussions of trauma affect not just those who have directly experienced it but also extend to subsequent generations. The people who have an active portrayal in the texts have explained their plight which remains unfiltered through the art of author's creative narration. Their experiences in challenging circumstances provide insight into the historical traumas endured by the common people of USSR. The impact on the individuals and the scars they carry are far deeper than they may seem at first glance. This has influenced not only their past but also their current situation and future prospects. As a result, they have suffered from trauma that has resulted into them carrying post-traumatic stress disorders, hysteria, and traumatic neurosis. The ostracization and alienation of the characters along with behavioural and psychological detachment to the past incidents has indicated an urgent need to critically analyse the situation and the same is targeted in the research. Drawing in-depth genesis of trauma, taking out the roots of the trauma studies and focusing on the contribution of the same towards its application in literature is the prime focus of this research.

Furthermore, the research gives a new interpretation to Alexievich's texts, taking into consideration the heavily filled elements of trauma depicted through each character involved in the process of displaying their side of the story. The thesis takes into consideration various trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Judith Herman, Dominick LaCapra, among others, aiming to understand how the characters that are in the form of testimonies in the texts of Alexievich react and interact in the socio-political conditions due to the crises of trauma sustained by them in the past. The representation of the characters and their study will expose the

comprehension of the Soviet and post-Soviet circumstances that have led to the accumulation of the society being traumatised collectively. The research will further delve into the individual wounds sustained during the collectiveness of the events.

Having roots in a community that experienced displacement following the India-Pakistan Partition, and being a resident of Jammu and Kashmir, my fascination with war, displacement and partition literature has deepened my desire to understand the perspective of those enduring suffering. Ever since I have gained consciousness, I have constantly encountered the issue of violence occurring almost everywhere around the globe through the extensive exposure of social media. There are many instances which have affected a certain community or a region like the recent Russia-Ukraine war, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Syrian civil war, Kargil war, 9/11 terrorist attack or even a mass shooting occurring in some parts of USA. However, after meditating on these events, I am reminded that the acts of violence are always horrifying, regardless of whether they affect a single person or a large group. This understanding of violence and an interest to search its possible impact on the human psyche has brought me to explore Alexievich's writings. She as a writer does not exposes the readers towards the truth on mere statistical data but utilises heightened emotions, imagery, and blended voices with a narrative technique to render powerful impact to its readers. The impact it generates is indelibly etched into a person's memory, emphasising the profound consequences of violence on the lives of people. An emotionally evocative method centred around storytelling conveys to the readers that violence is a deeply personal experience, rather than a simple aggregation of statistical information.

The research analyses the English translated versions of Svetlana Alexievich's novels, the original novels being in the Russian Language. The novels that will be analysed are, *The Unwomanly Face of War, Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories, Boys in Zinc, Enchanted by Death, Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future,* and *Second-Hand Time: The Last of the Soviets*. These novels have been studied through the lens of the trauma theory. According to the study, Alexievich employs storytelling as a deliberate method for involving interviewees and readers alike, as it follows the process of reconstructing individual as well as collective trauma experienced by Soviet and post-Soviet populace. The research emphasises that the interlinking of fragmented testimonies and unresolved historical traumas exemplifies Caruth's concept of trauma as an incomprehensible event that persistently remerges in personal and collective

memory, indicating that Alexievich's works act as archives of national trauma that resist resolution and necessitate continual engagement.

The research employs analytical and quantitative methodology, the basis of which lies on the experiences shared by the victims depicted in the texts of Alexievich. Trauma theory serves as the theoretical foundation for this specific study and the theories forwarded by various critics will be used to substantiate the desired view point. The chosen novels function as primary sources, while the theoretical and critical texts, newspaper articles, academic papers, and online material have been utilised as secondary sources. The research methodology would involve a meticulous examination, interpretation and thorough analysis of the primary sources. Biographical and historical sources will be utilised in order to establish a correlation between the social and political context in accordance to the author of the texts that has written the work. The findings would be bolstered by a substantial number of critical articles that expressly deal and address the topic of trauma. The research will trace the genesis of the trauma to understand its significance and finding an effective relation to the novels under consideration. Moreover, various theorists related to trauma like Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Roger Luckhurst, Shoshana Felman, and others have also been taken into consideration in order to analyse the novels of Alexievich. The approach of the thesis is interdisciplinary in nature.

The central objective of the research is to examine the works of Svetlana Alexievich and to establish a perspective through the application of trauma theory. The proposed objectives of the research are: To trace the genesis of trauma; to study war literature in Soviet Union and its impact on the novels of Svetlana Alexievich; to apply Cathy Caruth’s theory of trauma on the novels of Svetlana Alexievich; to disseminate the socio-political and the polyphony in the novels of Svetlana Alexievich.

Chapter one, entitled “Brief Candle: A Peep into Svetlana Alexievich’s Life and Works” is an overview of the Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich and her literary works, known for her distinctive approach in recording the human experience through oral history. It examines her personal journey, providing insights into how her formative years in Belarus (then a Soviet state) and her being brought up in a politically and culturally dynamic environment influenced her distinctive narrative style. This chapter contextualises Alexievich’s biography, highlighting her academic endeavours in journalism and her initial job as a reporter, in order to emphasise the

formational experiences that motivated her to publish works that blend reportage, literature and historical testimony. The analysis foregrounds her writing technique that delves into the emotional and psychological aftermath of violence, loss, and societal change. She utilises a method of intertwining the viewpoints of her participants, often those who have been neglected or overlooked in accepted historical narratives. This strategy creates a complex network of collective memories. To have a deeper understanding of the significance and depth of her works, it is necessary to place her stories within the broader context of USSR and post dissolution history. Her literature, firmly anchored in personal narratives and emotional recollections, transcends conventional genres, providing readers with a multifaceted chorus of experiences that encapsulates the psychological and moral dimensions of living under and after the Soviet dictatorship. In addition to her expertise, the writer's perspectives and philosophical stance constitute an essential aspect of her legacy. This chapter positions Alexievich as an author who has transformed literary and historical discussions by focusing on the human dimension of historical events and her commitment to amplifying the perspectives of voiceless individuals.

The chapter offers a comprehensive examination of Alexievich's biographical details and trajectory, the people and circumstances that influenced her writings, her literary creations, emphasising her distinctive impact on literature. It also analyses her thematic emphasis on pain, trauma, survival, and her personal encounters with terrible situations that motivates her writings. By prioritising individual experiences within overarching historical narratives, she transforms the methodology of historical documentation and recollection. Through the reduction of her own narrative involvement, the author enables her interview subjects to communicate directly with the audience, resulting in a genuine, unmediated account that challenges the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. The study looks at her impact on contemporary historical scholarship and literature, highlighting how her works surpass conventional genres and provide an emotionally resonant yet historically anchored depiction of life during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The chapter contains the essential elements of the research consisting a review of literature, research gaps, and the objectives of the study. It also highlights the methodology adopted and scope of the study.

Chapter two. entitled "Genesis of Trauma" offers an in-depth examination of trauma theory, particularly emphasising on Cathy Caruth's significant contributions to the discipline. It also centres on rigorously scrutinising the historical roots of trauma. This chapter highlights the

fundamental tenets of trauma theory, demonstrating its focus on the delayed and incomprehensible characteristics of traumatic occurrences, the challenges of articulating trauma through traditional narrative structures, and the mechanisms by which trauma eludes resolution or healing. Trauma theory offers readers a deep understanding of the essence of trauma and its varied elements. The origin of traumatic experience is ambiguous, as it is frequently described as a recurrent, eternal, and ineffable occurrence that spreads and persists without alteration. The chapter explores trauma as a disruptive event that emerges in an individual's mind due to an unpleasant incident in their past, such as illness, accidents, loss, or the distressing encounters of warfare. These incidents lead to an individual suffering emotional turmoil. Trauma not only affects the people directly experiencing it, but also has repercussions on the surrounding environment and others connected to the affected person. An examination of trauma theory through the perspective of various trauma theorists such as Abram Kardiner, Judith Herman, Dominick LaCapra, Roger Kurtz, Cathy Caruth and others is also carried out.

The chapter further contextualises Caruth's concepts within the wider framework of trauma theory. Her scholarship utilises psychoanalytical theories, especially those of Sigmund Freud, to assert that trauma is not entirely experienced in that particular instance but later resurfaces in fragmented and frequently unconscious manifestations. Caruth posits, utilising instances from psychoanalysis, literature and history, that trauma constitutes not merely a wound from a disturbing happening but also a disruption in the continuum of time and meaning. Her research underscores the ethical significance of engaging with and observing trauma, stressing the necessity of recognising these narrative voids and silences instead of imposing a coherent narrative. Caruth also explores the psychological ramifications of trauma research and their correlation with literature. The chapter explores that the disciplines of literary studies, psychology, and psychiatry offer intricate and continuously evolving explanations of trauma. These disciplines can be applied to investigate fresh approaches to trauma in literature. Trauma resides in fragmented forms within the unconscious mind, making its representation through language a challenging endeavour. The chapter lays a foundation that trauma theory provides various methodologies and strategies to uncover and delve into a deeper comprehension of the individuals featured within the works of literature.

Chapter three, entitled "Contextualizing Trauma of War" examines the representation and portrayal of war in the novels of Alexievich. The enduring impact of war, firmly ingrained in the

shared awareness of communities, reaches well beyond the confines of the physical battlefield. The complete obliteration of it has a tremendous influence on the memories, identities, and narratives of individuals who have experienced the events. Alexievich, a proficient artist in portraying the perspectives of ordinary individuals, bravely explores these memories filled with conflict in her literary works. She gathers the first-hand accounts of those who have endured the distressing ordeals of armed conflict, thereby providing a profound contemplation on the recollections of the war. This chapter examines the use of Caruth's trauma theory in author's investigation of war and its aftermath. The objective is to get a more profound comprehension of the mechanisms implicated in the development and dissemination of traumatic memories. This study investigates the extent to which Alexievich's narratives provide evidence of the long-lasting effects of war on individuals who experienced the horrors personally, through the application of trauma theory. The theoretical framework provides a lens to examine writer's depiction of war as an occurrence that interrupts the chronological progression of events of life, instead presenting itself through disjointed recollections, silences, and the continual re-experiencing of past traumas.

The chapter puts into perspective Alexievich's works situating it in the context of trauma theory and war literature, emphasising on her novel methodology for chronicling the emotional, psychological, and collective repercussions of the conflict. She constructs a nuanced comprehension of the manifestation of war trauma in individuals, as well as its transgenerational and societal implications. Her literature demonstrates that trauma is not encountered in isolation; it is influenced by the political, cultural, and historical settings surrounding it, particularly the Soviet regime's suppression. The chapter contextualises her works, highlighting her distinctive methodology in chronicling the experiences of soldiers, women, and children. Additionally, the chapter explores the ways in which Alexievich addresses the political aspects of war trauma, especially concerning state-imposed silence and the veneration of war within and after the Soviet administration. Her works illuminate the ways in which the state's dismissal of personal trauma in pursuit of a glorified, collective narrative exacerbates the anguish of those who experienced war personally. In conclusion, the chapter propounds that Alexievich questions these overarching state narratives by providing a platform for individual accounts of disillusionment, sorrow, and lingering psychological scars.

Chapter four, entitled “Reconstructing Identity and Shadows of the Haunted Past” discusses the impact of the Soviet Union's legacy on significantly shaping the current identity of its former residents. This chapter explores the complex process of rebuilding one's identity after a significant crisis, as shown in the literary works of Alexievich. Instead of positioning herself as just a storyteller, she adopts the role of a diligent listener, editor and curator of voices. She explores the catastrophic experiences of Soviet and post-Soviet individuals, chronicling the pain of warfare, political oppression, and social turmoil. By conducting detailed analyses of writer’s multifaceted narratives, this chapter explores the ways in which trauma alters perceptions of time and space, resulting in survivors being caught in a lingering past and an uncertain present. The narratives compiled illustrate the persistent, involuntary characteristics of traumatic recollections and their influence in the process of identity reconstruction. Survivors, comprising soldiers, women, children and displaced individuals, exhibit significant confusion as their identities are fractured and reconstructed in reaction to the enduring reverberations of the past. This supports Caruth’s assertion that trauma disrupts the continuity of identity, necessitating a reconfiguration of the self.

This chapter aims to analyse the difficulties encountered by the characters in Alexievich's oeuvre as they struggle with their divided identity in the aftermath of major disasters. The conceptual underpinning for this will be based on Caruth's ideas. It explores the alignment between the author’s oral history methodology and Caruth’s notion of trauma as an experience that eludes complete representation yet perpetually resurfaces in fragmented memories, shattering the continuity of time and identity. This paradigm elucidates the depiction of survivors who grapple with expressing their traumatic pasts, frequently inhabiting a liminal place where memory and amnesia converge, indicating a crisis in the reconstruction of both private and national identities. The novels delve into three major themes: the fragmented character of memory, the significance of narrative in the process of healing, and the transmission of trauma over generations. The chapter explores the strategies employed by the protagonists in the novels to cope with their unsettling recollections, as they strive to construct significant identities amidst the remnants of their past. This study integrates Caruth’s theory with Alexievich’s literature demonstrating how a haunting history transforms individual and social identities, while highlighting the complex interplay between memory, narrative and self. This perspective

highlights that Alexievich's creations transcend its historical context, confronting universal enquiries on the endurance of identity amidst trauma.

Chapter five, entitled "Reimagining History Through Polyphonic Narratives" explores that the various points of view intersect to provide a complex representation of historical events and their resulting implications. The chapter explores Alexievich's narrative technique which centres on the notion of polyphony. She subverts the prevailing narratives propagated by historical establishments by amplifying the voices of the people whose accounts were not deemed to be as necessary. She achieves this by leveraging insights gained from several interactions with witnesses, victims, and regular persons. The polyphonic approach employed by the author is scrutinised in the chapter, via which she adeptly depicts the nuanced complexities of everyday life during significant historical events, questioning the oversimplified distinctions between heroes and the victims thus discussing about the concept of new truths of history. The chapter subsequently shifts focus to her narrative practice grounded in interviews, which signifies a profound re-evaluation of the concepts of authorship and authority. Her approach facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives and individual narratives of conflict, catastrophe, and societal breakdown; challenging conventional, singular interpretations of historical occurrences and highlighting the complexity of trauma as an experience that affects both individuals and communities. This chapter conducts an in-depth analysis on author's significant works, exploring how polyphony facilitates the reinterpretation of pivotal historical events.

In addition, this chapter aims to examine the socio-political consequences of Alexievich's narrative interventions within the framework of life under and after the Soviet governance. The writer challenges dominant narratives of power and ideology by giving prominence to the perspectives of individuals, such as war survivors, victims of political oppression, and marginalised minority groups. Through this action, she reveals the substantial human losses that occur as a consequence of tyranny, wars, and social turmoil, thus constructing an alternative version of history. By presenting these perspectives without explicit commentary, Alexievich democratises narrative space, emphasising the significance of subjectivity in comprehending history. The study emphasis on the polyphonic quality of her texts, characterised by intersecting, overlapping, and contradictory voices, reflecting the fragmented and disjointed essence of trauma, defying linear or comprehensive historical narratives. Moreover, the chapter places Alexievich's literary corpus within the broader conversation of non-traditional historiography,

which challenges the linearity and objectivity inherent in conventional historical narratives. Her works are examined as a counter-narrative that emphasises on the ordinary and the transient, allowing for the emergence of voices that challenge and reshape prevailing historical frameworks. History is recounted through her works via human testimonials that illustrate the significant effects of trauma on those who survived, a majority of whom grapple with the inadequacy of memory and speech to completely convey what they have endured. This chapter further explores the ethical and epistemological dimensions of Alexievich's methodology. It engages into the complexities surrounding the portrayal of suffering, exploring the delicate balance between artistic expression and factual precision, while also examining the writer's dual role as a curator and a creator. In conclusion, this chapter contends that Alexievich's polyphonic narratives possess a transformative quality, enabling a reimagining of history and providing a comprehensive and compassionate lens for understanding the past.

The concluding chapter is a culminating analysis of Svetlana Alexievich's oeuvre, utilising trauma theory as a lens, particularly emphasising on Cathy Caruth's theoretical framework. Building upon the insights obtained from previous chapters, this analysis assesses the lasting influence of writer's narratives, their correspondence with trauma theory and the wider ramifications of this convergence for comprehending identity, memory and history. It highlights the significance of Alexievich's contributions to literature and trauma studies, while also emphasising the enduring relevance of her work in an increasingly complex and turbulent world. This section assesses the degree to which author's writings align with the fundamental tenets of trauma theory, namely as outlined by Caruth. Caruth's viewpoint underscores the difficulty of accurately portraying trauma due to its disruptive effect on the flow of narrative and its enduring influence on both personal and collective consciousness. Alexievich's oral histories clearly exemplify this disruption by documenting the fractured and even disconcerting memories of her participants. The artworks she produces not only function as documentation of personal anguish, but also chronicles the shared anguish felt by communities during conflict, catastrophe, and social breakdown. This study highlights her works as a powerful example of how storytelling can transform pain into insight and transform memory into meaningful action. The chapter presents the research findings and outcomes. It additionally addresses the societal implications of the research work and proposes recommendations for future researchers.

Alexievich's literature provide a rich foundation for trauma theory, however there are some inadequately examined aspects and research gaps. A significant portion of current trauma analysis available on the author concentrates on a particular i.e. generally specific incident (for instance, wartime trauma or the trauma associated with Chernobyl). Nonetheless, Alexievich's writings address multifaceted traumas including historical, social, and psychological, that are interrelate and amplify one another. The combination of numerous forms of trauma such as individual, collective, ecological, ideological, within her narratives remains inadequately explored. No extensive research has been conducted on this author from the present perspective of trauma theory. In particular, all her texts have not been analysed altogether through the trauma perspective. This research is an intricate examination of the intersection of diverse types of traumas i.e. personal, historical, and environment and their contribution to complex representations of suffering, particularly in Soviet and post-Soviet situations.

This study provides an in-depth analysis; however, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations. The study possesses intrinsic constraints stemming from the nature of the subject matter. The research has been done based on the translations available in the English language and therefore can miss out certain region-specific details and nuances of the Belarussian and Russian languages that might get missed unintentionally by the translators, and in turn can impact research in some ways.

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To almighty and my grandparents for all the blessings.

Chapter I

Brief Candle: A Peep into Svetlana Alexievich's Life and Works

> I'm searching life for observations, nuances, details. Because my interest in life is not the event as such, not war as such, not Chernobyl as such, not suicide as such. What I am interested in is what happens to the human being, what happens to it in of our time. How does man behave and react. How much of the biological man is in him, how much of the man of his time, how much man of the man. (Alexievich, "Voices from Big Utopia")

Svetlana Alexievich is a Belarusian author and investigative journalist who was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize for literature, "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffer and courage in our time" (Nobel Prize Foundation). Post Winston Churchill, she is the first Nobel laureate to have primarily written non-fiction. In her Nobel prize winning speech, she declares:

> The road to this podium has been long – almost forty years, going from person to person, from voice to voice. I can't say that I have always been up to following this path. Many times, I have been shocked and frightened by human beings. I have experienced delight and revulsion. I have sometimes wanted to forget what I heard, to return to a time when I lived in ignorance. More than once, however, I have seen the sublime in people, and wanted to cry. I lived in a country where dying was taught to us from childhood. We were taught death. We were told that human beings exist in order to give everything they have, to burn out, to sacrifice themselves. We were taught to love people with weapons. Had I grown up in a different country, I couldn't have travelled this path. Evil is cruel, you have to be inoculated against it. We grew up among executioners and victims. Even if our parents lived in fear and

> didn't tell us everything – and more often than not they told us nothing – the very air of our life was poisoned. Evil kept a watchful eye on us. (Alexievich, "Nobel Lecture").

In October 2015, the small post-Soviet state garnered global attention not due to the long-standing controversies surrounding its administration, but rather for a moment of celebration as it proudly announced the achievement of a Nobel Prize. Svetlana Alexandrovna Alexievich was born in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine on May 31, 1948. She was born into a military family, with her father hailing from Belarus and her mother from Ukraine. Her family moved back to their home in Belarus after her father completed his service in the army, settling in a village where both of her parents took on roles as school teachers. She was raised in Belarus and finished her education there. Alexievich engaged deeply in her studies and began her writing journey during her time in school. During her academic years, she crafted poetry and submitted articles to the school newspaper. As was the case with the majority of youngsters at that period, she joined the Little Octobrists at the age of seven, then the Young Pioneers, and finally joining the Komsomol, the Communist party's youth branch, at the age of nine. After graduating from high school, she worked as a journalist for a local newspaper in Narovl, Gomel region. In 1967, she got enrolled in Minsk University's Department of Journalism with a two-year job experience. During her time at the university, she received numerous accolades in both republican and all-union student and academic paper competitions. Upon completing her graduation, she was posted to the town of Beresa in the Brest region to contribute to a local newspaper. During that period, she also served as an educator in a school. At this juncture, she found herself in a state of uncertainty regarding her career, caught between the familial legacy of teaching and her fervour for journalism and academic writing, leading to a significant dilemma in determining her future path. After a year, she received an

opportunity to contribute to a rural newspaper in Minsk. After several years, she assumed the position of correspondent for the literary magazine *Neman*, where she swiftly advanced to lead the non-fiction department. Alexievich endeavoured to express her perspective through an array of literary forms, such as short stories, essays, and journalistic pieces. Ales Adamovich, a well-known Belarusian writer, had a profound influence on Alexievich's reading and writing choices, in particular his books, *Out of the Fire* (Russian title literally translates as, *I'm from the Fiery Village)* and *Leningrad Under Siege: First-hand Accounts of the Ordeal.* He collaborated with other writers on certain works; but, the concepts and subsequent development of the projects were solely his own. This literature created an entirely new genre in Belarusian and Russian literature. Adamovich was attempting to define the genre he had developed, which he described as a 'collective novel,' a 'novel-oratorio,' a novel of evidence, individuals talking about themselves, and epic chorus, to mention a few of his epithets. Alexievich has consistently regarded Ales Adamovich as her genuine mentor; he is the individual who provided her with guidance. His influence prompted her to embark on her own writing journey and establish her distinct path. In her keynote featured on her website, she discusses,

> I've been searching for a genre that would be most adequate to my vision of the world to convey how my ear hears and my eyes see life. I tried this and that and finally I chose a genre where human voices speak for themselves. Real people speak in my books about the main events of the age such as the war, the Chernobyl disaster, and the downfall of a great empire. Together they record verbally the history of the country, their common history, while each person puts into words the story of his/her own life. Today when man and the world have become so multifaceted and diversified the document in art is becoming increasingly

> interesting while art as such often proves impotent. The document brings us closer to reality as it captures and preserves the originals. After 20 years of work with documentary material and having written five books on their basis I declare that art has failed to understand many things about people. (Alexievich, "A Search for Eternal Man").

Alexievich was awarded the Nobel Prize for her grand cycle of work, which includes her books that she regards as 'Voices of Utopia' or the Red Man's history. Despite having authored six books over her lifetime, she views each one as just a chapter in the larger narrative of the Soviet people. Alexievich conducted extensive interviews with numerous individuals, almost hundreds of them, to create an oral history of a nation collectively to which she belonged, encompassing women who served on the front lines during World War II, young soldiers returned from the Soviet-Afghan war as dead bodies, wrapped in zinc coffins, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and concluding with the disillusionment and anger that ensued after the initial wave of euphoria of perestroika. The Soviet history is marked with certain major events that inspired Alexievich to document it in the form of literature. She serves as the spokesperson of the Soviet Union's populace through her writings, and the works are a true reflection of what marked the various significant historical upheavals experienced by the country and its countrymen.

The onset of World War II, referred to as the Second World War (WWII), was a turning point that signified the commencement of her creative career. It was a worldwide conflict that began in 1939 and concluded in 1945, since it encompassed most of the world's countries. The war that broke between Soviet Union and Germany had the involvement of almost whole of the globe. It was the overwhelming majority of countries in the globe, including the world power countries, that supported the creation of two competing military alliances, which were generally known as

the Axis and the Allies, during World War II. Thirty nations throughout the world declared a complete state of emergency as a result of the conflict, and approximately 100 million people were either directly or indirectly affected by it. During the war, the main economies devoted their complete efforts, manifested in the form of their economic, industrial, and scientific capacities, blurring the lines between civilian and military resources. The Second World War proved to be the worst human conflict in the history of humanity, resulting in a total of 50-85 million casualties, the vast majority of whom were civilians from the Soviet Union and China, making it the deadliest combat in human history. Massacres, strategic bombings, and the Holocaust's genocides were all part of the war's legacy, as was a sight of people dying from famine and illness during the conflict. This disastrous event marked the first use of the deadly nuclear weapons ever in the history. This resulted into a dynamic shift in the social alignment and the political structure of the global scenario. Therefore, this shift created a new world that had new socio-political dynamics.

The next pivotal event in Soviet history was during the Soviet-Afghan War, which endured for over nine years, from December 1979 to February 1989. Mujahideen the collective term used for the insurgent groups and the smaller Maoist groups were fighting a guerrilla war in the rural countryside against the army of the Soviet Union and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan government. The Mujahideen groups were backed by the United States of America, Saudi Arab and Pakistan, creating it as a proxy as well as a cold war. Nearly two million innocent civilians lost their lives and millions of people from Afghanistan had to migrate and take the refugee status mostly in Pakistan and Iran. After facing so many military wars and people dying on the battle field, the country again faced the crisis of a nuclear disaster.

The Chernobyl disaster or the Chernobyl accident was a catastrophe that hit the USSR. The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant suffered a nuclear catastrophe on the 25th and 26th of April 1986,

which occurred in reactor No. 4(four) of the plant. It took place in the northern Soviet Ukraine, near the town of Pripyat, which since then has been abandoned by its inhabitants. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster is considered as the most disastrous nuclear plant accident in the human history, measuring both in terms of the cost and the casualties related to it. This disaster not only affected the people who were exposed to it but also had an impact on their future generations.

In 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was broken into several independent countries, which was the ultimate blow suffered by the people of the former Soviet Union (USSR). In 1991, the country that had been a communist state in Eurasia from 1922 to 1991 was officially disintegrated, and with it, the collective identities of its citizens were destroyed. The Soviet Union was a confederation of several national Soviet republics. It had a centrally controlled government and economy; the nation was a single-party state run by the communist party; and Moscow served as the capital of the country's largest republic, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. This dissolution resulted into the formation of fifteen (15) new countries. It may have resolved the political crises but it resulted into displacement and the identity problem among the people. The nation that experienced such situation filled with crises produced a writer like Alexievich, who chronicled the realities encountered by herself and her countrymen. During the award ceremony speech of the 2015 Nobel Prize the chairman of the committee for literature said:

> ‘Voices of Utopia’ – her suite of five books describing the catastrophes of the 20th century – is Alexievich’s literary and moral masterpiece, a charting of the Soviet citizen’s mental history that she associates with a grave, a bloodbath and an endless dialogue between executioners and victims, concealing as much as possible. The work, she says, is about “Russia’s stifled scream”, about a past that must not return, a now that cannot be accepted, a future that proffers no hope. Like a stenographer

> in a high court, she enumerates the injustices visited on the unprepared and defenceless. Here are the words of thousands of witnesses for the first and only time. Without her, they would never have seen the light. (Wästberg, "Award ceremony speech")

It was in the year 1985 when her debut book, *The Unwomanly Face of War*, was published concurrently in Minsk and Moscow. It was republished several times throughout the course of following years, resulting in total sales exceeding two million copies. This novel, which the author refers to as 'the novel chorus,' is comprised of monologues of women who were involved in World War II but whose tales had never been made public before the novel was written. Women share their perspectives on the events. The book was praised by many war writers, and it was well received by the general public. In the same year, she also released *The Last Witnesses: 100 Unchildlike Stories*, her second book, similar to her first, faced challenges in the publishing realm because of its anti-war perspective and failure to align with the ideological standards of the USSR. This book has seen multiple editions and has been acknowledged as a ground breaking achievement in the realm of war prose writing by numerous esteemed critics. A fresh approach into literature was opened up by the portrayal of the battlefield through the eyes of women and children. The sentiments and concepts associated with the war were explored in a modern paradigm. Taking place in the historic Tanganka Theatre to commemorate the 40th anniversary of World War II, Anatoly Efro's theatrical adaptation of *The Unwomanly Face of War* was presented and staged to commemorate the occasion. The dramatization of *The Unwomanly Face of War*, conducted by The Omsk Drama Theatre's performance was awarded the State Prize. Many theatres around the country were staging productions of plays based on this novel, demonstrating how much of an influence the work had on the public. An additional event that occurred during this

time period was the production of a number of documentary films that were based on the novel *The Unwomanly Face of War*. During the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival, the film cycle that was produced was honoured with both the State Prize and the Silver Dove. The contributions that Alexievich made to the field of literature earned her a number of further accolades and prizes.

> *In War's Unwomanly Face*, Alexievich interviews five hundred of the countless women who served in the Red Army. They tell of Germans displaying the severed legs of prisoners from foxholes, a mother who drowned her crying baby so as not to betray her village, and how women made hair curlers from pinecones. Back at home they were seen as soldiers' whores and rejected by their families. Men were the heroes; the women were denied medals. Alexievich uncovers the face of evil in a truth process where "heat incinerates the lies" and in language that, between the lines, conveys the silence of pain. She waits until the voices lodge in her, acquiring a harder sheen. This makes her the most sensitive of contemporary historians and a genre innovator. (Wästberg, "Award ceremony speech").

Boys in Zinc was released in 1989, the text discusses about the conflict between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, which has in the past been considered to be criminal in nature, and how the truth about the war was kept hidden from the people of the USSR for ten years until the publication of the book. Over the course of nearly four years, she travelled around the nation gathering material for her work, meeting war victims and their families, as well as veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war. She even travelled to war-torn parts of Afghanistan in order to acquire a first-hand account of the situation on ground. The book astonished the audience, leaving many unable to reconcile with her approach of demythologising the war. The primary critics of her work were affiliated with the military organisation and the Communist publications. In 1992, she found

herself embroiled in legal proceedings as a case was initiated against her in Minsk. The individuals from the opposing side, those with a commitment to democratic principles, rallied in support of her and her book, ultimately leading to the resolution of the case. Later on, there were many documentaries that were made based on *Boys in Zinc*. She published her next book in 1993 under the title *Enchanted by Death*. Subsequent to the dissolution of the communist Soviet Union, the texts examine the suicide attempts undertaken by individuals in response to the occurrence. In the book, she articulates the torment of individuals who could not detach themselves from the socialist ideas and goals, leading some to attempt suicide due to their refusal to accept the emergence of a new social order and the resultant historical narrative. The stories covered in this book later became a part of *Second-Hand Time*.

In the year 1997, Alexievich's next book titled *Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future*, was released to the public for the first time. The scientific and the technical glitches that caused the tragedy at the nuclear facility was not discussed in the book, while instead it concentrated on the lives of the people who survived the disaster. Through this project, she aimed to illuminate the struggles of individuals who went through meaningful transformations in their lives. The evident truth, which remained obscured without proper representation, was revealed through the work. The new reality that had developed as a result of the Chernobyl tragedy was one that was marked by a common faith and brotherhood among all of mankind. The Chernobyl disaster served as a catalyst for a heightened awareness of this new reality among the populace. Individuals started to navigate their existence as though they were entrenched in a global conflict, and their interactions with one another shifted dramatically, as effectively illustrated in the book.

> She looks for the instant that shakes a person to the core. As in Voices from Chernobyl, when a nurse warns a woman that her beloved has now become a

> reactor, not a man, but the woman ignores her, and lets the radiation from the man's body take the life of the baby she is carrying inside her. The book becomes a reminder of how past radiation dictates our lives, our morality, for decades. (Wästberg, "Award ceremony speech").

In 2016, her book *Second Hand Time* came out. The book brought together various voices collected and represented in her distinctive style of oral history. The novel talks about the collapse of the USSR and the reaction of the people charting the decline of the Soviet culture and speculations on the future built on the ashes of the communism. In this book, as in her other works, Alexievich amplifies the voices of individuals i.e. men and women alike, who share common stories, narratives that have been overshadowed by the official accounts of nations and states. She has developed an alternate history derived from the personal and private narratives of those who have experienced the breakup, serving as a crucial component of the new framework. Her narrative reflects the collective journey of humanity. In her Nobel speech, Alexievich emotes:

> If you look back at the whole of our history, both Soviet and post-Soviet, it is a huge common grave and a blood bath – an eternal dialogue of the executioners and the victims. The accursed Russian questions: what is to be done and who is to blame. The revolution, the gulags, the Second World War, the Soviet-Afghan war hidden from the people, the downfall of the great empire, the downfall of the giant socialist land, the land-utopia, and now a challenge of cosmic dimensions – Chernobyl. This is a challenge for all the living things on earth. Such is our history. And this is the theme of my books, this is my path, my circles of hell, from man to man. (Nobel Prize Foundation)

She is the only Nobel Prize laureate in literature to have produced a corpus of literature exclusively from the viewpoints of living individuals. Her works address a variety of historical crises, including the Second World War, the Soviet-Afghan War, Chernobyl, and the fall of the Soviet Union, which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the USSR. Her works achieve this by utilising the voices of ordinary individuals. The oral history she has been developing has been segmented into various raw portions, enabling her to examine the audience's gullibility and the reader's capacity to endure the suffering depicted in the narrative.

> My first thought was: how will I ever find words for this? What sustained my hope? Witnesses. Only the words of witness were equal to what I saw and what I wanted to write about. Today, I see the witness as the main protagonist in literature. People say to me: “Well, you know, memories, recollections— that’s not history and not literature either. It’s just life, rubbish that the artist hasn’t polished. It’s the raw material of conversation, just chitchat.” But I see things differently. It is there, in the live human voice, in the live reflection of reality, that the mystery of our presence is hidden, and the insurmountable tragedy of life is laid bare. Life’s chaos and passion. Its singularity and inscrutability. Shouts and sobs can’t be polished, or the main thing will be neither the tears nor shouts, but the polish. I am building temples from our feelings… our desires and disappointments. Our reveries. From things that should not be allowed to disappear. (Alexievich, *In Search of Free Individual* 141)

Alexievich endeavours to peel away the layers of memories, feelings, and emotions of individuals who remain unacknowledged in the historical narratives of wartime and political upheaval. The portrayal of individuals as significant entities is a crucial element in her writings.

Alexievich's proses have a central meaning towards the idea of suffering and has a deep-rooted philosophical experiences and political implications (Gapova, 21). In her endeavour, she is documenting the complexities of emotions during and after Soviet administration. Her interest does not lie in probing the political views of her witnesses; instead, she is captivated by the intricate details of their lives that is their childhood experiences, love stories, desires, clothing, and fashions, and seeking to uncover the fundamental elements that shape the essence of individuals.

> In her dry matter-of-factness, in her striving to keep her eyes open rather than filled with tears, she unnerves us, her readers – especially in this year of refugee flux when her stories of the stubbornness and courage of the helpless are more apt than ever. Having grown up in a culture of sorrow – more localised: near the mined forests of Belarus, a country where every fourth inhabitant was killed – her love is for the little people, not the grand ideas. (Wästberg, "Award ceremony speech").

Her perspective on life is shaped by the words and the narratives; that is her literary essence. These topics fascinate her and form the foundation of her compositions. She has emerged as the advocate for the voiceless. Those who are unaware of their own challenges and lack representation, as they are silenced. An ordinary individual is muted by the prevailing system that governs the state and wields power. The framework that regulates the everyday individual and its anticipations is at present being scrutinised. The individuals who serve as the foundational elements of nation building and formation are those who require representation and advocacy. Their voices and aspirations often go unacknowledged, while the hopes that an ordinary individual holds for national progress and personal fulfilment are consistently overlooked. Though USSR was a glorious country to live, the global world felt threatened of the might of the country. The common people lived under the fear of losing their loved ones in the wars. World War II and the

Soviet-Afghan War resulted in the casualties and deaths of young men. The families experienced profound devastation due to the loss of their loved ones. Young women participated in the war as an effort to support the men. There came a moment when the community witnessed their young men wrapped in zinc coffins following the conflict. Young women deeply affected by the traumatic experiences they endured during their time in the war. The survivors found themselves with no tasks at hand, as they were just equipped for the conflict and no other skill to survive and sustain themselves. The memories of war lingered, compelling them to seek new employment to provide for their families. Women had to hide their identities to fit into the non-war conditions. To fit into a family system, they had to conceal their identities. They were terrified by the idea of their husbands and their extended families knowing about them being at war. The fight was not just against the system but also against the consciousness that made them question the very point of having a war and being a participant in that. The women were the worst sufferers, they played the role of sisters, wives, mothers and that pain to lose the close ones made them suffer. In her keynote on her official website, she says:

> But I don't just record a dry history of events and facts, I'm writing a history of human feelings. What people thought, understood and remembered during the event. What they believed in or mistrusted, what illusions, hopes and fears they experienced. This is impossible to imagine or invent, at any rate in such multitude of real details. We quickly forget what we were like ten or twenty or fifty years ago. Sometimes we are ashamed of our past and refuse to believe in what happened to us in actual fact. Art may lie but document never does. Although the document is also a product of someone's will and passion. I compose my books out of thousands of voices, destinies, fragments of our life and being. It took me three-four years to

> write each of my books. I meet and record my conversations with 500-700 persons for each book. My chronicle embraces several generations. It starts with the memories of people who witnessed the 1917 Revolution, through the wars and Stalinist gulags, and reaches the present times. This is a story of one Soviet-Russian soul. (Alexievich, "A Search for Eternal Man")

Alexievich dedicated a significant portion of her adult life to living in a simple two-room apartment with a kitchen, located in a ten-story building from the Soviet era in the heart of Minsk, alongside her adopted daughter. As the first author to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for works exclusively based on interviews, this honour has elicited both acclaim and criticism. Some authors have praised the committee for honouring a journalist as a result of this decision. Many tabloids that published articles about her following the award announcement labelled her as a reporter, a designation she finds insulting since her true aspiration has always been to be a writer, not a journalist. As is often the case in Russian publishing, the boundary between fiction and non-fiction is blurred, and her books are included along with literary novels in a category known as 'Proza'. However, the barrier between literature and journalism remains unbridgeable. Alexievich aims to incorporate the author's perspective, along with extensive timelines and contextual information, alongside the text. In her quest to reconnect with the echoes of her childhood, she yearned to revisit those nostalgic evenings of her youth, when the women of the village came together to recount tales of the Second World War, a time that had shaped her formative years. Her primary focus consistently revolved around the women she encountered during her formative years. The conflict resulted in the loss of most men during that era, leaving the survivors largely grappling with alcoholism or consumed by the grief of war. She was born in Ukraine during the Soviet era, three years after the conclusion of the war, and spent her formative years in Belarus,

also under Soviet influence, where Nazi forces had exterminated Jews, Gipsies, and Slavs, as well as destroying entire villages. Therefore, her publications carefully chronicle the emotional experiences of individuals from the Soviet era and beyond, utilising thoughtfully constructed collages of interviews.

She is engaged in a profound inquiry into existence, aiming to reveal the subtleties that highlight its varied aspects. Alexievich emphasises exploring profound themes instead of merely recounting the events. Her discovery transcends the realms of wars, the Chernobyl disaster, and the tragedies of suicide. Her objective is to investigate the individuals who were involved in them. She is investigating the implications of the events on humanity. How much did it impact them, how did they respond to the conditions and the circumstances that they had to face? On the occasion of the presentation of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015, the chairman of the Nobel Committee for Literature delivered a speech at the ceremony. The following is what he said:

> Alexievich uncovers the face of evil in a truth process where “heat incinerates the lies” and in language that, between the lines, conveys the silence of pain. She waits until the voices lodge in her, acquiring a harder sheen. This makes her the most sensitive of contemporary historians and a genre innovator. In her dry matter-of-factness, in her striving to keep her eyes open rather than filled with tears, she unnerves us, her readers – especially in this year of refugee flux when her stories of the stubbornness and courage of the helpless are more apt than ever. Having grown up in a culture of sorrow – more localised: near the mined forests of Belarus, a country where every fourth inhabitant was killed – her love is for the little people, not the grand ideas. (Wästberg “Award ceremony speech”)

Alexievich serves as a chronicler of the collective experience, articulating the language of suffering and embodying it in her literary works. She has created a unique genre that distinguishes her from other war authors and her contemporaries. She encourages her readers to confront reality instead of just evoking tears; she engages their emotions, drawing them into a deeper understanding of the situations she portrays in her works. Through contemplation and the crafting of narratives about life, she has devised an innovative method of presentation that avoids the fictionalisation of characters or the direct composition of autobiographies or memoirs. This technique is intended to be a practice for the community, rather than a method of presentation for individuals. She crafts testimonial narratives, a technique that constitutes her literary foundation.

The site-specific nature of the issue surrounding the act of listening to someone's life and subsequently translating that into an individual perspective presents a complex challenge to navigate. The emphasis on enhancing empathy and fostering engagement towards the voices of the people in her texts and the readers is a huge reason towards the overall success of her works. Technically speaking, the strategy aids the writer in becoming valid and realistic in nature for the readers, and vice versa. Testimony is coupled with the survivor's desire to exit the past relooking, rewinding his/her identity in the performed act of sharing the story, and at the same time hooked up to the desire to remain in the past to have a claim of the events, and realising that the past is irreversible. In a simpler version, testimony is connected to both the contradiction of claiming and letting go. The challenge of resisting the past, while simultaneously grappling with the changes one has undergone, is essential when composing testimonies. If we narrow our focus to the Belarussian literary heritage, we can have a clearer understanding of Alexievich's philosophy, the tradition out of which a fresh perspective on literature has developed. This has contributed in the creation of a new literary genre. In her acceptance speech after receiving the honour, she stated:

> I do not stand alone at this podium … There are voices around me, hundreds of voices. They have always been with me, since childhood. I grew up in the countryside. As children, we loved to play outdoors, but come evening, the voices of tired village women who gathered on benches near their cottages drew us like magnets. None of them had husbands, fathers or brothers. I don't remember men in our village after World War II: during the war, one out of four Belarusians perished, either fighting at the front or with the partisans. After the war, we children lived in a world of women. What I remember most, is that women talked about love, not death. They would tell stories about saying goodbye to the men they loved the day before they went to war, they would talk about waiting for them, and how they were still waiting. Years had passed, but they continued to wait: "I don't care if he lost his arms and legs, I'll carry him." No arms … no legs … I think I've known what love is since childhood … (Alexievich, "Nobel Lecture")

She has been decorated with numerous awards and honours for her contribution to the field of literature which includes, NIKOLAJ OSTROVSKY PRIZE, USSR, Moscow 1985; KONSTANTIN FEDIN PRIZE, USSR, Moscow 1985; KOMSOMOL PRIZE, USSR, Moscow 1986 ; KURT TUCHOLSKI – PREIS (Swedish Pen), Stockholm,1996; ANDREY SINIAVSKY PRIZE (For Honor and Respect in Literature), Russia, Moscow, 1996; "TRIUMPH", Russia, Moscow, 1997; "THE MOST FRANKLY MEN", "Glasnost" Foundation, Russia, Moscow, 1998; "DAS POLITISCHE BUCH". Sonderpreis Der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Der Verleger, Buchhändler Und Bibliothekare In Der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Germany Bremen, 1998; LEIPZIGER BUCHPREIS ZUR EUROPAISHEN VERSTANDIGUNG, Germany, Leipzig, 1998; HERDER – PREISE, Alfred Toepfler Stiftung, Germany, Vienna, 1999; "TEMOIN DU MONDE", RFI,

France, Paris, 1999; HORSPIEL. ROBERT GEISENDORFER PREIS (Der Horfunkpreis), Deutsche Akademie Der Darstellende Kunste, Germany, Berlin, 2000; ERIC-MARIA-REMARQUE-FRIEDENSPREIS, Germany, Osnabruck, 2001; PREMIO SANDRO ONOFRI PER IL REPORTAGE NARRATIVO, Italy, Rome, 2002; NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE PRIZE (NBCC), New York, 2006; OXFAM NOVIB – PEN AWARD, Holland, 2007; ПРЕМИЯ РЫШАРДА КАПУСТИНСКОГО, 2011, Варшава, Польша; The Angelus Prize Has Been Awarded For The Polish Edition Of Alexievich's Book *War's Unwomanly Face* ("Wojna Nie Ma W Sobie Nic Z Kobiety", translated by Jerzy Czech, published by Czarne, Wołowiec); FRIEDENSPREIS DES DEUTSCHEN BUCHHANDELS, Deutschland, Frankfurt am Main, 2013; MEILLEUR LIVRE DE L'ANNÉE, France, Paris, 2013; LAUREATES PRIX MÉDICIS ESSAI, France, Paris, 2013; BRAND PERSONA, Belarus, Minsk, 2013; PIÓRA WOLNOŚCI (ПЕРО СВОБОДЫ), Poland, 2013; PREMIO INTERNAZIONALE MASI GROSSO D'ORO VENEZIANO, Italy, 2014; OFFICIER D'ORDRE DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES DE LA REPUBLIQUE FRANCAISE, France, 2014; ПРИЗ ЧИТАТЕЛЬСКИХ СИМПАТИЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРНОЙ ПРЕМИИ "БОЛЬШАЯ КНИГА", Москва, Россия, 2014; RYSZARD KAPUŚCIŃSKI AWARD, Poland, Warsaw, 2015; DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYIV-MOHYLA ACADEMY, Ukraine, 2016; PREMIO ISCHIA INTERNAZIONALE PER I DIRITTI UMANI — INTERNAZIONALE DI GIORNALISMO, Italy, 2017; "NEW CULTURE OF NEW EUROPE" AWARD AFTER STANISLAW WINCENT, Poland, 2017; DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA AT THE UNIVERSITE DE GENEVE, Switzerland, 2017; BRONZE MEDAL FOR THE 2017 ARTHUR ROSS BOOK AWARD, USA, 2017; HONORARY CENTRAL EUROPEAN, Slovakia, Bratislava, 2018; MEDAL TO THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC "In the year of the 100th anniversary of the Belarusian People's Republic for special merits in

Belarusian literature", Мінск., 2019; PREMIO CRÉDIT AGRICOLE FRIULADRIA «LA STORIA IN UN ROMANZO 2019», Italy, Venice, 2019; ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA AWARD — RAW IN WAR; 2020 OPEN SOCIETY PRIZE, Central European University, Budapest, 2020; TAORMINA AWARD FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE, 2020; THE 2020 SAKHAROV PRIZE; HONORARY DOCTOR IN THE FIELD OF THE HUMANITIES of Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania, Vilnius, 2020; DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA OF THE UNIVERSITÉ LIBRE DE BRUXELLES (ULB) AND THE VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL (VUB), Belgium, Brussels, 2021; DAS GROSSE VERDIENSTKREUZ DES VERDIENSTORDENS DER BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND, Berlin, 2021; SONNING PRIZE The 2021, Copenhagen, 2021; HONORARY DOCTOR, European Humanities University(EHU), Lithuania, Vilnius, 2022; VMU HONORARY DOCTOR IN THE FIELD OF THE HUMANITIES, Vytautas Magnus University(VMU), Lithuania, 2022; DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA MEDAL OF THE EXTRAORDINARY UNIVERSITY CLOISTER—MEDALLA DEL CLAUSTRO EXTRAORDINARIO UNIVERSITARIO, Royal Spanish Academy, Madrid, 2022; BUDAPEST GRAND PRIZE FROM THE MAYOR OF BUDAPEST 2022; BOOKSTAR PRIZE 2022 NORTH MACEDONIA, North Macedonia, Skopje, 2022; CATALONIA INTERNATIONAL AWARD 2022 — XXXIII PREMI INTERNACIONAL CATALUNYA, 2022; and finally, the esteemed recognition that represents the pinnacle of achievement for a writer during their lifetime i.e., THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE 2015, "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time," Sweden, Stockholm, 2015.

The influence of Alexievich's Belarusian identity and her experience of exile is significant although sometimes overlooked in her creative oeuvre and outlook. As a Belarusian author, her work originates from a nation characterised by a convoluted historical and political landscape.

Belarus has always existed in the shadow of its more dominant neighbours such as Russia and Poland. This marginalisation is seen in the comparatively under-represented voices of Belarusian individuals in literature. Her novels, particularly in the documentary style she invented, serves as an endeavour to articulate the experiences of those historically marginalised by war, totalitarian regimes, or the invisible status of small nations. Notwithstanding Belarus's historical subjugation by Russia, even throughout the Soviet period, her corpus of work serves as an examination of the internalised tensions inherent in the dual identity of being both Soviet and Belarusian. She frequently navigates the grief and complexities of Soviet identification, both admiring and denouncing the USSR. Her exile resulting from Lukashenko's repression of dissent in Belarus reflects the circumstances faced by several academicians leaving authoritarian regimes. Exile afforded her the liberty to write with greater freedom while also enhancing her comprehension of displacement, alienation, and the fragile nature of home. This alienation from Belarus serves as both a catalyst for creative tension and an indicator of her ethical position. Writing in Russian enables her work to access a wider audience throughout the post-Soviet region, while simultaneously illustrating the prevalence of Russian culture in Belarus. Nonetheless, her emphasis on the narratives of everyday Belarussians in works such as *Chernobyl Prayer* and *Last Witnesses* quietly challenges this by revealing the local, human toll of being a Soviet (and consequently, Russian) imperial rule.

Literary journalism has been a genre in which several well-known writers have worked and produced great literature. John Silas Reed, an American novelist, is a notable contributor to the genre. Reed is known for writing a series of exposes on the Mexican revolution that were published under the titles *Insurgent Mexico* (1914) and *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919). These works were focused on the events that took place in Petrograd in 1917. Notably Ernest Hemingway, a

Noble laurate, paid close attention to genre of literary journalism. During his travels across the world, he wrote a number of novels, including *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), and *A Moveable Feast* (1964), in which he detailed his experiences. In this regard, it is important to highlight the Czechoslovak journalist Julius Fučík, the author of *Reports Written Under the Noose* (1945), he was a writer who authored the collection of reports during 1942 when he was incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps. A significant characteristic of such writings is the strong and uncompromised stand of the authors on the various topics they have investigated.

A significant turning point in the evolution of this genre was the novel *In Cold Blood* (1966) by Truman Capote. With the use of stylistic devices, the author was able to conceal his own voice while intensifying the objectivity of the story. Similarly, Alexievich is frequently acclaimed for perpetuating and advancing the legacy of factual literature, a form that amalgamates journalistic approaches with literary techniques to construct engaging narratives rooted in reality. This tradition, originating from the writings of authors like John Hersey, Truman Capote, and, within the Russian context, personalities such as Maxim Gorky and Varlam Shalamov, is characterised by a profound dedication to chronicling the real experiences of individuals, frequently amid historical crises. Alexievich's oeuvre advances this legacy while redefining its parameters, introducing a singular voice and a fundamentally humanistic methodology for chronicling the united memory of post-Soviet society. In Russian literary arena, factual literature has historically served as a means of engaging with reality, frequently providing a platform for those whose narratives are overlooked by official accounts. Authors such as Gorky and Shalamov established a precedent for incorporating authentic experiences with narrative craft, highlighting the perspectives of ordinary individuals and the challenges faced by the marginalised. Even the influence of Dostoevsky is unquestionable in her writings. *In Search of a Free Individual,* she

says: “Will this remain in history? History would turn its back— but I am astounded. If I hadn’t read Dostoevsky, I would be in despair over the human soul, its limitlessness.” (Alexievich, *In Search of a Free Individual* 224). Although Alexievich utilises the conventions of Russian and international factual fiction, her literature also signifies a novelty within the genre. She stretches the limits of non-fiction by combining journalistic precision with literary innovation, producing pieces that resonate on various levels. Her ‘novels of voices’ compel the reader to engage with historical events on intellectual, emotional, and psychological levels, resulting in a literary style that is both truthful and profoundly human centric. Furthermore, by emphasising on the shared recollections and pain, she imparts contemporary relevance to the heritage of factual literature. In a landscape where technology increasingly shapes our recollections and the narratives of the marginalised frequently get overshadowed, her contributions highlight the necessity of acknowledging and preserving the experiences of ordinary citizens. Her creativity is evident not just in the presentation of these narratives, but also in the way she contextualises them within broader enquiries regarding history, memory, and identity.

Alexievich, an oral historian in her own right, once described herself as a 'human ear,' echoing the sentiment of author Gustave Flaubert, who characterised himself as a 'human pen.' Alexievich serves as both an attentive listener and a meticulous recorder, making the 'ear' metaphor quite fitting. The personal interactions she engages in with the individuals, often lasting for hours or even days, and occurring in intimate settings like kitchens or living rooms, serve as a profound source of inspiration for her work. The fact that these are not interviews but rather interactions between friends is something that she underlines frequently. Her prose-like tale is created by picking pieces from her recordings and weaving them together in a continuous stream of text that is devoid of judgmental, critical or fictional narratives. Indeed, she often designates the chapters

of her books as monologues or 'choruses,' highlighting the significance of writing in the context of oral history methodology. Believing that journalism falls short in exploring the depths of human emotions, she aspires to encapsulate the conversational nuances of writing, which are seldom conveyed independently in other literary forms, including poetry. Alexievich omits her own voice from her narratives and refrains from enumerating the questions posed, creating the appearance that her subjects articulate their own perspectives. Notwithstanding this, her authorial existence is highly dynamic and strong. When she performs in the position of conversationalist, she compels people to share their most personal experiences with her. Consequently, she ought to be regarded as an advocate for humanity, or as an observer of human rights dedicated to illuminating the overlooked truths. Therefore, Alexievich acts as a bridge connecting the voids of historical occurrences with the memories associated with them. She ascribes value to individual historical experiences. Instead of depending on the broad, generalised, and highly influenced reconstruction of history presented by a country or a state, or based on her own interpretation, she compiles documented records of distressing occurrences for others to peruse. These narratives encompass the viewpoints of those who have directly experienced the devastating occurrences such as conflicts, political and environmental emergencies, and acts of aggression by official authorities.

Alexievich's literature is often characterised as 'polyphonic,' suggesting a dialogical nature, as she gathers oral histories where multiple voices resonate simultaneously, intertwining various opinions, visions, and reflections on the past in a complementary manner. Through her attentive listening (as listener), she allows her respondents to revisit memories that the overarching historical narrative might have overshadowed. They engage in dialogue with her regarding subjects that had previously been off-limits for public discussion. It is the absence of many descriptions, inferences, or reflections that distinguishes Alexievich from other authors such as even

Adamovich, that she allows the personal accounts of people to take centre stage in her work. Consequently, it can be asserted that her books reveal a profound comprehension of human attachment that remains untainted by ideological limitations. Attempting to make sense of the past is the goal of historical nonfiction authors. However, even if the past has already vanished from their perspective, they are constantly investigating it in the present-day realities of daily lives. The absence of an immediate object of investigation contributes to the ambiguity of their task. They actively pursue survivors, archival materials, and literary and historical accounts of incidents in which they did not personally participate, while also exploring various other sources of information. Writing about conflict and political violence is significantly more complex and laden with uncertainty than typical forms of writing. Such monumental and agonising events, suppressed by the totalitarian regime, must be documented by a writer for others to read. To do this, she necessitates sources and witnesses to guarantee the authenticity of the stories, which she indicates to be free from any censorship. The primary objective of Alexievich is to elevate the conversational aspect of literature and adopt a more humane approach to reporting. The witness testimonies she examines have a grain of grisly cruelty to them due to the character of the historical events she is probing. The narratives sometimes contain graphic elements such as infants being murdered by their own mothers, fathers whose lifeless bodies decompose in the presence of their spouses, boys being returned to their mothers in Zink coffins, and suicides among high-ranking government officials. Due to the inherent characteristics of these abhorrent events, it becomes challenging to address the narratives provided by survivors. Authors of documentary prose strive to mitigate the tragic nature of their own or other's experiences by presenting them as more comforting.

Alexievich's five primary prose volumes provide a remarkable and comprehensive account of the collective consciousness of individuals, encompassing not just the Soviet populace but also

of different communities. Every subsequent volume poses the subject with greater depth, pushing beyond the mere examination of the significance and lack thereof in political ideology, to delve into the fundamental nature of human cognition. A two-volume compilation of her works was published to commemorate her 50th birthday. The critic Lev Anninsky writes in the introduction:

> This is a unique work, which has probably been undertaken for the first time in Russian, or rather in Soviet and post-Soviet culture: the author has traced and recorded the lives of several generations of Soviet people, and the very reality of the 70 years of socialism: from the 1917 Revolution through the Civil War, the youth and hypnotism of the great utopia, Stalin's terror and the gulags, the Great Patriotic War, and the years of the downfall of the socialist mainland up to the present times. This is a living history told by the people themselves and recorded and selected by a talented and honest chronicler. (Alexievich, *Collected works* III)

Alexievich's novels predominately covers the following elements: a) History and emotions b) Writing testimonies and c) Oral history and polyphony. These themes uniquely encapsulate her methodology of portraying individuals in her writings. The integration of all three subject matters collectively shapes the distinctiveness of her literature. Each element is essential and interconnected with one another.

> When I grew up the main topic of conversation was the war. I was so impressed by all these stories. I never found anything like them in books, even though my parents were village teachers and their house was full of them. I heard about war whenever I stepped out of my house, or talked to my Ukrainian grandmother. As a student at university in a militaristic state, our victory was everywhere. It overshadowed things like the gulag. I couldn't reconcile this official version of the war with what

> I knew from my own experience. (Alexievich, “Most children caught up in war die early”)

For several decades, Russian readers were only acquainted with the official depiction of war; they were oblivious to political terror or its various expressions. Soviet literature failed to acknowledge some elements of the nation's harrowing historical past, such as the terrifying experiences of combatting a formidable adversary, enduring a term of incarceration in a labour camp, or dealing with the consequences of these past events. Although all Soviet individuals were survivors, they were specifically trained to portray their history either as magnificent or as part of a single overarching truth, namely the official narrative created by the state with a clear ideological purpose, rather than acknowledging the actual historical situations. Women histories, in particular, have been systematically erased from history. Through her books, the prevailing narrative of war history is challenged and a new communal memory of the atrocities is constructed, which is more attuned to individual experiences and views.

> There are a good many times when there is no war just as there are a good many times when there is a war. To be sure when there is a war the years are longer that is to say the days are longer the months are longer the years are much longer but the weeks are shorter that is what makes a war. And then there is no war, well just now I cannot remember just how it is when there is no war. (Stein, *Wars I Have Seen* 12)

The words of Gertrude Stein give the fundamental essence of the works of Alexievich. Each work of the grand cycle echoes the exact sentiment. The soviet sentiment is related to nothing but a turmoil situation. Each generation has experienced pain and sufferings, directly or indirectly. The prevalent topics of discussion among families were solely centred on war, which

psychologically affected the experiences of children as they grew up. The factuality resides not only in the historical circumstances that shaped the narrative of the USSR but also in the conditions that influenced the awareness of the ordinary individuals who experienced the tragedy. The study of history involves examining the facts and details that constitute the documentary evidence of nationalism and the conflicts arising from the expansion of national boundaries or the defence of territorial integrity. The boundaries requiring safeguarding and the unwavering patriotic fervour of individuals prepared to make sacrifices serve basically as archetypes in historical narratives and among historians. Alexievich's narratives breaks the popular construct of archetypal writings. She is a historian of souls and emotions. In her novel *The Unwomanly Face of War*, she pens:

> We did not know the world without war, the world of war was the only world known to us, and the people of war were the only people known to us. Even now, I do not know the other world and the other people. Did they ever exist?! (Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War* 3)

In her writings, Alexievich articulates the fears that occupy her thoughts, revealing a world she has observed throughout her life, a world she believes is eternal. The world, characterised by struggle, death, war, and pain, has become the reality for the Soviet people and an essential aspect of their existence. While official Soviet narratives maintained that the Second World War marked the final conflict involving the Soviet Union and that measures were implemented to prevent future occurrences, the truth is that warfare has consistently been woven into the fabric of their existence, manifesting in both genuine and symbolic ways. Nearly every aspect of existence in what may have been the most militarised society in human history, has always been engaged in discourse and contemplation regarding militarism. The Soviet propaganda penetrated among the people was about the military practices and the praises for the rhetoric of 'muzhesto' a Russian word meaning

'Bravery' and 'Courage' resonating with the nature of 'Masculinity' amongst the citizens. Therefore, the civic situations though prevailing, were consensually war-like for example 'Chernobyl' being regarded as 'a place of defeat for the Soviet people'. Even market and the democratic reforms were regarded as 'fight' towards the 'Totalitarism'. What Alexievich sought was an exploration that transcends the conventional narratives of documented history and the typical representational accounts. She connects with the people to known their part of the history, the one which is unaltered from the propaganda created by the state or the authorities, rather their sufferings and the emotions that they went through following the social obligations and confining themselves to the struggles and pressure to survive in a military setup.

> I realised that tears and cries cannot be subjected to processing, otherwise the main thing will be not the tears and cries, but the processing. Instead of life we're left with literature. Such is the material, the temperature of this material. Permanently off the charts. A human being is most visible and open in wars, and may be also in love. To the depths, to the subcutaneous layers. In the face of death all ideas pale, and in conceivable eternity opens up, for which no one is prepared. We still live-in history, not in cosmos. (Alexievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War* 32)

She examines the conflict between unadulterated human experience (particularly in severe circumstances such as war and love) and the manner in which we interpret, analyse, and depict that experience in literature or cognition. Her discourse encompasses the constraints of depiction, the unfathomable intricacies of human sentiment, and the omnipresent, everlasting energies that are constantly there but rarely recognised. In the above excerpt she asserts that, unrefined emotions such as tears and screams, which are intense manifestations of human anguish or fervour, cannot be completely collected, examined, or analysed (processed) without sacrificing their fundamental

nature. Upon the processing of emotions, the attention is redirected from feeling themselves to the process of analysing them. Authenticity is compromised, resulting in a fabricated rendition that no longer accurately represents the genuine anguish or happiness. This suggests that the process of intellectualising or transforming these unprocessed feelings into something that can be easily understood for artistic or literary purposes reduces their actual influence. Alexievich contrasts the realities of life with the nuances of literature. Fully encapsulating the essence of life in its raw form remains an elusive goal, whether through artistic expression or written word. Once a life is transformed into a narrative, it becomes a portrayal, frequently lacking the genuineness of the actual, experienced reality. The proposition is that literature (or art) serves as an analysis or mirror of existence, although it will invariably be not fully representative of the tumultuous and unadulterated truth of human feelings and experiences. Under severe circumstances such as war and love, Alexievich contends that humans expose their authentic selves. Such instances occur when the outermost layers are removed, revealing the individual, characterised by its capacity for profound vulnerability, revealing the most profound and concealed facets of our human nature. At such times, individuals attain their highest level of honesty, authenticity, and fidelity to their fundamental nature.

History embodies the domain of humanity such as our political systems, conflicts, civilisations, and concepts, all constrained by the passage of time. By contrast, the cosmos symbolises the boundless and everlasting world, the wider framework of life that surpasses human history and preoccupations. The speaker posits that, although our sporadic encounters with existential consciousness (such as the reflection on mortality), our predominant attention remains concentrated on the little, time-bound matters of history rather than the expansive, eternal universe. While our lives are shaped by human narratives and concerns, we have not yet achieved complete

awareness or active involvement with the broader, cosmic viewpoint. As a writer, Alexievich contemplates the profound emotional and existential encounters of mankind, especially during episodes of profound anguish, like war or love, when human susceptibility is exposed and a new history is created in the process.

Alexievich is a 'Soviet' person and a 'Soviet writer'. The Soviet person in her has the pain of losing the Soviet state. The sentiment expressed in her work reflects a refusal to accept the demise of that ideals and lifestyle associated with the Soviet experience. She possesses a deep understanding of this Soviet figure, and the narratives stemming from oral histories and traditions that are intricately woven into her own narratives. She throughout in her novels explores the details of the people, their hopelessness, emotions such as love and hate. Illuminating the enduring trauma experienced by individuals in wartime and exploring how this reality has shaped the lives of successive generations. The turmoil resulting from significant events in human history, particularly concerning the Soviet Union and the subsequent post-Soviet context, and delving deep into the strategies governing the lives of individuals are central to her focus under authoritarian rule. Her voices from an ideal realm advocate for grand concepts that ultimately lead to conflict and suffering. By intertwining historical context with emotional depth, she has crafted a portrayal that authentically reflects the experiences of everyday individuals. She looks for 'a little big person' and defines it as someone who has been humiliated, tortured and suppressed by the totalitarian controllers, still at the end of the day was able to win.

> Before Afghanistan, I believed that we were building socialism with a human face. That is what my father taught me. I returned from Afghanistan free of all illusions. "Forgive me father," I said when I arrived home, "you raised me to believe in communist ideals, but once you've seen our soldiers killing people they don't know

> in a foreign land, all those ideals turn to dust." My father cried. Life itself is unimaginably artistic all on its own. As cruel as this may sound— human suffering is especially artistic. This the dark side of art. I am always dealing with materials that lead right to the edge of the impossible. Where you are one on one with reality. (Alexievich, *In Search of Free Individual* 162)

Alexievich refutes the notion that history can be comprehensively grasped only, by relying on objective facts, dates, or figures. Instead, she posits that history is present inside the emotional and psychological encounters of humans. Her writings are replete with the voices of those who endured the hardships of wars, encountered love, terror, hope, and despair under most challenging circumstances. Through her emphasis on emotions, she underscores the influence of historical events on both exterior reality and internal personal experiences. Within her interviews, Alexievich adeptly documents the moments of quiet, pauses, and the profound emotional impact of undisclosed issues. These moments hold equal significance to the words themselves, since they expose the profound emotional distress people frequently find difficult to express. She delves into the concept that emotional truth frequently exceeds factual objective truth. While formal historical accounts may emphasise triumphs, defeats, and political changes, her writings explore the emotional realities which are the unfiltered emotions and internal conflict that individuals undergo. Through her analysis of how history shapes people's identities, relationships, and memories, she adds an additional private and human element to the study of history.

In her speech compiled in the book *In Search of The Free Individuals* (2018) she states:

> For over 30 years I chronicled the Red Empire. This unprecedented communist project spanned a vast territory and affected an enormous number of people . . . The

> Red Man that I write about is a creation of the soviet idea, the builder of communism, as he called himself. (Alexievich 3).

Essentially, the great cycle of the Voices of Utopia is a collection of the Red man's experience, which is to say, the journey of a common Russian man. Alexievich articulates her perspectives via the consolidation of her writings, which provide a precise depiction of the situations she has encountered and faced. The prolonged conflict spanning more than three decades, conducted in the field, stands as an atypical subject within the domain of traditional literature. In her writings, the narrators articulate their personal journeys as they navigate through significant societal influences, presenting their individual narratives as emblematic of a broader communal trauma. The narrator's duty as a witness is a fundamental aspect of testimonial writing, which she executes efficiently.

Testimonial literature can be understood as any literary piece that is articulated through the first-person viewpoint of a one or number of witnesses, who share the traumatic events they have observed and endured. This literature generally emphasises on a catastrophic rupture in the narrator's life, such as experiences of racial or gender-based discrimination, or wrongful incarceration, rather than the entirety of their life narratives. Despite the fact that the idea of testimony writing is already based on the assumption of enhancing the accuracy of people's lives by representing the exactness of their experiences through writing, traditionally understood literariness, which is generally expressed in the form of style and fictional values, is in fact destroyed, and the core of the message of trustworthiness is called into question by the readers. Thus, it becomes critical to consider the writer's role, who is also considered a witness in the same manner, and who is not the one just endorsing fact about people or feelings about the community with which he or she has been associated on his or her own, but rather becomes a "guarantor of

existential authenticity"(Nycz, 1993) in the process. Technically speaking, the strategy aids the writer in becoming valid and realistic for the readers, and vice versa. It is connected to the survivor's desire to escape the past relooking, replaying his/her identity in the conducted act of narrating the story, and it is attached to the opposition's wish to remain in the past to have a claim of the incidents and stating that they are irreversible. In the simpler version, testimony is connected to both of these oxymoronic desires. In the process of drafting testimonies, the battle to oppose the past, as well as the refusal to accept the change, the person has been subjected to is crucial. If we narrow our focus to the Belarussian literary heritage, we can have a clearer understanding of Alexievich's worldview i.e. the tradition out of which a fresh perspective on literature has developed, contributing to the creation of a new literary genre.

Although witnesses may be unable to deliver factually correct and credible testimony, this does not diminish the significance of their accounts. The bias inherent in witness evidence necessitates the collection of several viewpoints to construct a composite depiction of corroborative and contradictory accounts of a specific event. This composite depiction of a historical event reveals the fact that truth exists at the convergence of various perspectives; this intersectional manner in which truth formation parallels the Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept that the discursive modes present in the novel, mutually influence and progressively alter one another through a dialogic exchange. Although testimony may not always deliver historical facts with absolute certainty, a witness's recollection of an event powerfully conveys the traumatic impact of that experience, according to Young:

> nothing can be more 'authentic' than the ways in which the diarist's interpretations of events gathered the weight and force of agency in their lives. . . in fact, it might

> thus be said that the ghetto diarist's interpretation of events-- and not the putative factuality of an account-- is the authentic truth of the narrative. (36)

Similarly, Dominick LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) contents that, "Testimonies are significant in the attempt to understand experience and its aftermath, including the role of memory and its lapses, in coming to terms with—or denying and repressing—the past" (86-87). Despite historian's scepticism, trauma theorists and Holocaust studies experts have consistently defended the reliability of eyewitness accounts as recorded evidence. Criticising and going beyond policing institutions, testimonial writing bears testimony to oppressive legal systems and other social processes that classify, rank, and marginalise. The individuals recounting experiences in testimonial writings serve as voices that disrupt and engage with the established narrative of official history. Similar to how signals from various transmitters on a particular radio frequency result in some sort of 'disturbance,' the diverse and overlapping forms of witnessing in testimonial texts generate historical interference. Testimony literature, as a genre presents various and often contradictory accounts of events, and does not convey history in a cohesive, or singular narrative that provides clear insight into the past. Consequently, it refrains from utilising a single witness viewpoint to create a master narrative or a singular, authoritative accounting of a traumatic incident. Instead, it aims to investigate the subjectivity and diversity of historical realities. Testimonial writings present a unique perspective on history by highlighting the overlooked individuals and events. Its goal is to broaden the historical record by including those who have been marginalised, rather than completely rejecting the idea of historical representation.

Despite the fact that her novels are historical in origin, there is a strong feeling of artistic combination in them. She adapts the traditions of Ales Adamovich and Fyodor Dostoevsky to her own requirements and treats testimony and confessions as the primary source of information. The

fragmentation of collective memory during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras is vividly captured in her writings, highlighting a profound ethical dimension in her work. Through her novels, the trials and tragedies of others are seen as a sign of compassion on her part. The premise is that while she embodies a particular adaptation strategy in response to challenges, she simultaneously reflects a universal empathy for human adaptation overall, untainted by any bias. She has primarily authored six novels, which are challenging to categorise due to the distinct nature of the voices employed in the first-person narrative, complicating the task of differentiating between them. She does not divert her focus away from the "Red Man," whose emotional path she has chosen to follow. Her novel *Boys in Zinc* contains the following passage: “I ask and I listen everywhere: in the soldier’s barracks, in the mess, on the football pitch, at the dance in the evening. There are elements of peacetime life that are surprising here.” (Alexievich 14). Her attention is drawn to the smallest details of existence. In order to ensure that her works reflect the profound emotions and stark truths of human existence, she has meticulously explored every nuance of the subtle sensations and memories that individuals have encountered. The memories of the war are just as meaningful to her as the experiences during the peacetime. People's genuine nature is revealed when they have the opportunity to reflect on their history and their experiences. This is the ultimate source of inspiration for Alexievich's works since it allows them to express their true sentiments, aspirations, and emotions.

The author has researched historical references to numerous socio-political settings in Russia, but her portrayal of these scenarios in her writings has remained consistent throughout. The sentiments and sincerity of the experiences that she incorporates into her works are conveyed through the manner and writing of the testimony. She takes advantage of the fact that she is writing for her own people, and thus becomes an integral component of her storytelling, as someone who

has personally experienced the suffering. In order to distinguish herself from the normal approach of creating literature, she creates works that are a collection of voices that speak together. Her works would be incomplete without the onsite original material and research that she has collected and drafted for her grand cycle. Ales Adamovich and Fyodor Dostoevsky are both credited with inventing the testimonial form of writing. It is for her own requirements and demands that she has blended the characteristic nuances of both the Russian writers, resulting in an original twist on the traditional non-fiction writing style. Adamovich is recognised for his writings that includes an amalgamation of fiction and historical testimonies. The methodology he employed in documentary fiction, characterised by the integration of authentic testimonies with narrative elements, had a profound influence on Alexievich. Adamovich's focus on documenting the lived experiences of individuals before and following World War II, especially through the perspectives of trauma, aligns closely with Alexievich's approach of employing testimonial accounts to shed light on both personal and collective narratives. Adamovich's investigation into trauma and its consequences in a post-war setting aligns closely with Alexievich's thematic emphasis on the impact of significant historical occurrences on human beings. Both authors aim to uncover the profound psychological wounds inflicted by these events, while Alexievich broadens this investigation to encompass the Soviet experience and its aftermath. The impact of Dostoevsky on Alexievich is clear in her examination of psychological complexity and ethical uncertainty. Dostoevsky's novels frequently explore the profound inner experiences of his characters, revealing their conflicts using morality, identity crises, and existential dilemmas. Alexievich delves into the psychological and emotional landscapes of her subjects, illustrating their internal struggles and moral quandaries as they confront the consequences of historical turmoil. The empathetic depiction of the marginalised and struggling individuals by Dostoevsky significantly influences Alexievich’s approach to her subjects. His capacity to elicit a profound comprehension of human suffering and adaptability is

reflected in Alexievich's depiction of individuals navigating pivotal historical events. Her works aim to amplify the voices of the overlooked, mirroring Dostoevsky's dedication to delving into the human experience in its most fragile moments. Dostoevsky's profound psychological understanding and compassionate depiction of human suffering are clear manifestations of her influence to explore psychological depths, whereas Alexievich's use of documentary techniques and emphasis on historical trauma demonstrate Adamovich's impact. In Alexievich's testimonial writing, both of these inspirations come together, shaping her narrative style that combines first-person accounts with more generalised observations about human psychology and history.

She has built a vision of the people through her works, allowing them to be understood as emotional entities rather than mere physical creatures made of skin and bones. Since she has come to understand the inner realities of the sufferer's brain, she has a high level of awareness of the surroundings and situations. In many ways, her works have collaborated with aesthetics, which have been blended with the historical facts of the time she has investigated, as has been demonstrated by numerous views. Despite the fact that she is creating something that is now referred to as a 'novel of voices,' she boldly challenges traditional norms. Her methodology encompasses collecting individual accounts and integrating them into a narrative that illustrates wider social and historical trend. Alexievich's literature is constructed from the authentic voices of her interview subjects, providing an unmediated perspective of their lives. Her testimonials frequently address pivotal historical events, such as life during and post-Soviet era, the Chernobyl accident, and the Afghan War, using human narratives. In order to provide a comprehensive perspective on human resiliency and suffering, the narratives dive into the psychological and emotional effects that these experiences have had on individuals. Her literature is able to capture

the collective memory and trauma of communities, consequently illuminating the ways in which experiences from the past affect both individual and collective identities.

Oral history is an interdisciplinary field that is not limited to the academic subject of historiography. Oral history is used in a variety of fields, from ethnology and anthropology to sociology and psychology. According to Abrams, it is both a methodology, or a way of conducting research, as well as the result of that investigation. Professor of Gender History at the University of Glasgow, Lynn Abrams is a leading figure in the field of oral history theory and practise. *Oral History Theory* (2010) by Abrams offers a comprehensive and structured theoretical examination of oral history and its application. Alternative terms for oral history encompass personal testimony and life-story research, which are applicable and utilised in accordance with this theory. Historians, on the other hand, prefer the phrase ‘oral history.’ This is an evolving practice and output in both the academic sphere and the non-academic domain, especially within the legal field. For instance, the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission' in South Africa, established in 1995, sought to address the atrocities of apartheid by utilising oral history. This initiative aimed to reconcile opposing factions within a society that was perceived to be on the brink of civil war during that period.

“One of the most massive oral history projects ever undertaken” was also one of the first methodologically undertaken ones (Abrams 4). In the late 1930s, during the depression years, the New Deal Federal Writer's Project began conducting oral history by capturing the life stories of thousands of people. Post-World War II, Columbia University adopted a 'Great Men' strategy, documenting the oral histories of “those who ‘contributed significantly to society or who were close affiliates of world leaders.” (Abrams 3-4). In Europe, especially in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, a novel approach to oral history has developed in the past few decades, focussing on written records. This was profoundly affected by the European tradition of oral transmission of

culture and history. Oral history developed into a 'recovery history' in the 1970s and 1980s for the emancipation of those marginalised by traditional historiography, that included labourers, women, gays and lesbians, and minority ethnic groups. It was regarded as a largely political, reconstructive activity, and by the majority of historians as untrustworthy due to its subjective nature and reliance on memory primarily: “It was not an objective, social-scientific methodology which could be rigorously tested.” (Abrams 5). Following a period of defensiveness, oral historians reinterpreted their approach as an analytical practise and not just a technique of recovery. Abrams observes that Passerini was a crucial figure in transitioning oral history from social science to cultural history, and cites him:

> we should not ignore that the raw material of oral history consists not just of factual statements, but is pre-eminently an expression and representation of culture, and therefore not only literal narrations but also the dimensions of memory, ideology and subconscious desires. (Abrams 6-7)

Alexievich's novels, contain personal and subjective accounts of the people of Soviet Union, which echo this particular cultural historical approach to oral history. The shift from oral history to cultural history resulted in an increased emphasis on basic concepts such as subjectivity, memory, and techniques of communication in oral histories, all of which are significant in Alexievich's writings.

Abrams talks about the development of the oral history stating,

> Indeed, subjectivity has not only become something that must be acknowledged in the interview but it has become part of a bigger agenda, that of liberating voices and validating experiences and understanding how people construct retrospective versions of their lives. (Abrams 63)

Abrams underscores the crucial importance of subjectivity in the interview process, emphasising that it is not only something to be acknowledged, but is essential to the overall objective of oral history and qualitative research. Subjectivity is acknowledging the interviewee's individual viewpoints, sentiments, and understandings, which influence the sufferer's memory and storytelling of past events. Abrams argues that acknowledging subjectivity is a crucial aspect of a broader objective to empower voices and affirm personal experiences. Interviews serve the purpose of not only collecting objective information, but also enabling the persons to express their own narratives and viewpoints. Through this approach, researchers may get valuable understanding of how individuals formulate their retrospective renditions of their lives, and how they comprehend their history, interpret their encounters, and develop a cohesive storyline from their recollections. Allowing the silent voices to be heard that were absent in the pages of history books. All the novels of Alexievich follow this pattern. Additionally, an equally significant component of subjectivity in oral history theory is the concept of interrelated intersubjectivity. As Abrams persuasively argues, a person's subjectivity and the private experiences, can be expressed only by drawing them to public discourses:

> A focus on subjectivity requires that we not only be aware of the fact that our respondent is constructing a subjective version of the past in a dialogue with the interviewer but that in doing so he or she is drawing upon discourses from wider culture. (Abrams 63)

The oral histories present in Alexievich's work highlight the profound emotional and psychological aspects of historical narratives. Her interviews encompass not just the factual elements but also the emotions, uncertainties, and personal insights of individuals. This method

maintains the personal essence of memory, illustrating how people navigate trauma, loss, and identity following transformative experiences.

Alexievich's novels are regarded as polyphonic in nature. Polyphony is a concept that is originated from music and refers to a number of voices. It is a trait that is unique to prose literature. Various ideological viewpoints are represented, and this idea encourages to move away from the author's judgement or limits as much as possible. Polyphony refers to the distinct flow of voices that exist at the same time in a text. The author is included in the narrative on a democratic footing with the other character voices. There is no single point of view that is more important than another. As opposed to a closure or finalisation, the diverse components of the text are in a dialogic connection with each other. Every character constructs their own distinct universe and interacts with others in a manner that preserves their individuality without merging them into a singular entity. The relationship between objectivity and polyphony is such that the author's influence is limited within the voices of the characters, allowing them to convey their own realities. This leads to the text being perceived through the perspectives of multiple consciousness. Polyphony's malleability and multidimensionality has made it an especially enticing terminology for critics, since it enables a discussion of sound, space, and time in relationship to the text, all of which are more frequently discussed in poetry than prose.

The term polyphony was introduced in literary criticism by Mikhail Bakhtin. Today, literary critics use the term 'polyphony' to refer to nearly any writing that incorporates numerous narrative voices, languages, or stories. Mikhail Bakhtin introduced the concept of polyphony in relation to Dostoevsky's works during the late 1920s, and Milan Kundera popularised it in *The Art of the Novel*. A major component of Bakhtin's definition of polyphony in literature is an endeavour to counteract the objectification of man through the pluralistic engagement of dialogue.

‘Objectification’ is a process of reification by which a character or hero in a work can be reduced to being the embodiment of the author's sole consciousness. Bakhtin in the text *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* discusses about the concept of polyphony in Dostoevsky’s novels, which happens to have a huge influence on Alexievich’s novels. According to him: “heroes are indeed not only subjects of their author's word, but subjects of their own directly significant word. . . The hero's consciousness is given as a separate, a foreign consciousness, but at the same time it is not objectified, it does not become closed off, is not made the simple object of the author's consciousness” (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 4). He goes on to say that the hero in Dostoevsky's novels:

> ‘he’ nor ‘I,’ but a full-valued "thou," that is, another full-fledged "I" ("Thou art”) . . . Thus the hero's freedom is an aspect of the author's intention. The hero's word is created by the author, but created in such a way that it can freely develop its inner logic and independence as the word of another person, as the word of the hero himself (Bakhtin 51-53).

Employing polyphony as an artistic medium allows for the demonstration of the cohabitation, interaction, and interdependence of several distinct, yet relatively autonomous consciousnesses. These consciousnesses concurrently represent the diverse contents of the world, all unified within the framework of a specific singular work. It is therefore essential to distinguish between non-polyphonic or monologic storytelling, and polyphonic narrative that utilises the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue. One approach to characterise the former is as a narrative that utilises the integration of multiple consciousnesses through the structured interaction of their connections, all aimed at serving a singular, highly aware consciousness. According to polyphonic narrative theory, the unity of various consciousnesses is produced by their interdependent

interaction in connection to one another, and each in their relative autonomy with respect to the whole of which the resulting diversity is the unifying whole (Malcuzynski 56). Alternatively, one might say that the notion of dialogue underpins the narratological structure that delineates the text within a polyphonic context. The dialogic quality is a critical formative and unifying aspect in the polyphonic achievement; without it, the harmonic principle would disintegrate into anarchic noise, and the polyphonic achievement would collapse into chaos. For Alexievich, polyphony transcends mere narrative technique; it embodies a profound ethical position. She has articulated the ethical obligation she perceives as a writer to allow individuals to express their own narratives, ensuring their stories are maintained without her personal interpretation influencing them. By permitting each voice to exist independently, she fosters an environment where readers can connect immediately to the lived experiences and feelings of those she interviews, instead of encountering a mediated or interpreted account of their narratives.

In examining Alexievich's body of work, a notable pattern emerges: each novel features chapters that are distinctly divided for individual voices, allowing each perspective to occupy its own space and receive due recognition. The importance of polyphony lies in the fact that each narrative segment or chapter embodies a distinct perspective articulated by an independent voice. Each voice interrogates the reliability of comparable events, symptoms, or symbols, as well as the legitimacy of similar characters, including those presented in the preceding chapters. The absence of an effort by the author to unify and synthesise the various iterations of the narrative into a singular, conclusive version allows for a dynamic dialogic interaction among the multiple narrative segments, as articulated by Bakhtin.

The narrative structure of Alexievich's work is fundamentally anchored in oral history and polyphony. These two elements characterise her distinctive method of capturing personal

experiences within the framework of significant historical events. The narratives are exclusively first-person accounts, carefully assembled through comprehensive interviews. Through the utilisation of oral histories, she conveys the authentic, emotional, and frequently disjointed essence of memory, enabling the readers to engage with history from a personal, i.e. grassroot viewpoint. In contrast to conventional historical accounts that emphasise on political figures, military conflicts, or overarching stories, Alexievich's approach through oral history redirects attention to the ordinary individuals who frequently endure the most immediate and profound impacts of historical events. This methodology empowers her to amplify the narratives of individuals often overlooked in historical records of women, children, soldiers, survivors of nuclear catastrophes, and victims of oppressive regimes. In contrast to conventional novels or historical narratives that typically feature a singular narrative voice directing the reader, the author's polyphonic structure challenges the notion of a central, authoritative narrator. The narratives are primarily driven by the voices of people she interviews, with their shared experiences forming the core of the story. This facilitates a complex and frequently conflicting investigation of reality, memory, and history. Instead of offering a straightforward or unified story, her creations reflect the intricate nature of human existence and the various interpretations individuals have of identical events.

This chapter has examined the life and works of Alexievich, a writer whose impactful narratives have reshaped the limits of literature and history. Through an exploration of her personal history, writing style, and thematic focus, there is an acquisition of a more profound comprehension of the influences that moulded her distinctive narrative technique; a fusion of journalistic exactitude and literary emotional intensity. Although Alexievich is frequently associated with her Soviet heritage, there has been insufficient attention given to the influence of her Belarusian identity, particularly her experiences under authoritarian governance in Belarus, on

her literary explorations of oppressed and silenced. It illustrates how her upbringing in a culturally constrained Belarus fostered a heightened awareness of marginalised voices. A deep understanding of her forced political exile; especially the psychological impact and creative transformations experienced during her absence from Belarus, illuminates how displacement and isolation heightened her concentration on themes of identity, loss, and belonging. It can be conceived that her exile amplified her empathy for displaced persons, imbuing her works with an additional layer of narrative complexity.

An extensive biographical examination of Alexievich's own encounters with loss, encompassing both family and colleagues, elucidates how her individual sorrows shaped her depiction of communal grieving in her literary works. Her profound understanding of human suffering arises from her own unresolved personal grief, shaping her choice to chronicle the shared trauma of historical happenings. Alexievich blends her thematic centrality by writing about, history and emotions, testimonies, oral history and polyphony. These themes reflect a distinctive fusion of her approach to portraying individuals via her works. This interblended representation of the themes is a unique feature of her writing and is evidently reflected in her literature, setting her apart from other writers, writing about trauma. Her influence on the current scholarship and literature is covered in the analysis, with a focus on how her works transcend conventional genres and provide an emotionally charged yet historically accurate depiction of daily existence in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Alexievich's literature has been analysed via several perspectives in academic discourse, offering a particularly fertile ground for examination. The review intends to synthesise existing scholarship to identify the principal debates concerning her works and to pinpoint deficiencies in

the current research that this dissertation aims to address. This will contextualise the significance of Alexievich's literary contributions and situate the current study within wider discourses. Sonu Saini, in the article titled "Revisiting the World of 'Chernobyl' After the Nuclear Disaster Through 'Testimonials': An Analysis of *The Voices from Chernobyl: A Chronicle of the Future*" categorising *Chernobyl Prayer* as a form of testimonial literature. Saini's analysis highlights the book's depiction of both the tangible effects of radiation and the enduring psychological scars experienced by survivors. According to Saini, "These tragedies have ruined whole life of people in the region and made a new category of 'Victims' 'Chernobilskii' (people of Chernobyl) in the society. These tragedies affected not only on the bodies of the victims but on their souls forever" (1096). The writer emphasises on the motifs of sorrow, anxiety, and the upheaval of everyday existence following the calamity. This paper illustrates how *Chernobyl Prayer* functions as a significant historical record and a compelling piece of literature that allows readers to engage with the lasting impacts of the disaster on personal and community experiences.

Stuart Lindsay, in the thesis titled *Reading Chernobyl: Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction, Literature* explores the trauma that is psychologically induced in the minds of the survivors of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. He has applied the Freudian psychoanalysis to study the work in combination with the theory of deconstruction by Jacques Derrida. The trauma of the Chernobyl can be divided into different phases as identified by Lindsay in the thesis. Lindsay posits that survivors employ humour, namely dark humour, as a therapeutic mechanism to navigate through their painful past. This dissertation positions itself at the convergence of psychoanalysis and deconstruction, providing a sophisticated examination of Chernobyl's imprint in literature, movies, and video games.

Notably, Angela Brintlinger investigates the Soviet tradition of documentary prose writing, specifically that of Svetlana Alexievich's genre, in her article titled "Mothers, father (s), daughter: Svetlana Aleksievich and *The Unwomanly Face of War*." The research study centrally focusses on the novel The *Unwomanly Face of War*. Brintlinger contends that although Alexievich advocates for a 'women's history' of war, her perspective is influenced by the patriarchal tradition of documentation which she inherits, and the political limitations of her era. Brintlinger also reflects on the fluctuating nature of publishing and censorship during the period 1984-2004, as well as other elements, result in the formation of a text that can be considered a dynamic system in itself. This dynamism is significantly influenced by the author's biographical details and literary techniques, as well as her rapport with her interviewees. The findings indicate that Alexievich has significantly impacted the Soviet documentary canon and integrated herself into the framework of World War II history by establishing connections with both female and male veterans, along with fellow writers. She has meticulously recorded the shared remembrance of patriotism and the complexities involved in commemorating World War II. Furthermore, she has made significant contributions to the Soviet anti-war movement in the mid-1980s. The research paper also explores, Alexievich's process of creating and gathering material for her texts, making her participation significant and crucial in the development of the end product. Brintlinger notes, "In organizing the interviews, Aleksievich quoted her interview subjects. Each chapter or section title takes its name from a quotation in the text, thus elevating the women's voices to a position of power and authority and implying that the women themselves are in control of the book's contents" (201). In conclusion, the paper analyses the origins, structure, and progress of *The Unwomanly Face of War*, situating it within the Soviet tradition of factual prose and emphasising the impact of biography, gender dynamics, and political environment on its development.

Daniel Bush, writes in the research paper titled “No other proof”: Svetlana Aleksievich in the tradition of Soviet war writing” that traditionally, the works of Alexievich have been examined from the perspectives of ethnography, historical, and memory studies collection, among other approaches. The article presents a novel perspective that examines the role of her work as a factor in determining the accuracy of conveying the past through writing. Bush asserts, “Aleksievich’s work is a consummate example of literature asserting that matters of representation are also matters of justice” (225). He argues that Alexievich adopted and adapted traditional methodologies, especially Adamovich’s oral documentary technique, by redirecting the emphasis from factual accounts to a ‘history of feelings’ that highlights women’s emotional and sensory recollections of war. In summary, Bush's paper in general, examines the academic discourse that confines the concept of representation, along with the assertions, implications, and repercussions of past events presented in the works influenced by the legacy bequeathed by Alexievich. The study provides a persuasive examination of Alexievich's integration and at the same time transformation of the Soviet literary heritage.

Jeffrey Jones, published a paper titled "Mothers, prostitutes, and the collapse of the Soviet Union: the representation of women in Svetlana Aleksievich’s *Zinky Boys*" his analysis focuses on the portrayal of women in the novel *Boys in Zinc*. According to Jones, “Aleksievich thus represents women in *Zinky Boys* as mothers and prostitutes – sinners or saints” (16). He identifies three distinct representations of women in the novel *Boys in Zinc*. Jones proposes that the women are portrayed in the text, specifically as, the Motherland as a maternal figure, the grieving mother in sorrow, and the morally loose woman fighting in a war. These stereotypes mirror wider discursive changes in late Soviet society that played a role in the ideological disintegration of the USSR. Utilising comprehensive textual analysis, Jones illustrates how Alexievich confronts the persistent

World War II-era notion of the Motherland as a revered, maternal entity by presenting mothers who defy the state's narrative and scrutinise the significance of their sons' sacrifices. Jones challenges the widespread sexualisation and marginalisation of women who participated in the war, emphasising how gendered norms and male predation skewed their efforts. In a nutshell, Jones asserts in the article that, Alexievich reveals the moral, social, and political deficiencies of the Soviet state through her depiction of Soviet-Afghan war in the novel *Boys in Zinc*.

Anna Karpusheva, in her paper titled "Svetlana Aleksievich's *Voices from Chernobyl*: between an oral history and a death lament" contends that Alexievich in *Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future*, utilises oral history to create polyphonic imagery centred on a significant event in Soviet history, a technique she applies consistently across her oeuvre. Nevertheless, she claims that the structural framework and nature of the narratives in the novels remain distinct and distinguishable from Alexievich's other works, and we witness a continuation of the resemblance of the continuous collective mourning, which makes the book comparable to a Slavic death lament. A narrative analysis of *Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future*, according to Karpusheva, can be approached from the perspective of a Slavic death lament, which aids in understanding the structural composition of the text, identifying the text's central imagery and performative effects, and validating the text's reliance on the literary devices. In conclusion, Karpusheva in the research paper highlights the alignment of the text's structural composition, emotional intensity and imagery with folkloric lamentation, especially through its organisation into monologues and choruses. Further expanding on her research, Karpusheva in her PhD dissertation titled, *Fighting a War: Svetlana Alexievich's Prose between History and Literature*, examines how Alexievich integrates oral history with genres of literature to depict Soviet and post-Soviet pain in her three books i.e. *The Unwomanly Face of War*, *Last Witnesses* and *Boys in Zinc*. According to

Karpusheva oral testimonies are stylised in these three texts of the author in accordance to the standards of particular performative genres such as requiem, magic tales and confessions respectively. In summary, Karpusheva's dissertation sheds light on the ways in which Alexievich's singular combination of personal testimony and narrative methods poses a challenge to the conventional Soviet myths.

Johanna Lindbladh, asserts in the research article titled "The polyphonic performance of witness in Svetlana Aleksievich's Voices from Utopia" that Alexievich's works collectively referred to as ‘Voices from Utopia’ should be interpreted as a work of testimony. “This article proposes that we consider Aleksievich’s Voices from Utopia to be a testimony” (302). Alexievich’s interviews with the eyewitnesses indicate that her five works exemplify the creation of an implied author. In contrast to a theoretical perspective that views facts in opposition to fiction, Lindbladh's analysis demonstrates the historical significance of Alexievich's work in terms of its artistic composition. Utilising Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of polyphony, Lindbladh explores how Aleksievich removes external narrative viewpoints, enabling witnesses to express themselves through internally focused, emotionally intense monologues. Ultimately, Lindbladh situates Aleksievich’s work at the crossroads of literature and history, highlighting that its artistic structure is essential to its historical authenticity.

Irina Marchesini, examines the emergence of a new literary genre in the paper titled "A new literary genre. Trauma and the individual perspective in Svetlana Aleksievich's *Chernobyl'skaia molitva*" elaborating on Alexievich's approach regarding the portrayal of traumatic events and emphasising on the critical role of her 'voices' in the development of a new literary genre. By examining the role of oral testimony in constructing the narratives of Alexievich's text, the study emphasises the element of nature that cannot be controlled as a critical

factor in the textual construction of *Chernobyl Prayer*. The paper asserts that the text *Chernobyl Prayer* serves as a profound testament to personal anguish and a formally inventive addition to modern literature and memory culture.

Holly Myers, analyses the development of Svetlana Alexievich's narrative of the Soviet–Afghan War in *Boys in Zinc* within the research article titled "Svetlana Aleksievich's Changing Narrative of the Soviet–Afghan War in Zinky Boys." Myers compares the author's initial depiction of the material of the text in 1990 edition to the book's 2016 edition. "The textual modifications made between 1990 and 2016 form the backbone of Aleksievich's new narrative of the Soviet–Afghan War, but there are several smaller, more subtle moments throughout the 2016 edition that further reflect the direction that Aleksievich's narrative has taken" (347). Myers states that the initial version included a polyphonic narrative that permitted the coexistence of different, sometimes contradictory, personal realities, but the updated edition exhibits a clear transition towards a more unified, authoritative anti-war stance. The article examines three key dimensions of this transition: the framing of truth in historical narratives, the processing of individual memories, and the handling of documents. This examination emphasises the way Aleksievich's use of genre, structure, and testimony illustrates her evolving connection with history, memory, and truth, while also posing significant ethical enquiries regarding authorial control within documentary literature.

Andrea Zink, in the article titled "Approaching the Void–Chernobyl in Text and Image." examines the complexities of artistically depicting the Chernobyl disaster, with particular emphasis on the documentary contributions of Alexievich, and others. Zink contends that conventional literary and visual mediums find it challenging to effectively convey the magnitude and trauma of a catastrophic event, considering its anthropogenic roots, absence of a discernible

adversary, and the unsettling quiet post the incident. According to Zink, “absence of norms arouses a sense of pain in witnesses, and it is this pain, the trace of nothingness, which Aleksievich captures in her writing” (105). Ultimately, the research contends that the *Chernobyl Prayer* does not provide explanation but rather chronicles the boundaries of understanding, exposing the existential and metaphysical fractures induced by the catastrophe.

Iryna Hniadzko, in her doctoral dissertation entitled *Svetlana Alexievich: Fiction and the Nonfiction of Confessions* examines the literary style and the interplay of fiction and nonfiction within Alexievich's books. The dissertation explores the ways in which Alexievich's works interrogate conventional distinctions among history, literature, and journalism, especially through her employment of confessional interviews. Hniadzko explores how Alexievich weaves together personal recollections and shared suffering, resulting in what is referred to as ‘super-literature’. This term encapsulates Alexievich's distinctive approach of intertwining factual narratives with the profound emotional richness and intricacy usually associated with literary fiction. Hniadzko states, “Alexievich prefers her narratives to create their own polyphonic version of the historic event and to be perceived by her readers through emotions rather than historic data” (215). The study contends that Alexievich holds a unique status in global literature by developing a hybrid genre that merges historical testimony with profound human narratives, thereby challenging the distinctions between fiction and nonfiction while maintaining the lived experiences of individuals.

Laurie Vickroy’s research paper “It’s More Terrible Not to Remember: Alexievich and Women’s War Literature” explores how Alexievich’s work, especially *The Unwomanly Face of War*, underscores the anguish experienced by women during World War II. Vickroy analyses the ways in which Alexievich empowers female veterans to reclaim their voices and testimonies, confronting the masculine and militarised discourses that have historically overshadowed war

narratives. Through Alexievich's interviews, women express the enduring psychological effects of war, crafting narratives that offer profound understanding of the trauma associated with memories and experience.

RESEARCH GAP

Although Svetlana Alexievich's distinctive literary voice has gained increasing global acknowledgment, especially following her receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015, there is still a notable scarcity of scholarly analysis of her literature from the perspective of trauma theory. A substantial segment of currently available analysis pertaining to the author focusses on a specific incident (such as wartime or the Chernobyl). Also, the current body of available scholarship predominantly examines her narratives through journalistic, political and historic angles, frequently emphasising the factual quality of her writings. Although these methods provide important perspectives, they often miss the more profound psychological and emotional layers present in her narrative structure, particularly the expressions of personal and collective trauma.

Additionally, while trauma theory has become increasingly prominent in literary studies in recent decades, its relevance to post-Soviet literature, especially in relation to Alexievich's oeuvre, is still emerging. Cathy Caruth is distinguished among trauma theorists for her seminal contributions that highlight the belatedness and incomprehensible nature of traumatic experiences. However, there is a significant deficiency in concentrated analysis of Caruth's theoretical framework concerning Alexievich's works, which intricately demonstrate the lived consequences of war, catastrophe, and ideological disintegration.

The research seeks to fill these gaps by offering a comprehensive analysis of Alexievich's narrative techniques and thematic concerns, utilising Caruth's trauma theory as a framework. This approach aims to enhance both the discipline of trauma studies and the wider comprehension of

post-Soviet literature, along with the ethical considerations surrounding the witnessing and narration of trauma.

OBJECTIVES

The central objective of the research is to examine the works of Svetlana Alexievich and to establish a perspective through the application of trauma theory. The proposed objectives of the research are:

1) To trace the genesis of trauma.
2) To study war literature in Soviet Union and its impact on the novels of Svetlana Alexievich.
3) To apply Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma on the novels of Svetlana Alexievich.
4) To disseminate the socio-political and the polyphony in the novels of Svetlana Alexievich.

METHODOLOGY

The research utilises qualitative, analytical, interpretive methodology rooted in literary analysis and trauma theory, specifically emphasising the theoretical framework established by Cathy Caruth. The study entails a meticulous examination of texts by Alexievich, scrutinising them through the framework of trauma studies to investigate the ways in which trauma is articulated, depicted, and conveyed in her distinctive literary style. Caruth's theoretic concepts such as belatedness, the recurrence of the traumatic experience, and the ethical obligation of listening, serve as analytical instruments to elucidate the fragmented, recursive and polyphonic characteristics of the Alexievich's narratives. The methodology emphasises the convergence of personal narratives and shared recollections, seeking to elucidate how the writer's literary style manifests and encapsulates the framework of traumatic experience. This paradigm aims to enhance our comprehension of trauma's depiction in literature and to contribute to wider dialogues in

trauma and memory studies. The study utilises both primary sources consisting the books written by Alexievich, and secondary sources comprising research papers, critical essays, news articles, among others. Finally, the thesis employs interdisciplinary scholarship enriching the analysis by offering various perspectives for examining the texts.

SCOPE OF STUDY

This investigation is positioned within the domain of literary and cultural analysis. This study aims to investigate the ways in which traumatic experiences are articulated, recollected, and expressed in Alexievich's oeuvre, as well as how her employment of fragmented, multi-voiced testimony corresponds with significant concepts of trauma theory. The study does not seek to evaluate the psychological validity of the testimonies, nor does it intent to assess the historical claims presented within them. The emphasis is on the ways in which trauma is expressed through the form, structure, and language found in the author's narrative style. The analysis is confined to the texts rendered in English, which could affect the range of interpretations available. The dissertation seeks to offer a comprehensive and intricate examination of trauma narration within contemporary post-Soviet literature by concentrating on the texts of Alexievich and employing Caruth's theoretical perspective.

Chapter II

Genesis of Trauma

The chapter will primarily examine the historical development i.e. trace the genesis of trauma theory, with the aim of accomplishing three key objectives outlined in the chapter. 1) Trace the origins and draw a history of trauma studies, 2) To understand literary trauma theory and its various approaches as proposed by literary trauma theorists specifically Cathy Caruth, 3) To fill the voids of literary trauma theory by adopting an interdisciplinary approach.

Apart from Cathy Caruth, there are other literary writers like Geoffrey Hartman, Judith Herman, Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra, and others who have presented their view point regarding the trauma theory. The subject of trauma theory is very contentious and marked by conflicting viewpoints among these writers. The origin of traumatic experience is precarious while it has been described as an experience characterised as a recurring, timeless, and indescribable event that spreads and becomes stagnant. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, the aim is to integrate literary and cultural trauma theory with clinical and psychiatric trauma discourses. A multidisciplinary approach to trauma novels can go beyond the existing state of the field. All three components of the above-mentioned approach collectively establish a paradigm for trauma novels that is non-universalizing in essence. The lens of literary studies, as well as psychology and psychiatry, which provide highly differentiated and continuously developing analyses of trauma, can be assigned to uncover new approaches on trauma novels. Additionally, focusing on childhood and familial trauma allows for a reorientation away from excessively tropological and abstract aspects of trauma and towards more specific ones. This reorientation is vital since reinforcing the collective and cultural settings of trauma has aided the flourishing of expansionary approaches in literary studies, and this reorientation will help achieve their continued flourishing.

Trauma as a word initially referred to a bodily injury that required medical attention or treatment. The word's etymology may be traced back to the Greek word meaning wound (*τραῦμα*, traûma). Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the phrase has undergone changes and its usage has broadened. It now refers to a person's emotional state, as well as wounds resulting from a tragic incident or a catastrophe. The contemporary implication of this concept has led us to understand its usefulness in describing the psychological setback experienced by an individual or a group as a result of a highly distressing event in their personal or social life, which has caused irreparable damage. In the past few decades, there has been a significant amount of research and analysis focused on the term, particularly in relation to the comprehension of the worldwide cultural perspective. As a result, we have come to classify it as either traumatic or post-traumatic. The present understanding of this idea is a result of significant tragic catastrophes that have affected humanity and civilisations on a vast scale.

Events such as the two World Wars (WWI AND WWII), Holocaust, Genocides in various places, wars between countries and the internal conflicts of the states that majorly include Soviet wars, Vietnam war, 9/11, Nuclear disasters, Indian partition, etc., atrocities of colonialism, rise of religious fundamentalism, terrorists targeting innocent people, bomb blasts, has instigated an everlasting impact on the cultural aspect and socio-historical legacy. In addition to anthropogenic catastrophes, human civilisation has encountered numerous natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, and even the devastating outbreak of pandemics such as the Corona Virus, which has become an international concern. This has sparked discussions about the climate emergency and the resulting anxiety among people. It is bringing into perspective something that can go beyond the past and the present and look at the irreversibility of the damage caused to the environment in connection with the human, non-human and post human lives.

Humanity every day is still battling to come to the terms with the resolution of the calamitous events that has disturbed and effected the psyche of the people, it therefore becomes important to understand the area of study and research extensively.

The psychological or psychical understanding of the people or community is an extensive task and that can be done through the interrelation of people with their external surroundings that have caused sufferings in their present or past. When an individual is subjected to uncertain conditions physically or mentally the psychical effects of the incidents cause a deep impact on the person. The emotions that result from the distressing circumstances experienced by the individual are a response to the events encountered. Instances of trauma appear to be pervasive at times. Almost every setback may be described as 'traumatic' in a casual manner, which poses a risk of the term becoming trivialised and rendered ineffective. In “Mixing Memory and Desire: Psychoanalysis, Psychology and Trauma Theory” Luckhurst defines trauma as “Something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated by usual mental processes. We have, as it were nowhere to put it, and so it falls out of our conscious memory, yet is still present in our mind like an intruder or a ghost” (499).

The extent of harm inflicted by trauma in an individual's life differs from one person to another. If two people have encountered an adverse incident, the resulting hardships they endure will vary. Some individuals may experience heightened levels of trauma, while others may just feel distressed and apprehensive. These catastrophic occurrences have a prolonged effect on the individual who have survived them and influence their emotional and mental well-being. The degree of loss is directly proportional to the magnitude of trauma experienced. Trauma inevitably manifests many symptoms in the survivor. Various manifestations of physical symptoms might

arise as a result of trauma. These symptoms encompass low levels of focus, lack of energy and tiredness. The victim may experience episodes of acute anxiety.

The term has been trivialised since it has begun to be applied to any insignificant issue that is innocuous in nature, yet it is important to acknowledge that ‘Trauma' is a genuine phenomenon. In order to mitigate the risk of diminishing the significance of this word in a profound manner, individuals who have experienced or witnessed the actual traumatic events, or those who believe they have played a role in them, have endeavoured to safeguard its authentic essence by discussing and documenting it through various cultural expressions of commemoration and firsthand accounts. Besides this the legacy of the violence that has traumatized the ones that have been affected by an event is also a matter of concern for the ones that have not yet been directly affect from the same. They collectively raise the effort of recognising and asking questions about how the past atrocities can be stopped of getting repeated in the present and future, in addition to this how to tackle the mechanism of the structural violence that we have acquired from the past and we may somehow be perpetuating that in the present. Literature is a significant means of addressing these challenges. This research here becomes evident in bringing these issues from the point of view of literature.

The response to a severely distressing or disturbing occasion that makes an unsettling nature among an individual’s ability to handle or creates a feeling of helplessness among him weakening the ability to have self-identification or stability of mind is called trauma. Trauma causes an upheaval that occurs in an individual’s psyche as a result of a terrible or horrible act. It creates various psychical disorders in the human psyche such as hysteria, PTSD, and catharsis problem. Trauma studies in literature, on the other hand, encompasses a wide range of subjects including psychological trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in the

creation of individual and cultural identities. Post-structuralist, sociocultural, and postcolonial theories, in conjunction with psychoanalytic theories of trauma, serves as a foundation for criticism that evaluates representations of severe experiences and the impact of those experiences on the individual's identity and memory. The idea of trauma, which is itself a topic of criticism, is commonly defined as a highly disruptive experience that has a dramatic influence on the self's emotional structure as well as one's perception of the surrounding environment. Through the study of trauma's psychological, rhetorical, and cultural relevance, trauma studies seek to understand the influence of trauma on literature and society. In this field of study, scholars examine the complex psychological and social aspects that impact the self's perception of a traumatic event, as well as how such an experience moulds and is changed by the language of a text, as well as the relationship between the two. This subject continues to place a strong emphasis on the formal breakthroughs of texts; both print and media, that provide new insights into the ways in which identity, the unconscious, and memory are altered by traumatic events. The texts act as a source of the depiction of the traumatic events that has caused the crisis of the mind. Whenever a person is subjected to a traumatic incident, his or her defences are placed into serious question. There is even an overpowering aspect to traumatic experience that questions the regular systems of care and control, as well as the sense of connection and significance that the individual has experienced. The individual experience of trauma is thus ambivalent, since it is an experience of excess that can only be expressed in the absence of a meaningful structure or form that expresses the severe, intolerable moment that the self goes through.

Trauma research began in the 1860s, when doctors noticed that victims of railway accidents were experiencing prolonged and strange symptoms that were beyond obvious physical injuries. However, it wasn't until the 1880s that doctors began conducting psychiatric evaluations on women

who displayed unusual behaviour for no obvious reason. Historically looking back at the roots of the trauma theory, Sigmund Freud is the person who has laid down the foundation for the development of this theory. Freud, recognised as the progenitor of psychoanalysis, focused on the internal conflicts of the afflicted individuals. He revealed that when the mind encounters enormous and catastrophic situations, it attempts to isolate those memories in areas of the mind that are inaccessible to conscious awareness. The theories on traumatic experiences and memory by Sigmund Freud describes the various psychological concepts that guide the field of study. Psychoanalysis or the psychoanalytical theories that focused on the origin and the effects of trauma came up in the nineteenth century. A thorough study of hysteria as well as shock was done by not only Freud but other psychologists as well which includes Joseph Breuer, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, Hermann Oppenheim, Abram Kardiner, and Morton Prince.

Studies on Hysteria a book written in 1985 by Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer which was based on Freud's early theory as well as his critically acclaimed text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) which emphasised on Freud's adapted theories in his later career, have a dominant role in the trauma's conceptual framework carried out by the literary critics working on the theory of trauma. Freud defines trauma as, "It is not, like the wound of the body, a simple healable event, but rather an event… not locatable to the original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way that it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 4). Further referring to the study of psychology the relationship between trauma and mental illness was for the first time researched by a French neurologist and a physician Jean Martin Charcot who worked on the subject of traumatized women. While in late 19th century, the major focus of Charcot's study was on hysteria, a mental disorder that was commonly diagnosed in women. The symptoms included

sudden paralysis, sense loss, amnesia and convulsion. Back then women were the majority of sufferers and the disorder was thought to have originated from the uterus. Till Charcot was absent from the scene the treatment of hysteria was hysterectomy, but when Charcot's findings came into the research world, he underscored that the origin of hysteria was not because of the presence of uterus but was a psychological disorder. He came up with a view that traumatic events could induce a hypnotic state in his patients. Freud's early work point out that the development of the traumatic hysteria is because of a repressed experience of the sexual assault in the past.

Breuer and Freud's emphasis in *Study in Hysteria* is that the past event that took place was not traumatic in nature but it becomes traumatic in the remembrance of the event. The original incident keeps on recurring and causes continuous harm. To understand this the psychologist has to go through the process of talking cure, to recognize the effect of the past to let the patient gain the freedom from the past and the symptoms related to it. The most important factor is that the traumatic incident is understood only after the events and the symptoms have crossed the latency period, or the deferred action that causes the effect of the accident remains hidden from the patient as well as the doctor. It so happens that a recent event instigates the past repressed event to come out of the latency state and take part in the process of remembering. The procedure of remembering creates psychological torment but at the same time accredits value to an experience that has been previously got repressed in the unconscious. This recalling of the traumatic incident is referred to as 'pathogenic reminiscences' since it results in pathologic symptoms. As trauma research has become more prevalent, the term has been widely applied to the conditions other than those originally imagined such as war, natural catastrophe, abuse, and confinement to cover psychological trauma that did not originate out of the above or was caused by physical violence. Numerous publications in this field of trauma theory make direct references to the Holocaust of

World War II. One may even argue that Holocaust studies, if not the Holocaust itself, were pivotal in the development of trauma theory.

Trauma theory in the recent form has been derived out of the medical and legal matters of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. The technological advancement of the industrial age had some malfunctioned devices, these produced victims who were unable to know the cause of distress, but they were traumatized and demanded medical attention and financial compensation. Railway accidents particularly contributed significantly to the development of the trauma theory. The expansion of railways from around 1830s onwards brought a number of injuries and deaths due to the accidents in Europe and America. Occasionally the one who endured accidents and crashes found their behaviour changed, they were unable to work normally even if they had no physical injuries. The medical fraternity was busy seeking physical causes even though they remained invisible at that time. In the year 1866, a surgeon named John Erichsen propounded the theory of 'railway spine' in his book, *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System*, suggesting that the victims of trauma caused due to railways accidents suffered from spinal damage, which could not be directly observed due to the absence of the X-rays.

In the year 1889, Hermann Oppenheim, a leading German neurologist, termed this phenomenon as 'traumatic neurosis' in the text titled, *Die traumatischen Neurosen, nach den in der Nervenklinik der Charité in den letzten 5 Jahren gesammelten Beobachtungen*, which he considered to have involve from neurological damage. These earlier approaches were seen as a mental phenomenon in terms of underlying physical injuries, but after a lot of introspection and debates between the scientists and scholars across Europe, trauma started to be established more and more as a form of mental disorder rather than a physical one. The first one taking the lead in investigating about mental disorders and coming up with the proposition of mental shock as a

principal causative agent, was a French neurologist Jean- Martin Charcot. Charcot laid stress on the role of hysteria (a psychological disorder related to female reproductive organ) in decoding trauma. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, traumatic disorders were more emphatically seen as different in nature from the initial approaches of it just being a physical illness.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw political turmoil and the break out of the World war I (WWI), psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud and others found themselves with the problems of the soldiers that came from the war zone and the theory of trauma progressively became psychological in nature. It came to accepted as a form of injury to the mind as a result of the shocking events. After the examination of the soldiers and a lot of them in number, trauma started to be acknowledged as a real condition even if there was no involvement of the physical or bodily injuries. There were two entangled discourses functional one was the medical one and the other being the legal as those who were victimized either because of the war, factory, workplace, railway accidents wanted legal compensation for the psychological injuries. The term ‘shell shock’ gained momentum post war. While after the first world war, the solders that were suffering from the shell shock were sometimes suspected of stimulating a neurosis in order to skip the process of returning to the fighting front and getting paid by the authorities. It was only after the World War II and the holocaust that was caused by the Hitler’s army that the attitude of the people began to shift and trauma gained legitimacy. It was then that it started becoming acceptable to explain trauma as a psychological injury whether the person had suffered or even merely been a witness to the shocking incidents of violence. There was no contestation of the sufferings, these events paved a way for the discourse of the recognition of trauma as something real and sought for acknowledgement of the treatment and compensation to the ones subjected to horrific events.

Through the cultural and social transformation of the societies, the position of the victims of the trauma had gained the acceptance and a position of the ones that legitimately entitled them to receive compensation and sympathy. One of the important milestones was covered, when in 1980 the American Psychiatric Association formally acknowledged Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to articulate the profound distress experienced by US war veterans who served in the Vietnam War. The key idea was that by naming, diagnosing, and describing the trauma, it would cease to be viewed as imaginary or merely an abstract notion. Moreover, acknowledging the reality of the individuals' suffering could facilitate their access to the necessary treatment, compensation, and support they need. Consequently, trauma possesses a dual origin: it has emerged from both the medical and psychological domains, now acknowledged as a diagnostic category, while also having its foundations in social discourse imbued with moral significance. The first category pertains to the historical development of the medical field, while the second is associated with the evolution of moral values and social sensibilities. The interconnection of these dualities reveals a significant overlap in their origins. The ethical principles and social awareness have created an environment of reflection and have motivated the medical community to explore and develop new diagnostic classifications for those in need. The new medical categorisation in turn has helped the social recognition and acceptance of trauma. The discussion surrounding trauma has permeated our daily lives to such an extent that it often goes unnoticed how the introduction of this concept signifies a significant transformation in societal understanding of both individual and communal experiences. This transition required recognising the ways in which a difficult history can emerge in current experiences, frequently manifesting through subtle symptoms, unspoken tensions, and recurring patterns of thought and emotion. A new vocabulary was established to articulate suffering, framing it as both an injury that necessitates treatment and a resource that can be harnessed to assert rights. The framework established a role for individuals as trauma victims,

which can be assumed either as patients seeking assistance or as political agents advocating for compensation and the defence of their rights. The prevalence of trauma in our everyday language indicates a transformation in how we engage with our historical experiences. There is a growing recognition of the enduring impact of historical violence on our current and future realities, the way the past continues to influence us, and the critical need to acknowledge and address past injustices to prevent their recurrence.

Trauma has emerged as one of the most important conceptual subcategories of our age. There has been an explosion in the field of psychological trauma since the American Psychiatric Association (APA) first described it as "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) in 1980 edition. A rising number of handbooks, journals, and research have questioned its precise nature. Many civilizations now use the notion on a daily basis because of the influx of newly constructed trauma treatment centres all over the world. It is widely recognised and has been theorised that PTSD can manifest as a delayed response following the experience of a traumatic event or a sequence of distressing events. This condition often presents itself through repetitive dreams, hallucinations, intrusive thoughts, and abrupt alterations in behaviour. The phenomenon may also result in the numbing of sensory organs as a response to the body's stimuli during the recurrence of the event. This condition emerges following a distressing event that has impacted an individual, whether directly or indirectly, as suggested by the terminology.

Consequently, trauma has been lauded and criticised as a necessary component of contemporary subjectivity. When and why did this contemporary paradigm emerge? The major advancements in the history of trauma may be summarised in four phases. a) The initial theories on this concept were created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by European and

American physicians, neurologists, and psychiatrists. b) A substantial amount of academic work has convincingly demonstrated that these early diagnoses were influenced by and are integral to distinctly modern phenomena, including the industrial revolution and the formation of modern nation-states and welfare-state-like frameworks. It is crucial to acknowledge that if trauma is a contemporary occurrence and a result of modernity, this compels us to explore the genealogies of trauma by examining historical contexts beyond the conventional time frame to trace its origins prior to 1850. c) As a watershed event in the stormy history or rather politics of trauma, it was in 1980 that the PTSD diagnosis was established. This marked the beginning of what has been considered a change in the moral economy and a new era for trauma studies. d) The contributions of the early figures in trauma theory within the humanities have been significant; however, their contentious ethical stance prompts an inquiry into the present and future responsibilities of literary criticism in the interpretation of traumatic experiences. This overview succinctly highlights key achievements and shortcomings of current genealogies, functioning as a brief historiographical account of the evolution of trauma narratives.

Abram Kardiner, an American, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, authored a seminal publication *The Traumatic Neurosis of War* in 1941, which delves into the realm of psychological trauma. He argued that engaging in war may potentially result in the development of traumatic neurosis and developed a systematic explanation of war neurosis that built upon Freud's concept of the breach in the protective barrier. This became the foundation for the contemporary psychiatric classification of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Kardiner conducted a study on World War I soldiers, analysing the enduring psychological consequences of being exposed to combat. He observed that a significant number of troops endured intense and enduring symptoms much beyond the conclusion of the war. He provided an extensive overview of the symptoms commonly linked

with war neurosis, encompassing anxiety, nightmares, flashbacks, emotional numbness, hyperarousal, and several other psychological abnormalities. Kardiner analysed the issue using a psychodynamic technique, which was strongly inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis. He postulated that war neurosis was caused by the ego being overwhelmed by the traumatic event, resulting in a disruption of the usual psychological defences.

In *Trauma and Literature*, Roger Kurtz seeks to delineate the domain of trauma studies as it intersects with literary analysis, providing a comprehensive historical overview alongside a theoretical framework to comprehend the representation and processing of trauma within literary texts. The book explores the prominence of trauma as a key theme in both modern and contemporary literature, highlighting an increasing cultural consciousness surrounding psychological distress and historical atrocities, including wars, genocides, and injustices in society. He investigates the core concepts of trauma studies, including the difficulties of narrating trauma, the moral obligation of witnessing, and the complexities of depicting historical atrocities in literary forms. According to Kurtz,

> Whether for reasons external or internal to the discipline, literature appears to have found in trauma studies a set of concepts that allows it to revisit its own assumptions about and approaches to literary texts at the same time that it allows it to extend beyond itself to connect with some of the most pressing social issues of the day. (Kurtz 17)

Kurtz advocates that, within the realm of literary studies, trauma theory has introduced a fresh perspective for analysing narrative frameworks, character evolution, and the significance of memory and representation. Literature has consistently explored themes of suffering, memory, and human experience; however, trauma studies provide a distinct framework that highlights the

delayed aspect of traumatic memory and the challenges associated with expressing trauma. This has prompted academics to re-examine conventional literary structures and approaches of analysis. Trauma studies has allowed literary scholars to address critical social and historical concerns, including war, genocide, colonisation, institutional violence, and racial discrimination. Literature, viewed through the prism of trauma theory, transcends mere aesthetic or personal reflection, rather serves as a medium to investigate and address collective suffering and justice in society.

In *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, by Judith Herman, the history of trauma is accurately described as being filled with fear accompanied by episodic amnesia. She says, “it has been periodically forgotten and must be periodically reclaimed” (Herman 7). This work delves into the psychological ramifications of violence, encompassing both instances of domestic abuse and widespread political fear, and examines the process of individuals overcoming and recuperating from such traumatic encounters. Herman underscores the fundamental importance of power and control in the encounter with trauma. Whether it be in instances of interpersonal violence or political terror, the offender aims to exert dominance and exercise control over the victim. Recovery entails the process of regaining one's personal authority and independence. It is a seminal work that has revolutionised the comprehension of trauma and the process of recovery. Through her emphasis on interpersonal violence, specifically sexual and domestic abuse, Herman expands the range of trauma research beyond the conventional diagnosis of PTSD associated to combat. Model developed by her incorporates the psychological, social and political aspects of trauma. The approach acknowledges trauma not just as psychiatric problem experienced by individuals, but also as a profoundly social and cultural phenomenon that necessitates a collective reaction.

According to Herman, trauma is characterised as an incident or a sequence of incidents that surpasses an individual's capacity to manage and results in a sense of powerlessness. The presence of trauma entails a fundamental deprivation of control, connection and significance, and can lead to significant psychological repercussions. In addition to psychological trauma, her observations encompass societal and historical trauma. She examines the ways in which political horror, genocide, and institutionalised exploitation (which includes sexism, racism and colonialism) may result in collective trauma, therefore emphasising the imperative of both societal resolution and individual rehabilitation.

Kate Douglas and William Whitlock state that, it is problematic to "characteris[e] trauma as a fin de siècle preoccupation that was, perhaps, on the edge of running its course and becoming 'fin'"; a concerns of trauma critics during 1990s "remain sharp and relevant in discussions about life narrative and trauma now" (2). Trauma can be both physical and metaphorical. The concept can be applied to a variety of disasters, including geological and climatological (earthquakes, typhoons) technological (oil spills, nuclear disasters), and socio-political (abuse of children within the Catholic Church, labour camps of child soldiers in Africa, sex trafficking, refugee abandonment, contemporary slavery, militant jihadist suicide bombings, and the truly awful effects of war.

Dominick LaCapra is a historian specialising in trauma and Holocaust studies. In his work, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, he explores the topic of trauma and its associated challenges and impacts in relation to historical events. He diligently endeavours to investigate trauma and post-traumatic testimonials, such as those related to the Holocaust and slavery. He employs psychoanalytic techniques to examine historical events and the resulting psychological distresses. LaCapra says,

> in Freud's widely shared view, the trauma as experience is 'in' the repetition of an early event in a later event- an early event for which one was not prepared to feel anxiety and a later event that somehow recalls the early one and triggers a traumatic response (LaCapra 82).

LaCapra asserts that Freud posits trauma as being intricately linked to the recurrence of past, unresolved experiences rather than being solely caused by a single, isolated incident. Within this concept, trauma arises when a subsequent occurrence which triggers a previous, frequently suppressed, encounter for which the person was not mentally equipped. LaCapra highlights Freud's concept that trauma is intrinsically linked to repetition. The occurrence of a subsequent incident induces a traumatic reaction due to its resemblance or reminder of a previous encounter that was not completely dealt with or assimilated into the person's awareness. The unresolved experience from the past, without the expected emotional reaction like worry or panic, resurfaces when a similar or connected event happens in the future. In Freud's theory, the term 'early event' refers to an experience that was excessively overpowering or painful for the individual to effectively deal with at the time it happened. Due to the individual's inability to completely process and incorporate the emotions linked to this event, it was suppressed and the individual failed to address it effectively. The 'later event' acts as a catalyst that triggers the return of the repressed early experience to consciousness. The subsequent event does not need to be an exact replica of the initial one; it only requires certain shared attributes or the ability to elicit similar emotional reactions. During these instances, the person may experience a recurrence of the initial trauma in a manner that is characterised by both repeated and obsessive behaviour, frequently without a complete comprehension of the underlying reasons for the severe reaction.

LaCapra examines how writing can facilitate the processing of trauma, referencing Freud's concepts of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ trauma. In psychoanalytic terminology, ‘acting out’ denotes a repetition compulsion; a propensity for individuals who have experienced trauma to unconsciously re-enact or relive their traumatic events. Instead of assimilating the traumatic experience into a cohesive narrative or comprehension, individuals who ‘act out’ tend to reiterate pieces of the trauma through their actions or mental processes, frequently lacking awareness of oneself or control. LaCapra characterises ‘working through’ as a ‘articulatory practice’ that progressively allows individuals to differentiate among past, present, and future. The process is not straightforward, and one cannot simply categorise actions as either acting out or working through; rather, this process of working through remains intricate and seldom reaches a neat resolution:

> [Working through] requires going back to problems, working them over, and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. Even when they are worked through, this does not mean that they may not recur and require renewed and perhaps changed ways of working through them again. In this sense, working through is itself a process that may never entirely transcend acting out and that, even in the best of circumstances, is never achieved once and for all (LaCapra 148-149).

Anne Whitehead's book, *Trauma Fiction*, stands as a pivotal work in the realm of trauma studies, providing an in-depth analysis of the ways in which modern literature engages with the depiction of trauma. Whitehead examines the ways in which the notion of trauma disrupts the traditional form of storytelling, memory and history. She analyses contemporary fiction that confronts traumatic events, both personal and communal; spanning from the Holocaust to

postcolonial experiences of displacement and violence. Whitehead is especially focused on the formal and structural attributes of trauma fiction and their reflection of the psychological impacts of trauma. Whitehead's examination underscores the fragmented essence of traumatic memory and experience, asserting that trauma fiction utilises particular narrative strategies, such as non-linearity, disorientation, repetition, and omissions, to depict the disordered, frequently elusive dimensions of traumatic experience. These traits not only embody the intricacies of trauma but also challenges the reader's interaction with the text, emulating the challenges of comprehending and processing traumatic experiences. While describing about the writers and the impact of the trauma through the fictions, she says, "writers of trauma fiction found out that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (Whitehead 3).

According to Whitehead, trauma fiction transcends the mere depiction of catastrophic events; it delves into the inherent challenges of accurately conveying trauma. She utilises trauma theory, specifically Caruth's concept of trauma as an event that is not entirely integrated into memory at the moment it occurs, resulting in fragmented or deferred remembering. Whitehead contends that trauma fiction is essential in examining the remembrance and narration of historical traumas, including wars, colonisation, and systemic brutality. Trauma fiction works with individual trauma experiences while also reflecting on the community memory of historical events. This prompts the reader to reevaluate the methods by which history is documented and recalled, especially for catastrophic occurrences that defy straightforward expression or understanding.

E. Ann Kaplan in the introduction to her book *Trauma Culture*, emphasises that the political-ideological context surrounding trauma significantly influences its enduring impact. Consequently, there is a connection between individual and collective traumas. Kaplan writes:

> . . . as Freud pointed out long ago, how one reacts to traumatic events depends on one's individual psychic history, on memories inevitably mixed with fantasies of prior catastrophes, and on the particular cultural and political context within which a catastrophe takes place, especially how it is 'managed' by institutional forces. (Kaplan 1)

Kaplan emphasises three crucial elements that shape an individual's response to trauma: their personal psychological background, the interplay between memories and fantasies, and the political and cultural circumstances surrounding the traumatic event. She alludes to Freud's concept that each individual possesses a distinct psychic history influenced by their life events, recollections, and emotional maturation. This personal history shapes an individual's trauma processing, since prior experiences impact their resilience, triggers, and coping strategies. Kaplan also observes that, according to Freudian philosophy, recollections of past traumas frequently mix with fantasies or imagined scenarios associated with analogous experiences. This indicates that individual's responses to novel traumatic situations are influenced not just by actual past experiences but also by their anxieties, desires, and mental constructs inherent in their psyche. Freud contended that these fantasies might affect the perception and internalisation of traumatic experiences, occasionally rendering them more intense or disastrous than they may objectively appear. She further highlights the wider cultural and political context influences individual's reactions to trauma. The social and political backdrop establishes a framework through which individuals discern the significance of the traumatic incident, subsequently influencing their

psychological experience of it. Through the incorporation of Freud's concepts, Kaplan emphasises that trauma transcends the mere occurrence of an event, being profoundly influenced by individual inner experiences as well as the broader social and cultural contexts. This perspective indicates that a comprehensive understanding of trauma necessitates a focus on both the personal inner experiences and the societal dynamics that influence shared encounters with disaster.

Trauma that we are discussing today is not the kind of trauma that was twenty years ago and also not the trauma that was found in early twentieth century. But the way in which we refer to trauma and talk about it even in years to come will have the traces of the years that saw the earliest layers of historical development of the field. Trauma studies is an interdisciplinary area that has emerged as an important research area in the past few decades and has emerged as an important source of debate for the present century. The area of study finds its roots in the branch of medical sciences and psychology, further branching out to the field of literature and media studies primarily. Therefore, it is a branch that has come out of the cross fertilization of psychology and humanities developed by the western scholarship. Studying this phenomenon from a singular perspective is unfeasible, as trauma is linked to a multitude of factors and fields. According to Roger Luckhurst:

> Without a multi-disciplinary knowledge, there can only be an unappetizing competition between disciplines to impose their specific conception of trauma. We need another model for understanding the tortuous history and bewildering contemporary extent of a paradigm that is an intrinsically inter-disciplinary conjuncture. (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 14)

The interdisciplinary feature of trauma studies is complemented by the evolving definitions of trauma and the diagnostic criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), necessitating the scholars to constantly reviews the literature available in this field.

Professor Cathy Caruth teaches English and Comparative Literature at Cornell University in the United States of America. She has published several books on the subject. She's a trauma theorist who is a pioneer in the field of literary trauma theory. It has been argued by Caruth that trauma is a problem of the unconscious mind that is unsolved, and thus raises questions about how language and experience are fundamentally contradictory. In her 1996 book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, she coined the phrase 'Trauma Theory.' Cathy's notable works are *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud* (1991), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996), *Literature in the Ashes of History* (2013). She introduced the psychoanalytical perspective on trauma and proposed that trauma is a manifestation of issues inside the unconscious realm of the mind. She asserts that the notion of trauma originates from psychoanalysis and has significant significance in the realms of literary theory and criticism. She is considered to be the pioneer in integrating psychoanalysis with trauma theory. Consequently, she has made valuable contributions to the study of trauma, therefore bringing a distinct perspective to it.

Caruth graduated *cum laude* from Princeton University in 1977 and earned her Ph. D. from Yale University in 1988. Prof Caruth's teaching career started in 1986 at Yale University. In 2006, she ascended to the position of Chair of the Dept. of Comparative Literature at Emory University. In 2010, she was appointed the M.H. Abrams Distinguished Visiting Professor in English at Cornell University, and is currently serving as the Frank H. T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters at the same institute. She has been recognised with numerous accolades and has held various

prestigious positions at prominent universities. Notably, she held the position of Mellon Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, Cambridge University in 2011. In 2013, she received an invitation as a Whitney J. Oates Fellow in the Humanities Council and the Dept. of English, Princeton University. Additionally, she has served as the Northrop Frye Chair in Literary Theory at the University of Toronto. She also served as a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Kansas in 2015. Caruth contributes on the Editorial/ Advisory Boards of multiple journals, including the *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies*, *Sage Encyclopaedia of Trauma*, *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, *Journal of Psychohistory*.

The notion and definition of trauma have revolutionised literary theory. An illustration of this shift is Caruth's work. As noted by Caruth this theory sought, “to examine the impact of the experience, and the notion, of trauma on psychoanalytic practice and theory, as well as on other aspects of culture such as literature and pedagogy, the construction of history in writing and film, and social or political activism” (Caruth, *Trauma* 4). Caruth facilitated a profound exploration of the intricate interplay of trauma and its impact on the human mind along with various cultural dimensions, establishing herself as a prominent authority in the discipline. Despite the groundbreaking nature of her work on trauma, it has faced some criticism. Caruth expanded upon the psychoanalytical foundations of trauma to develop a theory of textuality, which continues to be contentious. Freud presented the notion of traumatic neurosis, while Carl Jung examined trauma in the context of emotional experiences. Caruth highlighted that trauma transcends mere pathology; it is a journey of revealing reality and truth through the art of storytelling.

Carl Jung’s theory regarding personality and psychodynamic functions holds significant relevance in comprehending the various manifestations of PTSD, as he proposed essential roles

for archetypes, complexes, and the influence of affects within both the personal and collective unconscious. A multitude of Jung's foundational concepts hold significant importance in comprehending psychical trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), dissociative processes, trauma complexes and archetypes, and the functioning of unconscious mechanisms. The exploration of dream imagery was a significant focus in Carl Jung's research. According to Jung, dreams arise from the symbolic language of the unconscious mind. Carl Jung posited that a traumatic event represents a highly charged affect that, once encoded in an individual's psyche, can lead to its disintegration into multiple forms. Such incursions can disrupt the psychic structure, potentially resulting in a nervous breakdown. Over time, the mind experiences modifications required to adapt to the excess impact of the significantly overwhelming event. He favoured the integration of the dissociated self rather than relying on the process of abreaction as a coping mechanism. The psychological theories of Carl Jung offer a profound basis for comprehending Caruth's investigation of trauma, as both delve into the fragmented essence of human experience and the difficulties associated with assimilating disruptive occurrences into consciousness. The notion of the unconscious as proposed by Jung, especially the relationship between the personal and collective aspects, resonates with Caruth's claim that trauma eludes complete expression, instead revealing itself through recurring intrusions and indirect manifestations. The process of individuation, as described by Jung, involves individuals facing and incorporating unconscious elements, which aligns with Caruth's focus on the importance of narrative and testimony in confronting the fragmented nature of trauma's temporality. By connecting Jung's psychological symbolism with Caruth's literary and ethical emphasis on trauma, their frameworks together elucidate the interaction between memory, narrative, and healing.

Caruth's teacher, Paul de Man, influenced her to formulate such ground-breaking theories, she frequently referred to him as a major influence on her achievements and perspectives in her literary works. De Man's concepts regarding language and referentiality, drawing from Jacques Derrida's work, significantly impacted Caruth and emerged as pivotal within poststructuralist discourse. Caruth's groundbreaking publications contain a significant reference to Paul de Man. This connection is expected, considering de Man's influential research on post- Romantic aesthetic ideology and his incisive critique towards traditional literary theory, which greatly influenced the development of trauma theory. Trauma theory may be seen as a significant response to the difficulty of interpreting the works post- de Man. During his analysis of linguistic referentiality, de Man presented a challenge that appeared to signal the end point of literary theory.

Additionally, Cavedon notes that, "Caruth, which is often credited as the founding figure for trauma theory, became interested in trauma due to the possibility it offered to defend her late mentor" (15). Caruth is focused on how trauma is represented in various literary works, such as books or films. If trauma has developed into a touchstone as a concept in popular culture, then the same is valid in literary studies, wherein trauma theory has developed into a distinctive and prominent critical tool, which Caruth says, "demands a new mode of reading and of listening" (*Unclaimed Experience* 9).

Critically speaking, Caruth's theory,

> owes much, on the one hand, to deconstruction, post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. But it is also informed by clinical work with survivors of experiences designated as traumatic. One definition of trauma theory suggests that it includes both work around the experience of survivors of the Holocaust and other catastrophic personal and collective experiences and the theoretical and

> methodological innovations that might be derived from this work and applied more generally to film and literary studies (Radstone 11).

Therefore, Caruth's work is firmly grounded in the philosophical lineages of deconstruction, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis. These philosophical perspectives highlight the lack of stability in meaning, the disintegration of individual identity, and the unconscious mechanisms that shape human perception and understanding. Caruth's beliefs are driven by practical, clinical encounters with survivors of traumatic situations, namely those classified as traumatic, such as the Holocaust. This facet of her work is not solely theoretical, but rather is influenced by real-life experiences of trauma.

Trauma is described broadly in terms of the memory process and as an incident held inside the unconscious that results in the severing of the ego or dissociation. Trauma is defined by flashbacks, nightmares, and involuntary reenactments of the traumatic experience. Trauma theory demonstration is most apparent in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, which uses a specific interpretation of Freud's trauma theory to further a greater post structural concern with language and history's referential boundaries. The approach sparked a critical debate about the role of trauma in literature and the relationship between individual and cultural trauma. Caruth argues in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* that,

> trauma’s latency and dissociation disrupt the ability to fully understand or represent a traumatic experience. Both individual traumatic experiences and collective historical extreme events are ultimately never known directly but only through an interrupted referentiality that points to the meaning of the past only as a type of reproduction or performance (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 11).

The notion that a traumatic experience may never be known except as a recurring absence reflects both the dissociation nature of trauma and its linguistic peculiarity. Caruth investigates the 'rhetorical potential' of repeating figures in texts that capture the broken referentiality that refers to the traumatic past's 'knowing and not knowing,' revealing the "traumatic nature of history" altogether (18). Elaborating on the understanding of Caruth work, it examines how depictions of trauma can aid comprehension by staging a collapse of meaning, and how trauma, which defies standard narrative structures, may paradoxically be presented through the failure of words, through the collapse of language. It, on the other hand, exemplifies the overuse of the term trauma in literary studies. Caruth's approach broadens the definition of trauma to the point that the boundary between traumatised and non-traumatized individuals, as well as between victims and offenders, appears to vanish; as a result, history becomes essentially a "history of trauma" (18). Trauma serves as a metaphor for the broader boundaries of language and representation, as well as for the concept of history as defined by "indirect referentiality" (18) according to Caruth. Alternatively, and in quite apocalyptic terms, as Caruth puts it: "history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (18). According to Caruth, this fundamental lack of representation is: "the truth and force of reality that trauma survivors face and quite often try to transmit to us" (*Trauma* vii).

She argues that, "the historical power of 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, *Unclaimed* 17). The notion highlights that during instances of trauma, the mind frequently struggles to fully grasp or process the event in real-time. The profound impact of trauma often leads to it being forgotten or repressed in the moment, resulting in a disconnection between the experience and the capacity for conscious acknowledgement. Nonetheless, this act of forgetting is inherent to the manner in which trauma is encountered. Initially, it may not be entirely accessible

due to the overwhelming nature of integrating it into conscious memory in a coherent manner. Subsequently, the trauma resurfaces, frequently involuntarily, manifesting as flashbacks, nightmares, or various psychological symptoms, akin to the activity of the mind reliving the event. The recurrence of the traumatic memory, following the initial phase of forgetting, is integral to the manner in which trauma manifests its past influence. It appears that the person is unable to fully process the trauma until it resurfaces, in a disjointed and partial manner, compelling them to face it. This emphasises a fundamental aspect of trauma: its hidden and delayed characteristics(belatedness). The complete emotional or psychological effects of a traumatic event are not immediately experienced; rather, they gradually emerge over time, through phases of recollection and amnesia. The delayed acknowledgement and recurrent surfacing of the traumatic memory is what endows trauma with its enduring and disruptive influence.

> an event marked by ethnic and racial hatred, violence, and war, become transformed into a generalized symbol of human suffering and moral evil, a universalized symbol whose very existence has created historically unprecedented opportunities for ethnic, racial, and religious justice, for mutual recognition, and for global conflicts becoming regulated in a more civil way (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 31).

This illustrates the metamorphosis of particular historical occurrences, frequently characterised by ethnic, racial, or religious violence, into more expansive, universal symbols of human anguish and moral malevolence. These events, initially grounded in specific wars, symbolise humanity's propensity for brutality, yet they also possess the capacity to catalyse substantial social and moral advancement. Through this there is a recognition of harsh truths of specific historical events, ethnic animosity, racial aggression, and warfare; that are generally entrenched in profound divisions among communities. As these incidents are recalled and

remembered all through time, they frequently surpass their immediate context. They transform into generalised or universal symbols that represent not only the pain of a certain group but also a wider human situation. This universalisation enables individuals from many backgrounds to relate to the trauma, rendering it a potent emblem for fostering empathy and ethical contemplation. The conversion of these occurrences into universal representations of anguish does not diminish their unique historical backgrounds; rather, it fosters remarkable prospects for justice and reconciliation. These symbols compel societies to address not only historical injustices but also contemporary disparities associated with ethnicity, race, and religion. Moreover, Caruth contends that by raising these occurrences to the status of universal human experiences, global conflicts can be addressed in a more civil way.

Trauma is a response or encounter with an event that has been demonstrated to be catastrophic for the survivor. It arrives abruptly with dread and intensity at a specific moment. The survivor does not fully experience this horrific history, which is why he endures various psychological illnesses. Consequently, the individual may occasionally fail to recognise the disruptive images that incessantly disrupt the mental peace. Caruth defines trauma, “in its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that is constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence” (*Trauma* 153). This examines the contradictory essence of trauma, namely its function as both a vivid recollection and a sort of forgetfulness that eludes complete remembrance or processing. Caruth posits that trauma, through its recurrent emergence, compels individuals or society to confront the "difficult truth" of past events that are so catastrophic that it elude complete understanding or assimilation into memory.

Caruth argues that in our century's ubiquitous and perplexing experience of trauma, both in its existence and our endeavour to comprehend it, we might identify the possibility of a history that is no longer founded on clear models of experience and reference. Through the concept of trauma, she argues, we gain a new perspective that enables history to emerge where instantaneous comprehension is impossible. Caruth discusses Freud's trauma theory as highlighted in *Moses and Monotheism* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; the concept of reference and the figure of the falling body in de Man, Kleist, and Kant; personal catastrophe narratives in Hiroshima mon amour; and the traumatic address in LeCompte's reinterpretation of Freud's example of dream of the burning child. Caruth wrote that,

> if Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet. (32)

Caruth juxtaposes the ideas of psychoanalysts, literary theorists, and literary authors who work in a century that is beset by a new sort of history, one that is composed of events that seem to undo, rather than produce, their own remembering in the book *Literature in the Ashes of History*. The book thoroughly examines the central riddle of a history that seems to elude our understanding as it unfolds. Her analyses are comprehensive and consistently impressive. Every chapter is thoroughly researched and articulated. Despite the density of the text and the complexity of the arguments, everything coalesces elegantly, albeit requiring a shift in perspective to properly understand her disquieting revelations.

"What does it mean for history to disappear? And what does it mean to speak of a history that disappears?" (Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* x). Caruth posits that these issues are central to the psychoanalytic texts that frames this book, along with the poignant experiences and theoretical discussions that resonate deeply and surprisingly with each other. In the works of Honoré de Balzac, Hannah Arendt, Ariel Dorfman, Wilhelm Jensen, Sigmund Freud, and Jacques Derrida, we uncover various narratives that attest not only to the past but also to ungraspable histories, consistently redirecting us towards an inconceivable future. The book consists of two portions. The first, 'Literature and the Life Drive,' is divided into two chapters: the first on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and the second on Honore de Balzac's *Colonel Chabert*. According to Caruth, each text articulates and foreshadows the historical contours of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The second section, 'After the End,' turns to works that define the possibility of history after the end of history - texts from our contemporary era of diminishing history, the age foreseen by Freud and Balzac. She deftly illustrates how Freud and Derrida employ the language of cinders and ash to construct their traumatic historiographies and how both find allegories for their quest in literature, most notably in Jensen's novel *Gradiva* about volcanic ash, repression, and an impossible yet necessary quest: "To search for traces in the ash: this is the story of an impossible quest, not for what lies buried beneath the ashes, but for what may be impossibly, evanescently, inscribed upon them" (Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* 92).

In her subsequent work, *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, and Freud*, she explores numerous critics and their respective ideologies and perspectives on psychiatric diseases. Cathy Caruth rethinks the significance of experience in philosophical, literary, and psychoanalytic writings by tracing its haunting, compelling, and frequently unnerving recurrence across four significant writers. She approaches Locke's book not only as philosophical

doctrine but also as a narrative in which experience plays an unexpected and a spooky role. Caruth rediscovers traces and transformations of the narrative in Wordsworth, Kant, and Freud, arguing that these authors must be read not simply as rejecting or overcoming empirical doctrine, but also as reencountering the complex and difficult relationships between language, experience, and death in their own texts.

Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in memory* opens with,

> The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (Caruth, *Trauma* 4)

She begins by acknowledging the fact that trauma theory is an outcome of the other fields including literature. Trauma studies have come from the amalgamation of science and humanities and that it has not stopped to grow in either of the fields because all the branches have contributed in understanding the problems of each other and looking and analysing the gaps that have been formed in each of these, it has broadened the understanding of the field and helped in uncovering the latent features of the trauma experiences. Caruth in the due course tries to explain that she does not intends to drag the discussion of explaining about trauma, but she is rather focused on the identification of how trauma impacts a person, and also on how it forces us to think about the past memory and experiences. Modifying and taking the trend of the psychoanalysis, Caruth has taken Freud's understanding of traumatic experience into consideration and further discussed on the shortcomings of psychoanalysis in understanding trauma. Caruth is probably the first person who

has tried to work in the intersection of trauma studies(interdisciplinary) and literary trauma theory. She should receive mention because she is one of the founding members of literary trauma theory.

> the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. And thus, the traumatic symptom cannot be interpreted, simply, as a distortion of reality, nor as the lending of unconscious meaning to a reality it wishes to ignore, nor as the repression of what once was wished. (5)

She explains, that when a traumatic event happens to a person, the person is unable to grasp the intensity of the event as the nature of the event is overwhelming for the witness or survivor, the experience is not assimilated and mixed fully to the understanding of the persons. Trauma is something that does not happen in the regular experience of the human life and the exposure for the same is highly difficult for the person to understand completely, also the state of shock in the mind is so intense that the person battling with it, concentrates upon just living the moment and existing. The event can be a single incidence or a series of incidences to an individual or a group of individuals or an entire community. When that event repeats itself as a part of memory in different forms, the event is then understood in true sense. Therefore, the belatedness of the memory is an important point of discussion for Caruth. Furthermore, this assumption posits that trauma constitutes the retention of an image of a previous event, as opposed to the actual occurrence at the moment it transpired. The symptoms of trauma cannot be merely construed as distortions of reality, nor do they signify a meaningful representation of reality, nor can they be regarded as a form of desire suppression. There is no falsehood or displacement of the meaning involved, it is the history itself that takes, its claim. This concept of belatedness pertains to Freud's

conception of Nachträglichkeit (afterwardness, delay), which he references in connection with his theory on traumatic neurosis. Trauma's symptoms do not manifest until a period has elapsed following the traumatic incident. The inability to integrate the incident leads to the separation of the traumatic memory from awareness; trauma remains inaccessible to conscious recollection. There exists a gap between the traumatic event and the emergence of the symptoms. Caruth says, "there is a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory. The force of this experience would appear to arise […] in the collapse of its understanding" (7). The traumatic event remains elusive and beyond understanding, as it has not been integrated into consciousness and is therefore inaccessible. The inability to consciously recall the event hinders the individual experiencing trauma from knowing or comprehending the occurrence.

> If PTSD must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history. The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess. (5)

In exploring the connection to post-traumatic stress disorder, Caruth asserts that the physical symptoms manifested are not merely products of the unconscious mind; rather, they stem from the historical context and implications of the trauma experienced by the individual. History here does not refer to the history in textbooks or the historical events, but the history(past) of the person affected. The past experience is the key catch that needs to be addressed while we understand Caruth. The traumatised person she says carries a past, the experiences or the events that are different from the casual life events. This past experience always stays in the memory of the person, the person does not possess that past, yet it is present. Freud understanding of the

dreams and past was about the unfulfilled wishes and desire, but the return of the pictures of the past are representation of purely and in literal sense the return of the overpowering situation that has occurred in past against the will of the person. It is not the interplay of the unconsciousness but the very conscious sense of understanding that has been missed during the event's occurrence. Modern theory that has come from the understanding of the problems of the psychoanalysis regards this as a non-symbolic and literal nature of the dreams and flashbacks. This literality of the dreams and flashbacks and their reoccurrence lead towards the core of the traumatic past that needs to be observed. The centrality should always rely on the experiences of the past that has been suffered, rather than the symptoms that occur to reflect the deviation of the mind. This new understanding has emerged through the establishment of a constructive lineage in the comprehension of trauma, drawing from various streams of study. The gaps identified in one area have informed others, resulting in an inclusive approach that fosters further understanding and advancement in the field of trauma studies. Further, discussing about PTSD Caruth states,

> shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis, responses not only to combat and to natural catastrophes but also to rape, child abuse, and a number of other violent occurrences have been understood in terms of PTSD (3).

Terminologies which define the symptoms of trauma such as shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, traumatic neurosis etc, have all been utilised to characterise the psychological reactions to traumatic experiences, especially within military and combat contexts. Over time, the understanding of what we now refer to as PTSD has broadened to encompass reactions to a diverse array of traumatic experiences, extending beyond just combat situations. This encompasses natural disasters, sexual violence, child maltreatment, and various other

manifestations of violence. According to Caruth, PTSD serves as a comprehensive term that encapsulates an evolving comprehension of human responses to extreme stress, arising from experiences such as warfare, disasters, or personal violence.

Analysing Freud's text *Moses and Monotheism* where Freud compares the Jewish history with the structure of trauma. The significant aspect for Freud is the delayed reappearance of an event. He asserts,

> It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a "traumatic neurosis." This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the "incubation period," a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease . . . It is the feature one might term latency. (Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* 84)

The period during which the effect of the experience is not visible is termed as latency by Freud, and he has tried to explain the constant movement of an event to its repression and then its return. But the centrality of the Freud's understanding of the survivor who has been affected by the event is not so much about the period of forgetfulness that takes place after the accident has happened, but he is more focused on the fact that the survivor was not fully aware during the event of the accident. So, the forgetfulness is not due to the latency of remembering the event but the latency of the event itself, which the survivor was not aware of. The historical power of trauma is not simply that the experience of the event is repeated after the person forgets it, but that it is

through this inherent forgetfulness of the event by the survivor that it is first experienced fully. The belatedness of the historical experience i.e. the temporal structure is explained through the paradoxical nature of the inherent latency of the event, the paradox arises because the event is not experienced in the way it occurred, it gets evident only in another place and another time frame. Replacing repression in trauma with latency holds significant implications, as its obscurity, or the realm of consciousness, paradoxically serves to preserve the event in its literal form. The history to be called as history of trauma needs to be referential to the limit that it is not understood fully as it occurs, or to simply say that the history can only be understood in its inaccessibility of the occurrence of the event. Freud later explores the complex relationship between history and trauma, reflecting the challenges faced by psychoanalysis in contemporary times. This exploration reveals what trauma seeks to communicate regarding both personal and historical truths, which are inherently linked to the rejection of historical boundaries. It becomes evident that truth is entangled in the crises surrounding its own existence. According to Caruth, psychoanalysis is impaired by its inability to adequately address the historical truths of trauma, raising questions about whether these truths originate from within or outside the human psyche.

Caruth not only articulates her perspective on the belatedness and truth of traumatic experiences, but she also acknowledges the significant role of the listener. She elevates the listener to a heroic status, suggesting that they willingly embrace trauma to create a space for the truly traumatised individual to express themselves. In Caruth's latest text, *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory and Treatment of Catastrophic Experience,* she has compiled almost a dozen interviews with theorists, clinicians, Holocaust survivors, historians, and literary critics, many of whom are colleagues and friends. The volume brings together established and emerging perspectives in our ongoing cultural conversation about trauma, most notably the

Holocaust, incest, child and woman abuse, and PTSD. It is neither a chorus nor a cacophony. Each interview is preceded by a photograph of the participant taken by Caruth. A number of individuals are connected to Yale University, such as Robert Jay Lifton, Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman, Nadine Kaslow, Shoshana Felman, and Caruth herself, who engaged with them during her time as a graduate student. The discussions span over two decades (from 1990 to 2013). They are divided into three parts: “Death in Theory,” “A Revolutionary Act,” and “The System is Weeping.” The interviews are divided into two chronological periods: four interviews conducted between 1990 and 1994 and nine conducted between 2011 and 2013. The recorded events are a synthesis of published material and in-person conversations. As indicated in the endnotes, every respondent, along with the editor, was afforded the opportunity to modify their observations prior to publication, or at the very least, to provide commentary on them in the endnotes. Caruth meticulously incorporates annotations to clarify or emphasise specific points.

Her conversation in *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory and Treatment of Catastrophic Experience* with Robert Jay Lifton, focuses on the individual who has endured a traumatic experience and is grappling with the aftermath, alongside a compassionate listener who seeks to comprehend the witness's plight. This listener aims to either document the narrative for broader awareness or assist the witness in navigating their fears and healing from the past, she tries to summarize Lifton by saying, “there’s a double survivor situation, but a survivor and a proxy survivor, and it’s the meeting of those two that constitutes the witness” (Caruth, *Listening to Trauma* 18). The scenario of the double survivor pertains to both the individual who has endured the trauma and the observer who consciously engages with the survivor's experience, seeking to understand and extract meaning from the harrowing events of the past. Experiencing such a transformation is a complex endeavour for many, necessitating significant resilience to

facilitate and guarantee that the individual feels comfortable throughout the sharing experience. The individual who has endured trauma is already in a state of distress and must strive to achieve a level of comprehension with the listener. In this context, as articulated by Caruth, the listener assumes the role of a surrogate survivor. When the traumatised individual identifies a surrogate survivor through companionship, they are able to articulate the truths of past experiences that are often unspoken in society or among individuals at large. This facilitates the objective of understanding the traumatic reality of the survivor, with the listener playing a crucial role in aiding the achievement of this objective as a proxy for the survivor.

Listening to Trauma is more than a collection of scholarly and therapeutic perspectives on the subject of trauma studies. The majority of the interviews are insightful, articulate exchanges honed by analytic acumen. Perhaps clinicians are incapable of "listening to trauma," as if the disease could speak for itself. They listen to individuals who have been, and may continue to be traumatised as they communicate with one another. It is posited that the act of articulating or verbal expression serves as a mechanism for converting trauma into a narrative form of memory. This may incorporate the understanding of past and the recollections linked to those past events. Therefore, speech serves as a vital component that facilitates departure from the distressing experiences, and engages with such events transcending merely hearing about their hardships.

Caruth's theories are not without opposition. Ruth Leys in his book, *Trauma: A Genealogy*, has accused her of offering erroneous interpretations of Freud and of utilising trauma as a "critical concept...to promote her performative theory of language" (Leys 275). C. Fred Alford in the text, *Trauma, culture, and PTSD*, makes a similar argument, stating that Caruth’s view of trauma is non-Freudian, despite its reliance on a distinction between ‘acting-out’ and ‘working-through’ in understanding traumatic experience. Alford claims that Caruth's theory omits the concept of

Nachträglichkeit and makes no allowance for an unconscious component (Alford 34–52). Leys and Alford concentrate exclusively on the physical or neurological components of trauma, omitting Caruth's concerns regarding narrative and symbolic processes. As Murray Schwartz noted in a review of Leys's book on trauma, her disagreements with Caruth and Van der Kolk (an interviewee) overlook distinctions between event, experience, memory, representation, and report, most notably the temporal factor: the timelessness of the original event and the temporal awareness required to recognise repetition (378–380).

Thomas Trezise makes the most strident attack on Caruth's theories. Additionally, he accuses Caruth of a lack of comprehension of Freud and an ignorance of the fact that any witnessing i.e. an act of receiving of a trauma narrative is always pre-involved in an interpretive framework. The framing then constrains the interpretation. He also takes issue with Caruth's assertion that trauma testimony stems from an unrepresentable or unspeakable experience. According to Trezise in his book *Witnessing witnessing: On the reception of Holocaust survivor testimony*, the concept of unrepresentable phenomena possesses dubious epistemic standing (Trezise 46). Additionally, he contends that Freud did not assert that the traumatised self is subject to unending repetition, but rather that trauma generates "a profound disturbance of representation that the very self it alters can nonetheless subsequently integrate…by narrating it to others" (4–5). According to his reading of Freud's theory, traumatic experiences are not completely inaccessible to symbolization, and the procedure of recurrence in dream, memory, or narration might result in a gradual integration of the unsettling experience. Trezise, drawing particularly on Levinas, proposes a relational data model of interacting that avoids a binary opposition between objective (historical) and subjective (psychological) occurrences. The witness to testimony must "tolerate a tension between identification and estrangement" (224). He or she must acknowledge the narrator's

uniqueness while hearing empathically and communing with the story. Particular care should be taken by the witness to avoid appropriating the other's testimony for his or her own, conscious or unconscious, motives. Trezise emphasises this ethical aspect in his attack on Dori Laub, whom he compares to Caruth.

Roger Luckhurst additionally highlights that there exist alternative methods for depicting trauma within literary works. He says, “Beyond poststructuralist trauma theory and its trauma canon, a wide diversity of high, middle and low cultural forms has provided a repertoire of compelling ways to articulate that apparently paradoxical thing, the trauma narrative” (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 83). Luckhurst advocates for a broader interpretation of trauma narratives, acknowledging that the complexities of trauma can be conveyed through various cultural forms, each contributing uniquely to the representation and comprehension of trauma. Indeed, there exist methods of representing trauma that challenge Caruth’s theoretical framework.

The chapter has examined the origins and development of the idea of trauma, starting from its early theoretical basis and progressing to its establishment as an essential component of contemporary psychological, cultural, and literary research. Examining the origins of trauma demonstrates that trauma is not only an individual psychological occurrence, but rather a multifaceted phenomenon profoundly ingrained in social, historical, and cultural settings. The examination initially focused on the early medical and psychoanalytic approaches to trauma, with specific attention to the influential contributions of Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, and Abram Kardiner. These people played a crucial role in developing the initial concept of trauma as a reaction to distressing experiences. Their work established the foundation for acknowledging trauma as a condition with significant psychological consequences, which later led to the development of notions like war neurosis and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

During the mid-20th century, the study of trauma became more prominent due to the devastating impact of the World Wars and the Holocaust. These horrific events heightened awareness of trauma and its effects on collective and cultural memory. In the late 20th century, trauma theory gained prominence with the contributions of researchers such as Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra and others. This development broadened the field of trauma studies by highlighting the narrative and representational difficulties associated with traumatic events. These researchers emphasised the way trauma interrupts conventional methods of narrative and remembering, requiring alternative methods to comprehend and express the impacts of trauma. In addition, there is a growing recognition of trauma as both a psychological condition and a cultural and historical phenomenon. The inclusion of trauma in the field of literary studies, as shown by the writings of Caruth and other scholars, illustrates how literature offers a distinct realm for grappling with the ineffable and disjointed aspects of traumatic recollection. The utilisation of an interdisciplinary approach has played a pivotal role in expanding the comprehension of trauma beyond its clinical origins, enabling a more nuanced recognition of its effects on persons and communities.

Chapter III

Contextualizing Trauma of War

The enduring impact of war, profoundly ingrained in the shared awareness of communities, reaches well beyond the confines of the battlefield. The destruction of it deeply influences the memories, identities, and narratives of individuals who have experienced it. Svetlana Alexievich, a skilled practitioner in portraying the perspectives of everyday individuals, offers a fearless exploration of these memories scarred by conflict in her literary creations. She captures the firsthand accounts of persons who have suffered the distressing ordeals of combat, thereby providing a profound contemplation on the shared recollection of war.

Cathy Caruth's trauma theory provides a necessary theoretical framework for a thorough examination of the intricate relationship between trauma and memory in Alexievich's body of work. Caruth posits that trauma is not merely an event that occurred in the past, but an ongoing experience that disrupts narrative coherence and defies simple representation.

This chapter seeks to examine the application of Caruth's trauma theory to Alexievich's examination of war and its aftermath. The objective is to gain a more profound comprehension of how memory of trauma is produced and communicated. This analysis will explore how Alexievich's narratives, viewed through the lens of trauma theory, provide evidence of the long-lasting effects of war on individuals who experienced it. Additionally, it will investigate how these narratives offer a strong critique of the methods by which trauma is remembered and shared within a community. This chapter aims to clarify the complex connection between memory, trauma, and narrative in Alexievich's works, hence enhancing our comprehension of how war influence identities and historical consciousness.

Happy are men who yet before they are killed

Can let their veins run cold.

Whom no compassion fleers

Or makes their feet

Sore on the alleys cobbled with their brothers.

The front line withers.

But they are troops who fade, not flowers,

For poets' tearful fooling:

Men, gaps for filling:

Losses, who might have fought

Longer; but no one bothers. (Owen 1-11)

War as a theme can be enquired in many ways. The chapter intends to open the understanding towards the presence of war and its implications, through the poetic style of representation. The contextualization of war and trauma caused due to it can be understood through the above lines from the poem "Insensibility" as they serve to be significant towards the interpretation of war. Owen's poem aligns under the genre of war poem, written during the phase of World War I. The poem explores a variety of insensibilities, including a refusal to acknowledge one's own grief as well as the pain of others. Numbness can be a physical or a psychological strategy or even both adopted by the soldiers, serving as a trauma response i.e., existing as a 'shell shock' or a coping mechanism for the civilians facing the wartime crises. It can manifest as a denial or an indifference towards human suffering. Owen sketches the tragic isolation of these various states as he builds to a passionate affirmation of human connectedness. Writing in the midst of the war that may ultimately kill him, he applies his own fierce artistic sensibility and his deepest

reserves of feelings to the theme of Insensibility (the poem). Literature of war is not new. It has been around ever since the earliest literary compositions were penned down. The Greeks and the Romans were the first known cultures, and both of them used wars as their primary means of conflict resolution as recognised by researchers. Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* reflect a culture of war as does Virgil's *The Aeneid* and the Hebrew *Bible*. Even the ancient Sumerian tale of *Gilgamesh* depicts a monumental conflict with a formidable adversary which needed to be vanquished. These literary works, along with a great number of others that have been present around for centuries, serve as a reminder to us that conflict is an inevitable part of human civilization and that it will always be a topic of discussion and thought. It is an example of a universal subject, along with love, death, time, and human frailty. Proliferation of the research into newer contexts explored through the lens of the war implicates that war is still a contemporary issue. The scholarship since the 20th century has given focus towards the wars that has impacted the general populace. A large body of texts and literary criticism exists on the American Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II and the Holocaust, the Cold War and the nuclear age, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the ongoing conflicts between Russia and Ukraine. Scholars have also treated the Boer War, the Hundred Years War, the English Civil Wars, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the US-Mexican War, as well as lesser-known conflicts like the Chaco War, Zimbabwe's War of Liberation, and the New Zealand Wars. The literature of war takes a wide variety of approaches in its efforts to comprehend the war experience and encompasses scholarship on a number of genres, including poetry, drama, short stories, novels, journals, diaries, oral histories, memoirs, and letters. While early scholarship focused mostly on white male soldiers, it has gradually evolved to include gender and minority studies, trauma studies, bicultural studies, the consequences of the war on civilians on the home front, and now even the significance of the human body, finds its reference in the graphic novels and comics.

World War I presented the experience of warfare to readers through structured forms like poetry. Similarly, World War II reshaped the association between trauma and literature, paving way for further development in the writing style. The occurrence of World War II and the catastrophic events of the Holocaust caused a significant transformation in society, shifting it from a structured and orderly state to the one characterised by disorder and confusion. As society started examining the intricacies of conflict, they were compelled to scrutinise the fundamental principles of combat more deeply. The tumultuous nature of World War II, together with the subsequent collapse of conventional military strategies, shattered the contemporary society and compelled the populace to acknowledge that the realms of order and organisation are not as rigidly interconnected. Writers adopted a form of meaninglessness that empowered them to formulate their own principles about characters, plot, various writing genres, and literary techniques. This included crafting narratives and content that emphasised on the undefined, inter-textual, and fragmented aspects of the society in which they were residing.

In our understanding towards the subject of war trauma and the act of uncovering the truth, we are at times frustrated by the facts as readers, the truth seems to arise only distantly and ephemerally, many a times in the form of paradox. Nevertheless, if we as readers are drawn into the sphere in which temporal and epistemological distinctions blur and dissolve, and if we are thereby forced to interrogate our own notions of truth, it is perhaps only through such dislocation that any collective knowledge of trauma may at any times seem fantastic or irrational, we must precisely deal with those elements of the stories in order to experience anything of the nature of traumatic histories. Geoffrey Hartman believes that “the post-traumatic stories often need a ‘suspension of disbelief’” (541) and asserts that the traumatic knowledge […] would seem to be a contradiction in terms. It is as closely as to nescience as to knowledge” (537). Considering the notion that the tentative understanding or more precisely, the lack of understanding arising through

the shared participation of the writer and reader in the process of re-enactment may ultimately constitute the best available form of ‘knowledge’ about war trauma and the most appropriate testimony to it. The textual depiction of war trauma by many writers is in a broader way a representation of history or gender. Examining the relationship between text and history, Petar Ramadanovic asserts about the ability of literature to inform historical understanding. Ramadanovic writes,

> Writing is a historical act not because it belongs to the time when the text was written, nor because it lends itself an immediate referential meaning, but because of the openness of its address and because of the opening that its address provides us as readers. (64)

According to Ramadanovic, the 'historical' significance of literature does not necessarily have to be viewed solely in terms of its capacity to give factual details and reference points. He argues that this approach is too narrow. It should be viewed as a contribution to the knowledge framework towards the on-going discussion on the topic of war trauma, history, and memory.

A significant connection exists between the author of a piece of writing and the experience that the author intends to portray in the work. In this aspect Kali Tal argues that the reader has to understand the difference between a text produced by a victim of a trauma and a text formed by the emphatic imagination, written by author who may only guess the intensity of a particular incident of trauma not experienced personally. Giving the term “Other People’s Trauma” (246), Tal Claims that “[l]iterature written about the trauma of others is qualitatively different from literature by trauma survivors” (217), she writes:

> It should […] be obvious that an author’s status as trauma survivor has a profound effect on both the motivation to write and the actual story told. The difference in

> intent and in the context of trauma literature and literature of Other People's Trauma should be clear. (246-47)

For Tal the distinction between the two is important because, the interpretative approach to "trauma literature" should embrace insights gleaned from other disciplines regarding the nature of trauma of others. Arguably, by implying that any text written by a survivor of trauma must be examined with reference to some primordial moment in the author's past, Tal places an inordinate emphasis on the significance of the author. Nevertheless, Tal suggests that the insight of the trauma studies may be applied usefully to literary depictions of trauma. Tal's endorsement of "an understanding of trauma" (247) also points to a sense in which the interest of literature and that of trauma studies coincide. Hartman claims that trauma theory provides "a clearer view of the relation of the literature to mental functioning in several key areas, including reference, subjectivity, and narration" (547), and goes on to explore the shared interest of trauma studies and literature:

> Trauma studies [has] a concern for the absences or intermittences in speech (or of conscious knowledge in speech); […] for the 'ghosting' of the subject; for the connection of voice with identify; […] and for literature as a testimonial act that transmits knowledge in a form that is not scientific and does not coincide with either a totally realistic (as it that were possible) or analytic for of representation. (552).

Like Hartman, Caruth argues that literature and trauma studies have common concerns. Identifying this nexus in one of the earliest discussions of the impact of trauma on the psyche. For Caruth, trauma theory and literature are both distinguished by the fact that their object of enquiry is the realm of the uncertain, the unconscious, and even the unknowable. Literature and trauma studies both focus on the inherent conflict between the conscious, or known, and the unconscious, or unknown. Traumatic events frequently exist in a liminal state, when they are not fully

recognised nor completely suppressed. Literature, through its use of symbolic language, metaphor, and narrative ambiguity, reflects the manner in which trauma is experienced i.e. partially comprehensible, partially unknown. The intersection between knowing and not knowing is pivotal in both literature and trauma studies. Caruth defines trauma as:

> a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (*Trauma* 4).

The fields of trauma theory and war literature have significant and interconnected histories. Both serving not only as a means for combatants to express their own traumatic experiences but also as an approach to analyse and understand the context of war. The amalgamation of theory and practice presents a unique chance to study the pain and trauma experienced by soldiers via literature. By examining how seasoned authors employ literary techniques and storytelling, readers can observe the depiction of pain and consciousness in writing, leading to a path of comprehending the inconceivable traumatic experiences of those who struggled in the battlefield for their country.

Svetlana Alexievich, the Belarusian author and journalist who won the Nobel Prize in literature, is widely recognised for her distinctive method of portraying war and its impact on individuals and society. Her literature is characterised by oral history approach, in which she gathers and portrays the perspectives of common individuals i.e. soldiers, civilians, women, and children, who have experienced conflict. All the characters that are narrating their stories are the protagonists of the novels, therefore each novel has multiple protagonists and multiple viewpoints reflecting on the horrors of the war. Her concentration lies on the experiences of common

individuals, rather than on military leaders, politicians, or official historical accounts. She collects testimonies from women who served in World War II and from children who experienced it. These voices are frequently disregarded or marginalised in conventional war narratives, although they offer a profoundly human and personal viewpoint on the atrocities of war. Alexievich's focus lies on exploring the subjective encounters of individuals who have experienced war, delving into their recollections, sentiments, and individual realities. She effectively portrays the personal experiences of persons living through and remembering war, emphasising the psychological distress, suffering, and ability for rehabilitation that come with these encounters. The perception of this subjective reality in this context frequently diverges significantly from the official, idealised versions of war. She explores the psychological and emotional consequences of war on individuals in her work. Alexievich's interviews expose the profound and enduring wounds that war inflicts upon its survivors. She examines topics related to sorrow, deprivation, remorse, and the endeavour to figure out traumatic encounters. For her, war encompasses not only the physical conflicts and tactical manoeuvres, but also delves into the emotional and psychological experiences of those who manage to survive it. She broadens the notion of war to encompass its enduring impacts on society and the human mind. The author examines the enduring impact of war on individuals and society even after the cessation of hostilities. This comprises persistent psychological distress, the cultural memory of war, and how society choose to remember or supress past encounters.

Alexievich strategizes the representation of war trauma by construction novels based on the specific themes. The *Unwomanly Face of War*, *Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories* and *Boys in Zinc* give a direct depiction of the war and war scenarios, whereas *Chernobyl Prayer: A Chronicle of the Future*, *Enchanted by Death* and *Second-Hand Time: The Last of the Soviets* has

an indirect portrayal of war trauma. Therefore, her works of can be broadly differentiated into the a) Direct recounting of war narratives b) Symbolic methods depicting war.

The first work of Alexievich is a novel titled *The Unwomanly Face of War*, first published in 1985 in Minsk, Belarus and was preceded by seven years of collecting interviews and travelling through various Soviet republics. Alexievich engaged with approximately Eight hundred (800) women to gather their narratives for the book. The novel presents a unique and deeply impactful depiction of the war's conditions, particularly highlighting the experiences of Soviet women engaged in World War II. The primary focus of the author is on depicting the experiences of women, who are often overlooked or marginalised in the context of war literature. These women fulfilled responsibilities such as soldiers, nurses, pilots, and in diverse capacities within the Soviet military setup. The book offers a distinctive perspective on war, focussing on women's experiences within a predominantly male military environment. It explores their encounters with the brutal realities of the battlefield and the psychological and emotional challenges they faced as a result of war. Alexievich powerfully illustrates war as a profoundly dehumanising experience through the narratives shared by these women. The novel portrays war as a setting characterised by intense brutality, immense pain, and ethical uncertainty. Women recount the experience of being compelled to repress their emotions and humanity in order to endure the atrocities of war, and how the conflict eradicated their innocence and radically transformed them. A significant number of women are represented in the text who got enlisted in the war due to their deep sense of national obligation, idealistic beliefs, or a personal aspiration to demonstrate their capabilities. Nevertheless, the harsh truth of battle frequently destroyed these ideals. The author effectively portrays this disillusionment illustrating how the initial enthusiasm of women clashed with the harsh reality of war; mortality, devastation, and the bereavement of fellow soldiers. A conscious effort is made to include

everyday aspects of wartime living other than just combat and military manoeuvres. She delves into the little things that are frequently missed, such as the connections between female troops and their male counterparts, the struggle with menstruation while serving, and the desire for normalcy in the midst of turmoil. This emphasis on the day-to-day challenges faced by female soldiers offers a more thorough comprehension of the war's background.

Despite the fact that there were innumerable World War II publications available, Alexievich was not interested in following what she called 'men's voices' and men's impressions. She claims that these volumes depict a history of men created by men, in which women were mute and silenced, and that no one ever interviewed women about their experiences during the conflict. “Everything we know about war we know with “a man’s voice. We are all captives of men’s and men’s sense of war. Men’s words. Women are silent” (Alexievich, *Unwomanly Face of War* xv). The historical narratives of warfare that we are familiar with predominantly focus on those who have adeptly wielded missiles and weaponry, or on those who have effectively seized enemy forces or territories. It has always been about the capturing of the land and the possession of the war trophies but the stories of a war women are different “Women’s war has its own colors. Its own smell, its own lighting, and its own range of feelings. Its own words. There are no heroes and incredible feats, there are simply people who are busy doing inhumanly things.” (xvi).

Several of the respondents start their testimonies by remembering the initial days of WWII. Almost all of them assumed that the war would quickly end, and that the Soviet army (Red army) would be battling abroad and not in their motherland. Many ladies were extremely young during the outset of the war and badly wanted to participate to show their patriotism. In a narrative by Tatyana Efimovna Semyonova, she says,

> Everybody had one wish: to get to the front … Scary? Of course it was scary … But all the same … We went to the recruiting office, and they told us: “Grow up, girls … You’re still green …” We were sixteen or seventeen years old. But I insisted and they took me. My friend and I wanted to go to sniper school, but they said: “You’ll be traffic controllers. There’s no time to teach you.” Mama waited at the station for several days to see us transported. She saw us going to the train, gave me a pie and a dozen eggs, and fainted … (Alexievich 43)

Despite just being sixteen or seventeen years old, the narrator's willingness to contribute to the war effort highlights the sense of duty and patriotism that motivated many young people to enlist. The recruiting office's dismissive behaviour, wherein the girls were advised to "grow up" and deemed "still green," is indicative of the gender stereotypes and undervaluation they encountered. However, the narrator's persistence and eventual admittance into the military demonstrates her determination to overcome these obstacles and take part in duties normally filled by men. The brief mention of the mother who waits at the station for several days and then faints upon seeing her daughter leave, encapsulates the profound emotional toll that war had on the families. The basic food offerings of pie and eggs, together with the mother's worry in this moment, highlight the humanity and fragility that lie under the fortitude of these young women. In sum, the youthful bravery, the fight against gender stereotypes, and the profound emotional toll that war takes on both those who serve in the front lines and those who remain behind are all captured in this narrative section. It is a moving demonstration of how the author gives voice to the often-overlooked experiences of women in conflict, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their efforts and sacrifices. The enthusiastic female counterparts wanted to contribute as much as

possible to the idea of saving their motherland. The war according to Alexievich dissolved the boundaries of the gender but the attitude of the men and society remained unchanged.

In one of the interviews, a woman recollects,

> I became better as a human being, because in war there is a lot of suffering. I saw a lot of suffering and I suffered a lot myself. There what's not most important in life is immediately swept aside, it's superfluous. There you understand that … But the war took its revenge on us. But … We're afraid to admit it to ourselves … It caught up with us … Not all our daughters' personal lives worked out well. And here's why: their mothers, who were at the front, raised them the way they themselves were raised at the front. And the fathers, too. (Alexievich 96)

The complicated and frequently contradictory repercussions of war on people and their families appears to be discussed in this narration. The speaker makes the argument that by going through the extreme pain of war, they improved as people and developed a greater sense of what matters most in life. The unwanted is eliminated in the confusion and suffering of the battle, revealing a stark clarity on the essential values. However, the story also emphasises on the dark and hidden consequences of war and the vengeful toll it exacts on those who have experienced it. The speaker agrees that her emergence from conflict was accompanied by an intensified feeling of purpose, but this achievement was not without its sacrifices. The next generation, especially the daughters, inherited the trauma and experiences of the war. The parents, who were deeply influenced and moulded by the horrific realities of the battlefield, inadvertently brought up their children in accordance with the harsh principles they acquired during the war. Consequently, their(soviet) daughters possibly experienced adverse consequences in their personal lives, as they were not adequately prepared to manage a post-war society that works based on different principles

and expectations. In totality, it includes the idea that the consequences of war reach well beyond the actual combat zone, influencing the dynamics within families and the psychological growth of subsequent generations. The memory addresses the topics of inherited trauma, the challenges of reintegrating into civilian life, and the inadvertent repercussions of transmitting battle-hardened principles to children.

The second novel *Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories,* contains collection of the stories of one hundred one (101) testimonies of the first-hand experience of the children who were subjected and exposed to World War II. All the witnesses were children throughout the war, and their memories of childhood are filled with years of hardship and living in a war-torn region, devoid of the joys of a normal childhood. The recollections of these youngsters, who witnessed conflict throughout their formative years, provide readers with insight into the fact that not only one, but three consecutive generations were directly exposed to the war and its brutality, as well as a clear influence to even future generations to follow. Three successive generations were greatly impacted by World War II. The first generation consists of the older members of the family who witnessed their children going off to the war. The second generation comprises the men and women who actively served on the frontlines to protect their nation. Lastly, the third generation includes the children who were either born shortly before or during the war, thus experiencing the immediate effects of World War II. Therefore, the war had a direct and significant influence on three generations of the nation. It is crucial to comprehend the influence and recollections of a child due to their innocence and limited understanding of events, which allows for a pure and unadulterated experience. Childhood memories remain unaltered and unfiltered because the child's cognitive abilities have not yet been developed to grasp the complexities of life. During a child's formative years, exposure to certain conditions can have a distinct impact on their cognitive development

and future trajectory. Alexievich's objective as a historian is twofold: to document the lives of people and to initiate a discourse on the psychological ramifications of war on children, including its impact on their cognitive development and their capacity for future agency. Undoubtedly, some witnesses may experience memory confusion due to the passage of time, but this narrative provides readers with a vivid display of the shared hardships endured by a generation too young to fully grasp the complexities of hatred, violence, and the profound losses that have impacted every facet of history, culture, and society.

The generation who fought in the war had almost entirely passed away. The remaining individuals who can provide firsthand accounts are exclusively those whose narratives were included in *The Last Witnesses*. As survivors of World War II, they recounted their firsthand experiences of war crimes, casualties, acts of violence, torture, copious amounts of bloodshed, famine, forced relocation, and the establishment of orphanages. Undoubtedly, the recollections of their childhood during the war are an important source of severe psychological trauma. The characters in the novel are deeply affected by trauma, and the novel directly portrays the psychological damage caused by the conflict. The post-traumatic psychology of the children got transferred into grown up adults.

While narrating his story Eduard Voroshilov, an eleven-years-old during the war, recounts his memories and narrates,

> The machine-gun burst rattled over my head, and the plane flew farther on. I got up and saw that woman lying on the side of the ditch with a bloody spot instead of a face. Then I got frightened, jumped out of the ditch, and ran. The question of what happened to that little girl has tormented me ever since, even now. I never met her again… (Alexievich, *Last Witnesses* 146).

The depiction of the machine-gun fire and the woman with a "bloody spot instead of a face"(146) emphasises the harsh and violent nature of war. This distressing imagery effectively portrays the abrupt and forceful occurrence of death during wartime, profoundly affecting the narrator's mental state. The trauma experienced is not solely physical, but also deeply psychological, as the memory of this event continues to torment the narrator. The use of "that little girl" provides a sense of innocence and vulnerability caught in the midst of conflict. The narrator's anguish regarding the girl's destiny resembles the destruction of innocence which is a prominent theme in war literature produced by Alexievich. The girl's destiny remains uncertain, representing the numerous lives that have been disrupted and lost in conflict, many of which remain unresolved and forgotten. The narrator's enduring anguish regarding the destiny of the young girl indicates a profound sense of survivor's guilt. The narrator experiences lingering unresolved guilt as a result of fleeing due to fear. A prominent motif in Alexievich's work is the persistent presence of guilt, as survivors confront the ethical and emotional repercussions of their wartime actions.

As Caruth highlights in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, the act of witnessing necessarily entails sharing and absorbing the challenging narrative one has been exposed to. Caruth discusses the concept of a “speaking wound” as a traumatic experience that is experienced by someone else and affects the emotions of the listener. Caruth analyses Freud's interpretation of Tasso's story of *Gerusalemme Liberata* and highlights the importance of the voice that Tancred, the protagonist, hears when he unknowingly kills his disguised lover, Clorinda. Caruth says,

> we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may

> lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 8).

It highlights how trauma can foster a deep connection between people, resulting in interactions in which simply listening to another person's suffering can have a transforming effect. In this way, trauma is not merely an isolated event but rather a shared space wherein empathy and compassion can arise from bearing witness to another's suffering. In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature*, Felman and Laub asserts that the person witnessing is "a party to the creation of knowledge de novo" and also is "a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event" (57). Caruth's assertion regarding the significance of the 'speaking wound' in trauma literature, and the essential bonds formed by the voice of the 'Other' that simultaneously addresses its own suffering and that of its listener, aligns with the experiences of war survivors depicted in Alexievich's works. Caruth notes,

> It is this plea by an other who is asking to be seen and heard, this call by which the other commands us to awaken (to awaken, indeed, to a burning), that resonates in different ways throughout the texts this book attempts to read, and which, in this book's understanding, constitutes the new mode of reading and of listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand. (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 9)

According to her, trauma necessitates a different approach to stories and experiences; a reading and listening style that transcends common comprehension. This new method is required because trauma frequently expresses itself through both the explicit language of the traumatic experience and the silence or repetition of the suffering that cannot be fully articulated. Alexievich in all her novels, collects the experiences of the people(sufferers), frames them into constant

narrative with a fluid structure and brings out the ‘silences’ and ‘repetitions’ so that their representation is truthful and honest. The characters in all the novels have their own voice, their personal perspectives and their individual values and belief system.

Boys in Zinc, presents a candid representation of the affected testimonies of the soldiers, nurses, medical officers, mothers, prostitutes, sons and daughters who tell their part of the story of the Soviet-Afghan war that remained hidden from the public space and their emotions and long-lasting impacts on their social condition. Alexievich explores the facts of the Soviet-Afghan conflict and delves into the complexities of how it affected the witnesses and their families. The enduring impact of direct or indirect participation in a war is also reflected. She conducted extensive interviews with several individuals, including both Afghan war veterans and the bereaved relatives of those who did not return. The book explores the unfathomable atrocities of war and the profound sense of betrayal and deceit experienced by individuals in Afghanistan and upon their return to the USSR.

In 1979, the USSR deployed its military forces to Afghanistan with the declared objective of assisting the local population in achieving more autonomy and establishing a socialist society. Over the course of the following decade, around 500,000 Soviet soldiers, described as a 'limited contingent', were deployed to Afghanistan. Several of them embarked on repeated excursions across the nation. The casualties suffered by the Soviet side exceeded 15,000. In 1985, the USSR underwent a political transformation known as 'Perestroika' (meaning 'restructuring'), which allowed for the discussion of previously prohibited topics. Some of these enquiries were related to the rationale behind the conflict, and more broadly, scrutinised the war itself. In 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew its military forces from Afghanistan, and shortly thereafter, citizens began to observe an increasing presence of combat veterans in the streets. These soldiers encountered

difficulties integrating into society. Soviet citizens started to scrutinise their impressions of Soviet leaders and the army as a whole, and to contemplate the experiences of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, as well as the ethical portrayal of a Soviet soldier.

The storytellers in this novel are not identified by their names, but rather by their titles in relation to the war; such as mother, staff employee, grenade bomber, private, ensign, captain, helicopter-pilot, and so on. A portion of those interviews were gathered within the war, when Svetlana Alexievich embarked on a journey to Afghanistan. She maintained a journal throughout her journey and incorporated certain excerpts from it. Each excerpt forms a distinct chapter within the book. In one of the stories, a boy recounts,

> In our maybe naïve belief, we were pristine. We thought – the new power gives away land and everybody should accept it gladly. Suddenly, … a peasant does not accept the land! It's like they say "Who do you think you are if you can give away land when the land belongs to Allah. Allah measures it and gives it away." We thought - we will build MTS (machine-tractor stations), will give them tractors, combine-harvesters, mowing-machines, and their whole life would change, the people would change. Suddenly, … they destroy MTSs! They blow up our tractors. [. . .] We thought – it is silly to think about God in the century of space travels. Suddenly, … there is Islamic religion unshakable by the civilization. Is it possible to make war with the eternity? (Alexievich, *Boys in Zinc* 212)

The speaker thinks back to a period when they thought their new political ideology was superior and that modernisation had the ability to transform. The socialist or communist government was known as the "new power" because of its belief that technological advancements like tractors, combine harvesters, and machine-tractor stations would inevitably lead to societal

change. It is argued that this belief in the inevitable growth of society is "naïve," implying that it was not understood or took into account the existing spiritual and cultural values of the people it was intended to transform. The speaker's eventual realisation of the futility of attempting to impose ideological change on deeply ingrained cultural and spiritual values is encapsulated in the rhetorical question, "Is it possible to make war with the eternity?" Here, "eternity" refers to the enduring and timeless quality of religious faith, which is resistant to easy eradication or change by outside influences. This admission implies humility and an understanding of the limitations of human endeavours to alter the world in accordance with ideological directives.

Another personal memory highlighting the experiences of individuals involved in the Soviet-Afghan war, juxtaposed with the contrasting realities of other citizens of the USSR who remained untouched by the conflict due to their lack of active participation, the man while expressing his agony conveys,

> Back then, even those of us who were fighting that war didn't know what kind of war it was. Don't confuse today's me with yesterday's me, with the person I was in '79. Yes, I believed in it! In '83 I came back to Moscow. Here they were living and acting as if we didn't exist out there. As if there wasn't any war. In the metro people were laughing and kissing, the same as always. (Alexievich 46)

The confession captures the confusion, disillusionment, and extreme distancing between people who were involved in the war and those who were not. The orator contemplates his individual metamorphosis and the striking disparity between the brutality of warfare and the normal routine of everyday civilian life. The speaker admits that his understanding and beliefs have changed significantly over time. He cautions against comparing himself to himself from the past, especially from 1979 when the war was just getting started. This implies a progression from

a state of first conviction and dedication to the cause to a later phase of disappointment or reassessment. "Yes, I believed in it!" suggests that the speaker formerly supported the goal of the conflict, probably due to then-current ideological or mass propaganda. But as he has gained more insight and awareness, he has since questioned or rejected this notion. A key problem in the story is the sharp contrast between the speaker's experience of combat and Moscow's daily life. When the speaker returns to Moscow in 1983, he is surprised by the seeming lack of concern from citizens about the reality of the Soviet-Afghan conflict. People "laughing and kissing" in the subway, "the same as always," emphasises how unaffected by the sacrifices and tragedies endured by those in the front, life in the capital went on as usual. This gap highlights the sense of alienation and loneliness experienced by veterans who are trying to make sense of their horrific experiences in the context of everyday life after the war.

The problems of adjusting to a casual life in a civilian setup is a global problem encountered by the war veterans when they come back to the normalcy of life. The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the shell-shock are some of the psychological problems that are experienced by the people who have sustained the horrific scenarios of the war, where killing and bloodshed is a routine that is discovered through their eyes on the regular basis. The impact on the veterans and their families that have directly been involved in the process of a combat situation is immense as it a subject of the people enduring trauma experience to an exposed amount of time, making it difficult to relate to the general realities of a civilian life post the end of the conflict and making a detachment to the old self and accepting the newer realities of the life. There are no situations of life and death and no hurry to take immediate actions for the sake of survival, like it is a threatening condition in a war scenario. The barbarism of the war is a scenario that has far-fetched implications on the psyche of the individuals and therefore giving an outlet to their agony and listening to their

problems is a strategy of reliving them of some of the suppressed desires of being able to be represented and heard. This somehow helps the individual to cope up with the situation and he/she feels heard and understood which helps to recoup with the new found realities of the world.

While the depiction of World War II and the Soviet- Afghan war has been covered extensively in the three novels of Alexievich that includes *Unwomanly Face of War, Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories* and *Boys in Zinc*. Yet the theme of war and its representation continues in the other three novels of Alexievich. *Chernobyl Prayer*, *Enchanted by Death* and *Second-Hand Time* contains elements of sustained war experiences, as majority of the citizens who had experienced the later stages of the USSR had already gone through the experience of being a part of the war directly or indirectly, and this new change interrupted their lives drastically. A soviet man has always been exposed to the war, their society has experienced a constant experience of either preparing for the war, being at war or either trying to dissociate themselves from the brutal memories of the war.

Chernobyl Prayer is an examination of the fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear accident, which is viewed as akin to a war; a struggle against an unseen enemy that fundamentally altered the lives of those impacted. Despite not depicting conventional warfare, the novel describes the experiences of individuals who survived the calamity using language and imagery of the war. The Chernobyl accident is shown as a conflict against radiation, an unseen and all-encompassing adversary that cannot be combated with traditional weaponry or tactics. The survivors, including primarily of soldiers, firemen, and civilians, were confronted with an invisible adversary, leading to a struggle for their own existence. The catastrophe converted ordinary existence into a battleground, marked by the identical apprehension, disorder, and anticipation of imminent catastrophe that typifies genuine armed conflict. *Chernobyl Prayer* addresses the themes of

sacrifice and valour, drawing parallels to battle. The initial responders that arrived at Chernobyl promptly following the detonation are portrayed as troops entering into combat. A significant number of these individuals, known as liquidators, made the ultimate sacrifice in their endeavours to manage the catastrophe, similar to the troops in the forefront of battle ground. Their heroism is underscored, although it is also depicted as tragic, as numerous individuals were deployed into the radiation-infested zones without a comprehensive grasp of the associated hazards. The novel depicts the destruction caused by the accident in a manner similar to the aftermath of a war. Whole of the villages were cleared, people were evacuated, houses were deserted, and lives were permanently altered. The region surrounding Chernobyl got transformed into barren wastelands, evoking memories of a ravaged battlefield. Alexievich amplifies the personal losses endured by individuals, encompassing the loss of physical well-being, cherished relationships, homes, and a feeling of safety. This catastrophe is similar to the extensive devastation that war causes.

Nikolai Prokhorovich Zharkov, a teacher of design and technology, shares his ordeal,

> A new enemy has appeared. An enemy that stands before us in a new guise. But we were brought up in a spirit of war. With a military mindset. We were focused on deflecting and recovering from a nuclear attack. We were going to be countering chemical, biological and nuclear war, not trying to rid the body of radionuclides. Not measuring their build-up, monitoring caesium and strontium levels. (Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayer* 132)

The “new enemy” as mentioned by Nikolai are the radiations, a hidden and harmful energy that arose after the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe. Radiation, unlike human enemies or weapons of mass destruction, does not adhere to the conventional understanding of combat. This opponent does not engage in combat using explosive devices or firearms; instead, it surreptitiously infiltrates

the surroundings, organisms, and even the fabric of time, leaving its consequences to persist for multiple generations. The military preparedness, which previously appeared satisfactory, suddenly appears insufficient in light of a calamity that cannot be combated with conventional weaponry or tactics. The feeling of being ill-equipped further contributes to the state of bewilderment and powerlessness experienced by those on the ground. It shows the psychological ramifications of confronting an adversary that is imperceptible, inaudible, and cannot be engaged in a conventional manner. Radiation, in contrast to conventional weapons, does not cause immediate and obvious devastation, hence making it more challenging to comprehend and counteract. The enemy's invisibility intensifies their terror, as it undermines the sense of control and comprehension that military training is intended to provide. The worry and panic arise from the unfamiliarity of how to quantify, supervise, and alleviate a danger that does not exhibit the characteristics of any previously encountered adversary.

Alexievich incorporates one character's psyche into a patchwork of other character's personalities. Through the integration of one character's psyche into the broader tapestry of other characters. She underscores the concept of collective memory and shared trauma. The narratives of individuals are not merely depicted as isolated occurrences, but rather as integral components of a larger, communal encounter. This collective approach enables her to communicate the universality of specific emotions and experiences, such as fear, grief, and resilience, while simultaneously accentuating the distinctive elements of each character's account.

As Cole notes: "In addition to figuring the return from the war in terms of characters and plots, writers developed a symbolic language to express and capture the condition of the returned men" (Cole 191). As a result, in order for the character's traumatised discourse to be recognised as

an artistic success, the symbolism must go beyond the direct materiality of war experience, even as it thrives on that experience.

Enchanted by Death, again falls in line with Alexievich's obsession with the theme of war. The theme of war is depicted in the metaphorical and psychological manner. The novel is a part of her wider compilation that explores the human condition in the midst of disaster. Specifically, it portrays the significant effects of societal breakdown, personal hopelessness, and the lasting consequences of war on individuals' existence. The title itself *Enchanted by Death* implies a deep interest or preoccupation with death, symbolising an internal struggle within the human mind. Within this framework, war is not a direct physical confrontation, but rather a symbolisation of the profound internal challenges experienced by humans. The people narrating their stories have undergone emotional and psychological distress that reflects the disorder and devastation of war. They struggle with their personal worries, feelings of hopelessness, and the existential horror of living in a collapsing society. The lasting impact of previous conflicts is apparent through the prevailing feeling of hopelessness. The individuals in the novel are haunted by the psychological trauma caused by war, whether they were directly involved or have inherited it through the collective memory of their culture. This trauma is shown as a continuous struggle, where the adversary is not a tangible force but rather the profound, unresolved anguish and distress that warfare leaves in its wake. The narrative portrays the connection between unresolved trauma and a strong interest in death, which serves as a way to escape the overwhelming burden of past atrocities. The work employs the theme of war as a symbol to represent the wider breakdown of society that individuals are undergoing. The portrayal of post-Soviet life depicts the disintegration of social structures, economic adversity, and the erosion of purpose as a type of conflict that undermines the morale and welfare of the population. In this symbolic conflict, the adversary

represents the grim actuality of existence following the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with its associated disappointment and hopelessness. The protagonists are portrayed as warriors engaged in this conflict, striving to endure in a world that has relinquished its previous principles and certainties.

This strategy of survival and tackling crisis falls in line with Cathy Caruth's idea which Alexievich is trying to depict through literature. As Caruth mentions that, "history is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 71). This provides a deep understanding of the essence of traumatic experiences and how they are transmitted across time and space. This concept highlights the two-fold aspect of trauma; as a significant and often disastrous occurrence that interrupts the progression of history, and as evidence of the ability to endure and recover that connects individuals across generations.

Second-Hand Time: The Last of the Soviets depicts war not only as a historical event, but also as an all-encompassing and enduring influence that moulds the lives, identities, and recollections of the individuals. The novel is an oral history of the post-Soviet era, delving into the psychological and emotional consequences of both actual and metaphorical battles on people and the collective consciousness of the former Soviet Union. Collective memories are often 'cohort memories' which, "Collective memory sustains a community's very identity and makes possible the continuity of its social life and cultural cohesion" (Wang 37). Hence, the dissolution of USSR, formed a dent in the collective memory of the citizens.

Alexievich presents conflict as an integral aspect of the Soviet identity, an inheritance transmitted across successive generations. Many of the respondents recognised the Great Patriotic War (World War II) as a pivotal event in the Soviet history. This conflict is commemorated with

a combination of pride and grief, representing both the valour of the Soviet populace and the tremendous agony they experienced. The protagonists are deeply affected by the memories of this war, which shape their views on subsequent battles and the overall weakening of Soviet authority. The war is employed as a metaphor to depict the tumultuous and violent shift from the Soviet Union to the post-Soviet states. This era is portrayed as a distinct form of conflict; an internal struggle for existence in a society experiencing swift and frequently ruthless transformation. The dissolution of the Soviet Union is perceived as a tumultuous disruption, resulting in individuals losing their employment, their financial assets, and their sense of direction. This conflict is not waged using physical arms, but rather through the harsh realities of financial adversity, societal unrest, and the erosion of a shared sense of identity.

An individual narrates his ordeal and recalls,

> Before the war, my father had been studying at the Minsk Institute of Journalism. He would recall how often, on returning to college after vacations, students wouldn't find a single one of their old professors because they had all been arrested. They didn't understand what was happening, but whatever it was, it was terrifying. Just as terrifying as war. I didn't (Alexievich, *Second-Hand Time* 28)

The narrative effectively captures the intense emotions of terror and disorientation felt by individuals enduring the oppressive political atmosphere in the Soviet Union, specifically during Stalin's purges. The comparison of this terror with the fear of war underscores the extent to which the internal political violence of the day was as terrifying and unfathomable, mirroring the chaos and devastation of actual warfare. The excerpt exposes the inscrutability of the repression, as the students lacked understanding of the events unfolding. The absence of comprehension intensifies the feeling of fear, since it implies that the brutality was not only random but also beyond the

comprehension of its victims. This reflects a recurring theme in Alexievich's writing, where the intricacies of historical tragedy frequently surpass the capacity of humans to comprehend or articulate.

Alexievich's analysis of war trauma demonstrates a deep and intricate comprehension of the human experience when confronted with devastating occurrences. Alexievich's distinctive storytelling technique, which skilfully combines oral history with literary ingenuity, offers a captivating structure for exploring the lasting psychological, emotional, and cultural effects of war. Through prioritising the perspectives of common individuals such as soldiers, citizens, survivors, and witnesses, she sheds light on the frequently disregarded individual aspects of trauma. In doing so, she provides a profoundly compassionate depiction of the human ordeal during and following conflicts.

When studying trauma and memory, the ideas of silence and speech play a crucial role, especially when it comes to giving a voice to those who have been ignored or marginalised. Silence can function as both a means of oppression and resistance. While dominating powers may suppress marginalised groups, silence can also be a conscious decision made to reject or question the existing social order. Speech is an influential instrument for conveying ideas and expressing thoughts. When individuals who have been deprived of the opportunity to express themselves regain their ability to communicate, it has the potential to bring about profound and significant change. Elissa Marder in her essay states that, “Literature is one of the ways we tell one another about aspects of human experience that cannot be contained by ordinary modes of expression and that may even exceed human understanding” (Marder 3). Marder perceives literature as a means to connect the divide between our capacity to comprehend and express, and the realm that surpasses our immediate understanding. It allows us to confront and understand the enigmas and

intricacies of existence in ways that are not possible through other means of communication, therefore making it a fundamental aspect of the human condition.

Alexievich's writings highlight the tension between unspeakable elements of traumatic experience and the necessity to give them voice. In this context, silence, can be understood as both a symptom as well as a consequence of trauma. It indicates the gaps in collective memory, the narratives that stay unspoken, and the voices that have been systematically silenced or disregarded throughout history. Alexievich's novels frequently highlight these instances of silences, not just by filling them with words, but by also recognising their existence and importance. On the other hand, speech serves as a potent instrument in Alexievich's writing to regain control and revive self-respect for individuals who have been silenced. With her distinctive method of oral history, she enables individuals to recount their stories using their own language, thereby closing the divide between silence and communication. In her narratives, the process of speaking, is not merely the remembrance of the events, but rather a transforming process that makes the unrepresented visible and audible. In Soviet and post- Soviet context, silence usually has a political dimension attached to it. Alexievich's work reveals the state's imposition of silence on individuals, especially when their experiences contradict official narrative.

While the people who remained unrepresented in the Soviet official narratives are the people that endured scars and setbacks, believing towards the lies propagated by the state-run authorities. Their wounds remained open and uncovered till the time they found someone like Alexievich to present their narratives and make them visible. The subjugation of their opinions, feelings and experiences had made them invisible. This marks a shift in an altered form of history being present for evaluation. She prioritises amplifying the perspectives of women, children,

teenagers and sufferers who did not comply with the authoritarian rule, who are frequently excluded in conventional accounts, particularly those concerning conflict and catastrophe.

In *Unwomanly Face of War*, she writes about the distinct viewpoint women bring to the experience of war. A significant number of the women she interviews discuss not only the military conflicts and tactics, but also the emotional and psychological difficulties they faced, such as the loss of loved ones, the need to maintain their femininity, and the psychological impact of violence. This portrayal of war encompasses a comprehensive perspective, incorporating the nurturing responsibilities women assumed and their coping mechanisms in the face of war's destruction.

In her interview, Natalya Ivanovna Sergeeva, a private nurse-aide, speaks,

> I want to speak … to speak! To speak it all out! Finally somebody wants to hear us. For so many years we said nothing, even at home we said nothing. For decades. The first year, when I came back from the war, I talked and talked. Nobody listened. So I shut up … It's good that you've come along. I've been waiting all the while for somebody, I knew somebody would come. Had to come. I was very young then. Absolutely young. (Alexievich, *Unwomanly Face of War* 20)

Natalya's account gives an overview of an intensive need to express herself and the deeply repressed trauma experience by a survivor. The speaker's desire to "speak it all out" highlights the deep psychological weight of harbouring onto unvoiced experiences, particularly those associated with war and trauma. The feeling of being alone and isolated is particularly noticeable, which reflects on the societal and psychological barriers to discuss about the painful memories. The speaker's initial endeavours to share her story was received with indifference, resulting in a protracted period of distressing quiet that was endured for several decades. The resurgence of spoken communication(speech) in the company of an attentive listener shows the healing capacity

of storytelling and the significance of bearing witness. Within the framework of Alexievich's work, this excerpt serves as a prime example of her emphasis on amplifying the voices of individuals who have been historically marginalised and silenced, consequently exposing the enduring emotional and psychological wounds that endure long after the actual events have taken place.

Keightley talks about the process of remembering and its connection with the past and present. According to him,

> Remembering is an active reconciliation of past and present. The meaning of the past in relation to the present is what is at stake here; memories are important as they bring our changing sense of who we are and who we were, coherently into view of one another (Keightley 58).

This stresses on the need of not only recalling events but also actively reconciling the past with the present. The process of memory entails a dynamic interaction between our past selves and our current selves. Memories hold significance as they enable us to perceive ourselves as cohesive individuals, linking prior encounters with our current sense of self. This reconciliation provides a unified understanding of our identity, demonstrating how our previous experiences have influenced and continue to influence our present selves. It involves comprehending the importance of previous experiences in relation to our present circumstances and self-perception.

Boys in Zinc is another example in which Alexievich renders speech to the silenced. The book reveals the experiences of soldiers who were deployed to combat in Afghanistan, a significant number of them were repatriated in coffins made of zinc, thus the title *Boys in Zinc*. These combatants, usually of younger age, were made silent through various means. They were prohibited from discussing the atrocities they witnessed and endured, and even upon their return, they faced difficulty in voicing their distress. The Soviet Union, through its official narrative of

the war, deliberately downplayed or disregarded the harsh and terrible experiences sustained by these soldiers, thus adding to their suppression and lack of voice.

While taking the interview of a teenager returned from war, wherein he says,

> I don't remember days. I remember wounds. Gunshot wounds, wounds from landmines. The helicopters just kept on and on arriving. They brought them in on stretchers. They lay there, covered in sheets with red blotches creeping across them. I wonder … I ask myself … Why do I only remember the terrible things? (Alexievich, *Second-Hand Time* 173)

It shows the eerie quality of traumatic recollections and their ability to overpower our remembrance of the past. The speaker is struggling with the overpowering existence of these recollections, particularly the vivid and agonising images of wounds and suffering. The repetitive depictions of helicopters, stretchers, and blood-soaked sheets symbolise the continuous invasion of horror into the speaker's mind. Trauma frequently leaves a profound mark on the mind, resulting in memories that are more vivid and readily accessible compared to usual events. This phenomenon can be attributed to a psychological process aimed at ensuring survival, as the brain gives priority to the retention of memories related to potential dangers or injury. Nevertheless, it also prompts enquiries into our cognitive and emotional handling of such encounters, as well as the underlying reasons for the mind's tendency to hold onto pain more strongly than to peace.

The inclusion of the voices of bereaved mothers in the novel adds a compelling and influential aspect. They represent another layer of silencing, as they frequently find themselves grappling with unanswered enquiries and unresolved sorrow. The state's failure to acknowledge the actual expenses of the war resulted in these women frequently grieving in silence, with their

suffering being unnoticed by the broader society. The agony of a mother is expressed through her narrative, she adds,

> Where there is no repentance, there is no consolation.' 'We're not to blame for anything … We didn't know anything …' 'You were blind, and when you opened your eyes you saw only the body of your own son. Repent …' 'What do we care about the Afghan mothers …? We lost our own children …' (Alexievich, *Boys in Zinc* 289)

The conversation demonstrates a conflict between individual sorrow and the wider moral consequences of the war, including the issue of accountability and the ability to understand and share the pain of others beyond one's own suffering. The grief is in conflict with the moral responsibility. The grieving mother is a silence entity yet her silence speaks of some sort of empathy even after the loss of her own son.

According to Caruth, the general comprehension of PTSD signifies: "the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking over of the mind, physically and neurobiologically, by an event that it cannot control" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 58). It underscores the overpowering and involuntary characteristics of trauma. This notion emphasises how traumatic events circumvent typical cognitive processes, directly embedding themselves in the mind and body in unpredictable, unprocessed, and frequently disruptive manners. Alexievich's books frequently illustrate the impact of traumatic wartime experiences on survivor's physical and psychological states. Numerous narrators describe enduring bodily sensations such as, palpitations, tremors, chronic pains that re vestiges of their wartime encounters. Caruth's assertion that trauma affects neurobiological processes, resulting in survivors experiencing prolonged heightened alertness or hypervigilance after the events have concluded. Alexievich's portrayal of

war effectively exemplifies Caruth's concept that trauma transcends the catastrophic event, manifesting as an indelible and pervasive mark on the psyche and physical state of body. Her works illustrate how conflict affects survivors in ways that circumvent cognitive regulation, resulting in their being tormented by sensory remnants, unresolved feelings, and corporeal reminders.

Alexievich humanizes the unrepresented. Her portrayal of the unrepresented individuals adds a humane element to the historical record, making it more comprehensive and recognising the experiences of those typically excluded from official narratives. Through her efforts, she supports the preservation of their voices in history, ensuring their recognition and remembrance. The meticulous and compassionate depiction of her subjects cultivates a more profound comprehension of the toll that war and disaster inflict on human lives. Alexievich brings a personal element to those who have been overlooked by highlighting the perspectives of everyday individuals, namely women and children, who have been excluded from conventional accounts. Through her work, she offers a forum for these folks to express and convey their stories, ensuring the preservation of their memories and emotions with genuine and profound depth. Alexievich's technique not only enhances the historical record, but also cultivates increased empathy and comprehension for individuals who have experienced some of the most arduous events of the 20th century.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the impact of war trauma is intricately intertwined with a multifaceted interaction of historical, cultural, social, and psychological elements. It has been demonstrated that war trauma cannot be completely comprehended when considered independently. Instead, it must be examined in relation to the wider circumstances that influence how individuals perceive and react to the conflict. By examining the various ways in which trauma

appears and is communicated across different groups and in different time periods, we develop a more detailed comprehension of the complex characteristics of war trauma.

Alexievich's unique approach towards oral history enables us to see the firsthand accounts of persons who have directly experienced the impact of war. This technique provides insights into how trauma is encountered, assimilated, and articulated across diverse individuals and communities. Her novels shed light on the intimate and frequently concealed aspects of trauma, questioning traditional accounts that typically emphasise military tactics and political consequences. The observation reveals that trauma is not a uniform or homogeneous encounter, but rather one that is influenced by a multitude of elements. Alexievich's narratives expose the interconnectedness of trauma, illustrating how women, children, and ordinary people cope with the consequences of war in ways that diverge dramatically from the prevailing, typically male-focused, narratives. The author's work emphasises the significance of acknowledging the various methods through which individuals cope with and experience trauma, prompting the reader to contemplate viewpoints that are sometimes sidelined or disregarded. Moreover, Alexievich's writings dwell deep into the significance of memory and narrative in relation to trauma. Through amplifying the voices of war survivors, she not only safeguards their firsthand accounts but also empowers them to regain control over their own stories. Storytelling serves as a means of resisting the elimination and suppression that frequently occur with traumatic events, especially in authoritarian or militaristic environments.

Overall, examining war trauma through the perspective of Svetlana Alexievich's literature enhances our comprehension of trauma as a contextual and multifaceted phenomenon. Her writings serve as a potent reminder that trauma is not solely a psychological ailment, but rather a lived experience that is deeply impacted by social, cultural, and historical factors.

Chapter IV

Reconstructing Identity and Shadows of the Haunted Past

The influence of the Soviet Union has a significant impact on the current sense of self among its former people. This chapter explores the complex process of rebuilding one's identity after a significant crisis, as shown in the writings of Svetlana Alexievich. Through the use of common people's confessions, the author's books depict a collection of voices that recount the lasting trauma of experiencing major historical events, such as the Great Patriotic War, Soviet-Afghan War, the Chernobyl accident, and the fall of the Soviet Union. This chapter aims to explore how Alexievich's characters struggle with their divided identities in the aftermath of these catastrophes, using Cathy Caruth's trauma theory as a framework.

Caruth's theory of trauma, which emphasises on the delayed character of trauma and the need of witnessing and recounting painful traumatic incidents, offers a significant context for examining Alexievich's storytelling method and thematic preoccupations. According to Caruth, trauma cannot be completely comprehended during the exact moment it occurs, but rather it is relived through repeated dreams, flashbacks, and other involuntary acts of remembering. This theoretical framework elucidates the intricate manner in which Alexievich's characters undergo and express their traumatic pasts, frequently grappling with the task of harmonising their recollections with their present circumstances.

Alexievich's literature functions as a collective memoir, documenting historical events but also capturing the enduring psychological wounds they inflict on people and communities. The novels lay stress on the individual experiences above political aspects, allowing those who have been silenced and marginalised to express themselves. In doing so, she questions the dominant and uniform narratives commonly found in official historical accounts. Alexievich builds a counter-

narrative that emphasises on the broad impact of trauma on the development of one's identity by giving attention to individual testimonies.

This chapter examines the application of trauma theory to Alexievich's novels, focussing on three main themes: the fragmentary characteristic of memory, the significance of narrative in the process of healing, and the intergenerational transmission of trauma. The chapter explores how the individuals that are featured in the novels navigate through their haunting recollections, striving to construct coherent identities amidst the remnants of their past. By listening to their narratives, we obtain a deeper grasp of the wider socio-cultural consequences of trauma and the ongoing pursuit for significance and self-awareness in post-Soviet society.

In essence, this chapter provides a poignant exploration that Alexievich's novel offers following a profound examination of how people and groups endeavour to rebuild their identities post disaster. Her act of bearing witness to the voices of pain serves the purpose of preserving historical accounts while also encouraging readers to engage in profound contemplation about the human condition, the enduring strength of the human spirit, and the profound impact of storytelling.

The inherent characteristics of traumatic memory and its connection with additional personal memories, such as memories of the events from the past, are believed to have a significant impact on the emergence and persistence of post-traumatic psychosis. In their work, Ehlers and Clark use a metaphor to illustrate trauma memory as a cupboard where various items are hastily tossed in quickly and in a disorderly manner. Such memory can manifest in various and sometimes contradictory ways: memories may resurface unexpectedly (referred to as involuntary triggered intrusive memories), and individuals may struggle to remember specific details when necessary (known as dissociative amnesia, where voluntary recall of certain aspects of an event is impaired).

Individuals who have suffered trauma often describe a lack of a comprehensive, organised recollection of the events that can be transformed into a coherent narrative. Instead, the memory is characterised by disorganisation and incoherence, with 'things' scattered over the 'cupboard' and with certain items missing, which hinders the formation of a concise and cohesive narrative. The condition of being unable to consciously recall and articulate traumatic memories in a structured and coherent manner is referred to as fragmentation.

Trauma and fragmentation are mutually reflective and causative. Severe trauma causes a person's identity, including their personality and emotions, to undergo disintegration. This is the process by which the body separates characteristics and emotions, organising them into smaller categories and concealing some until a secure environment for their expression is available. Fragments refer to certain elements of our being that were unable to articulate their desires, wishes, or requirements due to a perceived lack of safety. Consequently, they partially disconnected from the central part of the individual and became repressed. However, it should be noted that this does not imply their entire disappearance. Triggers have the ability to thrust fragments to the centre, resulting in incomprehensible emotional reactions. As pieces and the self-acquire the ability to function independently, the rational self becomes inaccessible. When individuals become trapped in a reactive cycle, it indicates that their illogical and impulsive tendencies are now guiding their behaviour and responses. Individuals who possess fragmented aspects of their identity lack agency over their behaviour, as their actions are dictated by their traumatised younger self. External forces lack the ability to strip power and influence from resilient components. However, individuals can focus on recognising their components and endeavour to overpower them by reintegrating logical thinking.

The fragmented narrative is often considered by scholars to be a fundamental characteristic of postmodern storytelling. Postmodernist novels frequently lack a central narrative and their story structures are intricate, making the storylines difficult to grasp. Fragmentary narrative function as “witnesses to the unspeakable” (Lyotard 211). Fragmentation undermines the cohesion of the world. By dissolving the integrity of the text, authors are given the flexibility to manipulate the structure and plot through collage. Fragments disintegrate the underlying significance inside the text and progressively reveal the hidden, inexpressible components to the reader. Authors intentionally employ the fragmented narrative as a literary technique to create a sense of unfamiliarity and contrast with the usual unified structure seen in novels. The convergence of fragmentation and trauma presents a novel perspective for literary investigation. Trauma inherently exhibits resistance to the chronological narrative framework. The fragmented narrative typically replicates the occurrence of fragmented flashbacks. The analysed novels have an intricate composition. The author intentionally disassembles the entire narrative structure into fragmentary shapes. The planar structure exhibits a three-dimensional form when it fractures. The convergence of multiple story threads captivates the reader's attention, compelling them to contemplate the distressing encounter.

It becomes important to understand that Alexievich incorporates her unique style of storytelling by capturing the complex, multifaceted and frequently disjointed character i.e. fragmented nature of memory. The contextualization of the collective as well as personal experiences of the individuals within soviet and post-soviet space is depicted in the books. She offers a venue for views that are often marginalised or disregarded in official historical accounts. By carefully gathering personal stories, she reveals how memory can be confused and conflicting, illustrating the significant influence of historical events on individual lives. Alexievich's

examination of fragmented memory serves multiple crucial objectives. This highlights the innate intricacy of human memory, especially when dealing with traumatic experiences and significant societal changes. The fragmented and frequently inconsistent recollections of her characters question the uniform and sequential accounts frequently promoted by officially sanctioned histories. This methodology not only offers a more comprehensive and subtle comprehension of historical events but also emphasises the varied viewpoints and encounters that form the shared recollection of a community.

In *The Unwomanly Face of War* there is an exploration of the fractured and complex structure of memory, focussing on the ways that trauma, societal expectations, and the passage of time affect individual and collective recollections. The fragmentary memories of women in this book provide a more nuanced and sophisticated picture of their experiences than the traditional, monolithic and male centric accounts of the war. The structure of the novel is a mirrored reflection of the fragmentary nature of the memory. The memories of the women are greatly affected by the trauma they suffered during the war, resulting in fractured and disjointed recollections. A significant number of women narrate their experiences in a non-sequential manner, with memories resurfacing sporadically and in fragments. The fragmentation observed here is a direct result of the challenges involved in comprehending and expressing traumatic events. In the novel an account of Maria Alexeevna Remneva, who served as a Second Lieutenant during WWII, she recounts her war experience and says,

> I served as an officer in the regimental mail. With my own eyes I saw people weep, kiss envelopes, when they received a letter at the front line. Many of their relations had been killed or lived on territory occupied by the enemy. They couldn't write. So we used to write letters from an Unknown Sender: "Dear soldier, it is an

> Unknown Girl writing to you. How is the fight with the enemy going? When will you come home with the Victory?" We sat at night writing … I wrote hundreds of those letters during the war … (Alexievich, *Unwomanly of War* 167)

The recollection of a specific memory by Maria serves as an authentic representation of an experience that has significantly influenced her life. She presents a distinct perspective of authenticity, emphasising that she witnessed the event firsthand, which revitalises the narrative through her account. The narrative encompasses accounts of atrocities and the grim realities experienced during the events of World War II. The recollections of the conflict are marked by numerous atrocities. The horrors of the world war are filled by extensive bloodshed and loss of life. The emotional nuance embedded in the narrative of Maria shows the distinct perspective women hold regarding war. It captures a woman's portrayal of conflict, interwoven with memories of distress, yet simultaneously infused with a sense of compassion. Many women recount their experiences in brief, fragmented sentences that often conclude abruptly, swiftly transitioning to new emotions, highlighting the overwhelming burden of these memories. This indicates that women who have undergone such turmoil struggle to fully articulate their feelings due to the profound impact of the past event and the lasting impression it has left on their psyche. Therefore, reiterating Freud's concept, that trauma is as an overpowering influx of stimuli that surpasses our ability to manage, distinguished by its complete unpredictability (Freud 216).

While the *Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories* portrays the fractured recollections of individuals who, as children, witnessed the atrocities of World War II, Alexievich uncovers the impact of trauma and the effect of time on memory, as she presents moving testimony that demonstrate how memories become fragmented and distorted. This provides a profound and complex understanding of the war from a truly human perspective. The memories of the young

survivors are intrinsically fractured, characterised by the tumult and bewilderment of their experiences. During their childhood, their comprehension of the events happening around them were restricted, and their memories are frequently fragmented, consisting of vivid but isolated snippets. The fragmentation of traumatic experiences, particularly when they occur across early childhood, underscores the challenge of processing and integrating them. In the novel the account of Natasha Golik displays the account of a five-year-old experiencing the war, shows the naïve nature of a child unable to grasp the true meaning of a war, yet experiencing the emotion of the horror. Natasha recounts her experience and narrates,

> They said: it's war. I---understandably---being five years old, didn't picture anything specific. Anything frightening. But I fell asleep from fear, precisely from fear. I slept for two days. For two days I lay like a doll. Everybody thought I was dead. Mama cried, and grandma prayed. She prayed for two days and two nights. I opened my eyes, and the first thing I remember was light. Very bright light, extraordinarily bright. So bright it was painful (Alexievich, *Last Witnesses* 9)

The narrative presented by Natasha intertwines her childhood memories from the age of five with the insights she has accumulated over the course of her life as she has matured. She implies that as a child, she was unable to envision anything particular, indicating that the traumatic event lacked a clear comprehension of what she was encountering. Nevertheless, the terror and anxiety were emotions that even a young child could comprehend and exhibit. The anxiety expressed by Natasha caused her to remain in sleep for two consecutive days. This sleep serves as a mechanism for a child's mind to bypass their conscious awareness and find refuge, or perhaps the intensity of the fear was overwhelming, prompting the physical body to retreat into the unconsciousness of the mind. The recollection and narration of her traumatic experience is

presented as a singular, powerful memory of horror in an unfiltered manner. The narration of the incidents does not adhere to a specific linear order; instead, it comprises fragments of vivid memory highlights (core memory of experience). The current self of the narrator recognises that at the moment of the traumatic event, the cognitive grasp of its intensity was nearly imperceptible; however, the experience continues to reside within the mind. The memory crafted is imbued with the purity of childhood, a yearning for safety alongside the mother, juxtaposed with the awakening to the grim realities of 'war' and its associated horrors, revealing to the child the true, frightful nature of such experiences. The contrast between the purity of childhood and the harsh realities of war is profoundly striking. The coherence with which children recall events is significantly influenced by the trauma they experienced during the conflict. Traumatic memories are generally encoded in a way that differs from the encoding of typical memories. This leads to disjointed and non-sequential memories, which may be triggered by sensory stimuli or emotional responses rather than rational thought processes.

Caruth in the introductory section of *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, states that, “The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (Caruth 5). The accounts shared by the witnesses in Alexievich's works encapsulate a profound and complex history, as articulated by Caruth. Similarly, because of the traumatic aspects of history, all the characters recounting their experiences in the novels are unable to grasp the entirety of what they have endured. The recollections emerge in a disjointed manner and are expressed within the contextual structure of their accounts. The survivor is unable to completely claim the events, leading to non-linear narratives that persistently surface throughout Alexievich's literary corpus.

Taking the instance to justify Caruth's idea, in *Boys In Zinc*, a Private Signaller describes his story of being a part of the Soviet-Afghan war, he says that,

> War doesn't make a man better. Only worse. That's for sure. I can never go back to the day I left for the war. I can never be who I was before the war. How can I become a better man when I've seen guys buy two glasses of a hepatitis patient's urine from a doctor for hard currency checks? Then drink it. And fall ill. And get invalided out. Men shooting their own fingers off. (Alexievich, *Boys in Zinc* 69)

The speaker categorically affirms that war has a detrimental effect on mankind, making their attitude worse. This assertion vehemently critiques the romanticised notion that warfare can foster personal character development. Nonetheless, it is portrayed as morally and psychologically degrading. The war, as recounted by the Private Signaller, reveals that he has endured a traumatic experience in the military atmosphere that has fundamentally transformed his mentality, making it challenging for him to revert to his former self. The witness bears the psychological scar of the horrific experience, with his memory acting as a barrier that prevents a return to his pre-war self. The personality is tainted by the involvement of the individual in the war experience. The witness is distressed by the horrific incidents that transpired during the conflict. The sight of men firing weapons is a terrifying experience, and those who witness such events endure psychological damage. The Signaller's involvement in the conflict has provided extensive exposure, positioning him as both a witness and a narrator. The portrayal of a memory fragment rather than a comprehensive narrative indicates a traumatised individual who cannot comprehend the entirety of the conflict and is preoccupied on the principal events that have caused bodily and emotional distress.

The combatants and their families are profoundly affected by the violent events they experience, significantly influencing their memories. War trauma interferes with the typical functioning of memory, resulting in fragmented, intense, and emotionally loaded memories. The testimonials in *Boys in Zinc* exhibit abrupt transitions, incomplete narratives, and violent emotional outbursts, which convey the profound psychological wounds inflicted by the war. For instance, soldiers may vividly remember particular instances of violence or periods of extreme fear, but other aspects of their experiences may be unclear or repressed. There are many examples where suffering is caused by conflict, and this suffering has been buried over time. Despite years of silence and the inability to articulate their feelings, when the witnesses are finally afforded the opportunity to convey themselves through text, a profound surge of emotion emerges. This surge of emotions, when expressed through narrative, becomes structured into fragmented and non-linear forms.

This coincides with the observation of trauma critic, Herman who says, “Long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present” (Herman, *Trauma* 26). The three essential manifestations of psychological trauma are flashbacks, delays, and recurrence. Individuals who have experienced horrific situations often find themselves in a perpetual quandary where they are compelled to disclose the truth, yet find themselves incapable of doing so. The conventional narrative approach is constrained in its ability to depict a pathological storyline within a structured and cohesive setting. Fragmentation is a more suitable term for describing trauma and can effectively facilitate the understanding and healing of traumatic experiences, as well as the psychological processes involved in depression and the retrieval of painful memories.

While understanding the complexities of the stories displayed in *Chernobyl Prayer* there is an encounter of a new reality of the world post an event that is apocalyptic in nature. Alexievich effectively portrays the tremendous consequences of the disaster on the lives of survivors, evacuees, and liquidators (individuals engaged in the cleaning) through a collection of powerful monologues. In one of the monologues mentioned in the novel, narrated by Yevgeny Alexandrovich Brovkin, who served as a lecturer, recalls his experience of the time faced during Chernobyl disaster and conveys,

> I arrived there when the birds were sitting in their nests, and left when the apples were lying on the snow. There was a lot we didn't manage to bury. We buried earth in the earth. Along with the beetles, spiders and maggots, that whole separate nation. We buried a world. That was the deepest impression I came away with. Those creatures. I haven't told you anything, really. Just some fragments (Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayers* 104).

The speaker effectively communicates a profound feeling of bereavement, the immense magnitude of the catastrophe, and the interdependence of all living beings impacted by the incident, employing vivid visual descriptions and fragmented recollections. This concise yet impactful perspective delicately intertwines the themes of environmental destruction, grief and sorrow, and fragmented recollection and psychological distress. It emphasises on the lasting impact of the catastrophe on both the natural world and the human mind. The shared story contemplates on the passage of time and the significant consequences of neglecting the remains of life and nature following a calamity. It declares on the profound emotional impact of observing the demise of the earth's natural form and its inhabitants, serving as a symbol for the devastating loss of an entire civilisation. While the catastrophe has severely impacted the lives of the people, the author

critically incorporates these depictions in the text about the destruction of the nature and natural beings. While Yevgeny in deep sorrow narrates the account, he also mentions that there is no end to the memory of the unfortunate event. He testifies that whatever he says, those are only the fragments of the core memory. This usage of the term ‘fragments’ in a testimonial’s narration, is a direct representation of how memory interplays with the individual’s mind. The past has so much to reveal and reflect.

The recollections in *Chernobyl Prayer* are typically characterised by vivid emotional and sensory elements. This structure reflects the disturbance produced by the catastrophe, both in their daily lives and in their memory of the events. Despite their fragmented nature, these individual memories collectively provide a detailed and profoundly human portrayal of the disaster's effects. Survivors vividly remember distinct aromas, auditory stimuli, and visual representations that have left an enduring mark on their memories. These sensory bits effectively communicate the intense reality of their experiences, something linear narratives typically fail to do. They establish a strong and instantaneous connection to the past. For instance, multiple people remember the artificial attractiveness of the radioactive luminescence, the nauseating odour of combusting graphite, and the eerie stillness and silence that ensued following the evacuation.

Similarly, the examining of the book *Enchanted by Death* provides an outlook towards the individuals impacted by the surge of suicides that ensued after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Alexievich explores the profound psychological and emotional wounds caused by the societal turmoil, economic downfall, and identity crisis that occurred after the conclusion of the Soviet era. The work effectively demonstrates how societal turmoil and the breakdown of a formerly solid structure (a full nation) may result in a deep feeling of loss and confusion. The fragmentary recollections depict the challenges faced by individuals in comprehending their

altered circumstances, the loss of their sense of self, and the profound despair that drove many to commit suicide. The dissolution of a vast nation, characterised by a steadfast sense of nationalism and a deeply rooted collective identity among its populace, has resulted in a profound psychological scar. This reflection on the psyche of the people and an elaborate testimonial accounting is depicted in the last addition of the grand cycle of Alexievich's work *Second- Hand Time: The Last of the Soviets*. The trauma stemming from the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the accompanying period of economic adversity, political instability, and societal transformation significantly affects the memories of individuals who experienced it. *Second Hand Time* features interviewees that have disjointed memories of the experiences they have endured exemplify the profound psychological wounds inflicted by the swift and frequently tumultuous transformations of the time period. For instance, numerous individuals vividly remember the scent of destitution, the flavour of inexpensive cuisine, or the resonance of political slogans, all of which act as strong reminders of the past. The narration of the story of Tamara Sukhovei, a waitress, just 29-years-old, gives a bone-chilling account. Her story begins,

> Life's a bitch! I can tell you…it's no picnic. I've never seen anything good or beautiful in this life. I can't think of a single thing…You could put a gun to my head, I still wouldn't be able to think of anything! I've tried poisoning myself, hanging myself. Three suicide attempts so far…Most recently, I slit my wrists. [She shows me her bandaged arm.] Right here, in this spot…I got rescued then slept for a week. Just kept sleeping and sleeping. That's how my body works. (Alexievich, *Second-Hand Time* 489)

Tamara embodies resilience in the face of the brutalities she has endured, a testament to the profound impact these experiences have had on her existence, culminating in a struggle for

survival against the urge to end her life. She discusses the different methods she has explored in her struggles with life. The grief of living a traumatised life has forced her to escape the act of living itself. The process of slipping into the habit of falling asleep and keep sleeping is an escape that her physical body has adopted to give space to the mind which is in a state of utter distress and agony. Sleeping here becomes a strategy of escapism form the realities of life and the challenge of carrying forward with the strong memories of anguish that surface while the mind is in the conscious state. While addressing about her attempts to find solace in seeking death as an ultimate resort, the speaker cannot explain the entirety of life experiences as a whole on what and how things transpired and unfolded that caused grave marks on her mental state. These unspeakable wounds of trauma are the ones which Caruth refers to as "Unclaimed Experience" in her text *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.

The fragmentary narrative framework resembling the shape of a tree. Readers cannot anticipate the future connection between the current scene and the overarching storyline, nor can they forecast the emergence of new branches that may establish an entirely distinct narrative context. The variety of characters, surroundings, and plot pieces lack a discernible focal point. However, each fragment maintains its own autonomous purpose, giving rise to several branches that continuously alternate between 'de-centralization' and 're-centralization'. The concept of trauma is conveyed through fragmented narrations that span over many time periods, locations, and characters, rather than following a linear chronological structure. Traumatic experiences are firmly embedded in a specific moment in the past and cannot be effectively communicated in a conventional narrative framework, such as regular memory. The main character's(witness) interpretation of his damaged memory is reflected through the alternative use of 'past' and 'present' in all the novels. The 'past' sections portray flashbacks and the recurrence

of psychological trauma, while the ‘present’ narrative illustrates the consequences of delayed psychological trauma. Furthermore, the main character(witness) employs this narrative approach to articulate his yearning for recuperation from his distressing encounters. Alexievich’s use of fragmented narration of the accounts brilliantly depicts the indescribable trauma of despair and the process of finding recovery.

Storytelling has been an inherent aspect of human civilisation for thousands of years, functioning as a means of exchanging experiences, safeguarding historical accounts, and imparting moral teachings. Within the framework of trauma, storytelling assumes a notably prominent function. It serves as a method by which individuals can analyse, incorporate, and comprehend their experiences that were traumatic. Therapists and Psychologists have acknowledged for a considerable amount of time the healing capabilities of storytelling. Michael White and David Epston in their book *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* introduced a healing technique known as Narrative therapy. It is a strategy that employs narrative to assist individuals in disentangling themselves from their problems and examining their experiences from an alternative standpoint. Through the act of externalising their problems, individuals are able to reshape and take ownership of their life narratives, resulting in a heightened sense of empowerment and control.

The role of the listener or witness is a crucial element in the process of storytelling for trauma rehabilitation. Sharing one's narrative necessitates a compassionate audience capable of offering affirmation and assistance. This interpersonal interaction is essential for the process of recovery, as it facilitates the transformation of an individual's solitary experience into a collective human bond. Receiving empathy from others who listen helps to create a feeling of being accepted and decreases the emotions of embarrassment and isolation commonly linked to trauma. Although storytelling has considerable therapeutic potential, it is not without some problems and challenges.

Recalling distressing events might potentially re-trigger trauma in individuals and re-traumatize the person if not conducted in a supportive and secure setting. Therefore, therapists and facilitators are required to establish an environment of confidence and security to ensure that the act of storytelling provides empowerment rather than being detrimental. Furthermore, it is imperative to take into account cultural and individual differences. Some persons may not feel at ease or be inclined to disclose their personal experiences; hence it becomes important to provide alternate therapy methods that can cater to a range of different requirements and preferences. Practicing ethical storytelling necessitates meticulous deliberation on portrayal and authenticity. Narratives that are created need to endeavour to faithfully depict the experiences of individuals who have had trauma, while refraining from sensationalism or exploitation. Incorporating the inputs of survivors during the storytelling process may guarantee that their narratives are conveyed with honesty and reverence.

Survivors of trauma derive significant therapeutic advantages from the act of storytelling. It facilitates individuals in expressing and structuring their memories, hence diminishing the emotional anguish linked to them. This process promotes a sense of empathy and awareness, for both the storyteller and the reader. Sharing one's personal narrative can offer ‘emotional catharsis’, aiding in the alleviation of the weight of bearing distressing recollections. Survivors typically experience a cathartic release, which is accompanied by a feeling of relief and empowerment. During this process, they regain control over their stories and discover significance in their past experiences. Consequently, storytelling also promotes empathy and connection, dismantling the walls of isolation that frequently accompany trauma. Through the act of recounting their experiences, survivors can establish connections with those who have encountered comparable obstacles, fostering a feeling of camaraderie and assistance. Engaging with trauma narratives can

enhance listener's comprehension and empathy towards individuals who have experienced suffering. Narration of personal stories can help foster resilience and optimism. Through recounting their experiences of enduring and overcoming adversity, those who have experienced trauma can serve as a source of motivation and bolster their own resilience. Tales of resilience showcase the innate ability of humans to bounce back and develop, providing a source of optimism for individuals navigating the consequences of tragedy.

Svetlana Alexievich's body of work serves as a testament to the influential role of narrative in the process of healing and rebuilding one's sense of self after experiencing trauma. She utilizes the psychological mechanism of 'Externalization and Distancing' as a technique to depict the trauma survivors. Externalisation is the process of expressing and materialising internal thoughts, emotions, and experiences, thus making them easier to handle and comprehend. Distancing, however, pertains to the psychological mechanism of establishing distance between oneself and distressing memories, hence diminishing their emotional intensity. Collectively, these mechanisms assist individuals in attaining control over what they have experienced and incorporating them into their overall life narratives. Speaking enables those who have experienced trauma to express their experiences in a way that creates a separation between themselves and their horrific recollections. This process facilitates individuals in obtaining a broader understanding and diminishes the emotional intensity of their memories. *Second-Hand Time* is a book where people have shared their experiences of living through and after the downfall of the Soviet Union. They expressed their feelings of sadness, disappointment, and the feeling of getting deceived. This practice of creating distance helps in the cognitive processing of intricate emotions and promotes the development of emotional resilience. In one of the accounts the person recollects,

> I'm searching for a language. People speak many different languages: There's the one they use with children, another one for love. There's the language we use to talk to ourselves, for our internal monologues. On the street, at work, while traveling—everywhere you go, you'll hear something different, and it's not just the words, there's something else, too. There's even a difference between the way people speak in the morning and how they speak at night. What happens between two people at night vanishes from history without a trace. (Alexievich, *Second-Hand Time* 30)

This story effectively conveys the intricate and subtle nature of human communication, highlighting that language is not simply a compilation of words but a fluid and contextually influenced medium that fluctuates in different environments and throughout the day. The individual is narrating the incident and the consequences of the event that has happened years ago and has survived a chaotic time of the 1990s. The temporal distancing of the person has contributed in analysing and articulating the experience more calmly and thoughtfully compared to the person's mental state during that period. Probably the individual is able to identify patterns and meanings that were not immediately evident at the time of the incident. There is pain in the tone of the narration and a shift towards unlocking the new perspectives i.e. towards the change. There lies a conflict between the old and the new reality of the surroundings and the society. The rapid social and political shift has exposed the narrator to a reality where the people are struggling to adjust.

The account of Nina Shunto, who was six-years-old during WWII recalls her experience of childhood in *Last Witnesses* and recollects,

> We were picked up by the partisans. From the partisan unit we were sent away from the front on a plane… What do I have left from the war? I don't understand what strangers are, because my brother and I grew up among strangers. Strangers saved us. But what kind of strangers are they? All people are one's own. I live with that feeling, though I'm often disappointed. Peace-time life is different. (Alexievich, *Last Witnesses* 93)

This passage demonstrates the deep and enduring influence of war on an individual's understanding of their own identity and a sense of belonging. The speaker's encounter of being rescued and nurtured by unfamiliar individuals during the war has profoundly influenced her perspective on the world, resulting in a challenge to differentiate between unfamiliar individuals and those they know well. The blurring of borders in the midst of conflict implies that the distinctions between 'stranger' and 'family' can become less clear, as the priorities of survival and solidarity override traditional social categorisations. The speaker's assertion, "All individuals are one's own,"(93) emphasises a pervasive feeling of familial connection formed during the intense and transformative experience of warfare. Nevertheless, this viewpoint is confronted with the difficulties of adapting to a time of peace, where relationships and interactions among people may not be motivated by the same immediate need for reciprocal assistance. The speaker's expression of disappointment suggests a challenge in reconciling the egalitarian and inclusive values that emerged from wartime experiences with the more divided and potentially less empathetic aspects of post-war society. The comprehension of the event of losing parents and living with the strangers and even being raised by strangers is a memory explained by Nina. Despite the manifestation of hollowness and emptiness, there exists a degree of acceptance about the changes the child has encountered at a young age. This re-look towards the personal belongingness and a new approach

to accept, like in this case Nina has accepted that the strangers as her own, because these strangers have assisted her in growing up and have helped raising her and her brother. This acceptance is somewhat a way of healing and recovery.

Similarly, another interplay of psychological mechanism that makes Alexievich's novels unique and responsive towards the witnesses is the 'Empathy and Validation'. Empathy is the ability to comprehend and experience the emotions of others, resulting in a profound emotional bond. Validation, however, refers to the recognition and approval of someone else's emotions, beliefs, and experiences as valid and genuine. Collectively, these processes are essential in aiding individuals in the processing of traumatic experiences and incorporating them into their overall life narratives. Through the act of sharing their personal narratives, individuals obtain recognition and affirmation of their pain, a crucial component in the process of healing.

The collective nature of narratives in *Unwomanly Face of War* enables the women to discover a sense of unity and assistance, affirming their experiences and contributions. This shared capacity for understanding and relating to other's emotions enhances their feeling of identity and belonging. Alexievich utilises the techniques of empathy and affirmation to assist women in comprehending and incorporating their distressing wartime encounters. By employing an empathetic methodology and affirming the authenticity of their narratives, these women are able to express and structure their recollections, establish authority over their traumatic experiences, and reconstruct their sense of self. Valentina Pavlovna, a commander of antiaircraft artillery narrates her story and says,

> When I put on a dress for the first time, I flooded myself with tears. I didn't recognize myself in the mirror. We had spent four years in trousers. There was no one I could tell that I had been wounded, that I had a concussion. Try telling it, and

> who will give you a job then, who will marry you? We were silent as fish. We never acknowledged to anybody that we had been at the front. We just kept in touch among ourselves, wrote letters. (Alexievich, *Unwomanly Face of War* 109)

This account reflects upon the internal challenges and societal struggle faced by the women who served in WWII. The speaker's experience exemplifies the profound influence of war on their sense of self and the strategies they used to navigate their life after the conflict. The act of donning a dress and failing to recognise one's own reflection in the mirror signifies the profound metamorphosis that the speaker experienced throughout the conflict. Donning trousers over a span of four years, which served as a symbol of their vigorous involvement in the war, became an integral aspect of their identity. The clothing, once a representation of conventional femininity, now appears foreign and unfamiliar, emphasising the profound interior transformations brought about by their experiences during the war. The outpouring of tears upon catching a glimpse of herself in the outfit indicates a liberation of repressed emotions. The statement highlights the conflict between the speaker's identity during wartime and the conventional norms of femininity that she is now expected to adhere. This moment of confrontation with her mirror exposes the incongruity between her previous encounters and her present identity. The speaker's choice to withhold information regarding her battle injuries and concussion emphasises the negative perception around the experiences of female soldiers. Disclosing that their experience of serving on the front lines may potentially endanger their future opportunities, such as securing work or entering into marriage. As a result of this social shame, numerous women were compelled to repress their distressing encounters and hide their authentic selves. Alexievich's work highlights the significance of empathy and validation in dealing with trauma and rebuilding one's identity. It serves as a strong witness to the resilience of these ladies in the midst of great difficulties.

Caruth emphasises the frequent occurrence of the mind's ‘immediacy’ and ‘directness’ in perception of the traumatic event. She says, “the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it” (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 92). This paradoxical expression emphasises the deep disconnect between the encounter with trauma and the ability to comprehend and deal with it in the present time. This shows the profound impact of trauma on both cognition and memory. Further, the next step of the traumatized is to reach healing. Healing entails expressing these broken feelings and receiving compassionate support from others, which assists survivors in incorporating the trauma into their narrative memory. The process of deriving significance from tragedy is crucial for both personal and communal recovery.

One generation not only transmits love, memories, and ideals to the next generations. Trauma can also be inherited throughout generations, thereby becoming a lasting legacy. Occasionally, the previous generations transmit worries, anguish, and traumas to future descendants through their narratives and memories. These concerns endure throughout generations as a result of the transmission of trauma. Intergenerational transmission of trauma is the process by which the consequences of traumatic events are inherited by future generations from individuals who have personally experienced trauma. This phenomenon has undergone extensive examination in diverse disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and epigenetics. The transmission of trauma from one generation to another is a multifaceted process that involves psychological, social, and biological causes. Individuals who have experienced trauma can have an impact on their offsprings by changing the way they parent, communicate, and behave. The cultural and collective recollections of traumatic events also have a vital impact on forming the identity and resilience of future generations.

The term transgenerational trauma was first introduced in a 1966 essay by Canadian psychiatrist Vivian M. Rakoff et al. They conducted a study where they recorded the transfer of trauma from parents to their offsprings. This article established the foundation for future investigations on transgenerational or intergenerational trauma. Victims of mass migration, systematic extermination by the state, and acts of violence persistently experience the recurrence of their traumatic experiences through their recollections. As a result of continuously reliving their memories, they subject their offspring, who have never directly experienced it, to the same traumatic experiences. Rachel Yehuda and Amy Lehrner, in their study examining intergenerational trauma theories and the influence of epigenetic processes on multigenerational transmission, assert that the prevailing notion in the majority of trauma theories is that the offspring of persons who have endured traumatic occurrences "find themselves grappling with their parents' post-traumatic state" (243).

The transfer of psychological and emotional discomfort from one generation to the succeeding can occur, even if the future generations weren't directly affected by the traumatic event. This act of transfer can be observed through a range of mechanisms, such as interpersonal relationships, cultural practices, narratives, and collective memory. The consequences of intergenerational trauma manifest in multiple facets of an individual's existence, including their psychological and physiological well-being, interpersonal connections, and cultural sense of self. For instance, in the case where a parent or grandparent has undergone a traumatic event, they could encounter challenges in regulating their emotions, establishing good interpersonal connections, or transmitting cultural customs and principles to their children. Consequently, the trauma may persist and impact subsequent generations, creating a cycle of trauma that is challenging to disrupt. Yehuda and Lehrner emphasise that the circumstances encountered by subsequent generations can

“augment or mitigate offspring effects” (252), and advocate for the necessity of more investigative studies into how the environmental circumstances influence the transmission of trauma.

The Soviet society has been deeply affected by several traumatic events such as war, nuclear accidents, forced migration after the Soviet breakup, and cultural rupture. These experiences have become ingrained in their collective consciousness, influencing their understanding of themselves and the world around them. The exploration of one's identity and the need to find a place of belonging is a recurring element in all the novels of Alexievich.

Gabriele Schwab talks about transgenerational trauma in context of the nuclear dangers and narrates,

> Nuclear dangers, including those resulting from the threat of nuclear wars, create a chronic collective nuclear trauma. Usually concealed within a relentless politics of denial, the risks from the already existing planetary radioactive contamination include not only the skyrocketing levels of various cancers and other health problems, including reproductive damage, but also the transgenerational persistence of major forms of physical and psychological trauma. (Schwab 844)

She emphasises the significant and long-lasting influence of nuclear hazards on worldwide health and socioeconomic welfare. The persistent and widespread psychological distress caused by the constant fear of nuclear warfare and the long-lasting consequences of radioactive pollution are significant concerns that are frequently disregarded or minimised as a result of political motivations and a prevailing culture of refusal to acknowledge these problems. While *Chernobyl Prayer* talks about the exposure of radioactive substances to the common people and the struggles of being exposed to radioactivity causing transgenerational imperfections physiologically and psychologically. Schwab’s observations fall in line with the testimonial accounts that are a part of

Chernobyl Prayer and justifies the impact of nuclear trauma among the people exposed to it. The narrative of a husband and wife, both educators, reveals their observations regarding the profound impact of a nuclear disaster on their students' childhood. They articulate the challenging circumstances faced by the children and express their insights on the situation:

> I teach Russian literature to children who aren't like children used to be ten years ago. Right before their eyes, there's always someone or something being buried. Being laid to rest in the ground … People they knew. Houses and trees, everything is being buried. In assembly, the children faint if they remain standing for fifteen or twenty minutes, their noses start bleeding. There's nothing that can surprise them, and nothing that can cheer them up. They're always sleepy and tired, their faces are all pale and grey. (Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayers* 129)

The narrative vividly portrays the deep psychological and physical effects on children who live in a world characterised by continual loss, destruction, and contamination of the environment caused by the exposure to nuclear radiation. Continual exposure to trauma can result in a condition called chronic trauma or complicated trauma. Unlike a single traumatic event, continuous exposure to stressful events can profoundly change a child's psychological and emotional growth. The absence of astonishment or happiness, along with persistent exhaustion and a detachment from typical childhood activities, suggests a profound psychological apathy. This phenomenon might be considered as a defence mechanism, in which the mind suppresses emotional reactions in order to safeguard itself against excessive stress and sorrow. Children raised under such circumstances may bear the enduring psychological and physical marks of their encounters far into their adult years. This can result in a recurring pattern of trauma that impacts subsequent generations, sustaining a condition of shared hopelessness and dysfunction within the community.

Dana Amir, a clinical psychologist and literature researcher, in *Bearing Witness to the Witness: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Four Modes of Traumatic Testimony* (2019), demonstrates that testimonies provide insight into the profound psychological injuries experienced by individuals. Furthermore, she recognises that authors have the ability to depict trauma and its consequences in many ways by utilising specific language in their narratives. These ideas challenge the prevailing beliefs of 1990s that trauma is 'unspeakable' and difficult to understand, as discussed in the field of trauma studies.

An individual expressing his deep sorrows over the disintegration of the formidable USSR and the emergence of capitalism, in *Second-Hand Time*, he says,

> We're living in the most shameful era of our entire history. Ours is the generation of cowards and traitors. That's how our children will remember us. "Our parents sold out a great country for jeans, Marlboros, and chewing gum," they'll say. We failed to defend the USSR, our Motherland. An unspeakable crime. (Alexievich, *Second-Hand Time* 147)

The notion that the present generation will be deemed "cowards and traitors"(147) by future generations underscores the conflict between individuals who experienced the Soviet era and those who came of age after its demise. The generational split frequently encompasses contrasting viewpoints regarding the significance and worth of the Soviet past. The descendants of the Soviet generation may regard their predecessors with a blend of admiration and bewilderment, especially if they have been raised in a society that values individualism and capitalism. The expression implies a concern that the upcoming generations may lack comprehension or admiration for the sacrifices made by their predecessors, namely their parents and grandparents. The emotions conveyed are based on a profound feeling of grief and disillusionment, illustrating the significant

influence that the dissolution of the Soviet Union had on a large number of its inhabitants. The concern that future generations would recall this period as one characterised by timidity and disloyalty reflects the lasting anguish of individuals who believe that their principles and efforts were forsaken. This narrative serves as a potent reminder of the intricacies associated with historical memory and the manner in which various generations perceive and evaluate the past.

Boys in Zinc also displays many stories of the children getting their traumas passed on from the previous generation without anything in their own control. In one of the stories a lady recounts her son's childhood and the agony of having a malnourished child. She tells,

> He was as small as a girl, white and fragile; he was born at eight months and bottle-fed. Our generation couldn't produce healthy children; we grew up during the war – with the shelling, the shooting and the hunger … the fear. (Alexievich, *Boys in Zinc* 136)

This account explores the repercussions of war on a generation's capacity for producing kids that are physically and mentally sound. It emphasises on the profound and enduring consequences of prolonged exposure to violence, scarcity, and terror. This perspective highlights the significant impact, both physically and emotionally, that these conditions can have. This impact is not limited to those who directly encounter the conditions, but also affects the subsequent generation. The assertion that, "Our generation couldn't produce healthy children" (136) conveys a profound feeling of culpability or remorse. It implies that the effects of experiencing war, such as continuous bombardment, gunfire, starvation, and anxiety, directly influenced the capacity of that generation to guarantee the well-being and vigour of their children. This approach is consistent with the concept of transgenerational trauma, which refers to the transmission of the consequences

of severe stress and deprivation from one generation to the next. These consequences affect not only the psychological and emotional well-being but also the physical health.

Caruth situates Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a historical phenomenon wherein the horrific experiences incessantly haunt the survivor. Caruth notes: “What returns to haunt the victim, these stories tell us, is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known” (*Unclaimed Experience* 6). This concept indicates that trauma is not solely associated with the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic occurrence but is fundamentally anchored in the incapacity to completely understand or absorb the event at the time it transpires. The unassimilated component of trauma i.e., the disparity between experience and comprehension constitutes the foundation of its haunting quality. Similarly, the testimonies collected by Alexievich embody this idea. Her oral accounts demonstrate how survivors are haunted not just by the experiences they had but also by the ongoing difficulty in comprehending, recounting, and coming to terms with their incompleteness. Through the documentation of fragmentary, incomplete, and frightening experiences from ordinary persons, she elucidates the intricate nature of trauma while underscoring the necessity towards empathetic, ethical witnessing, and a profound connection with the unresolved aspects of human suffering.

Once the crisis has subsided, the process of reconstruction commences, including not just the physical environment but also the psychological domains of one's identity and memory. For those who have endured, the task at hand is not simply to regain what was taken away, but to confront the lingering reverberations of a history that resists being erased from memory. After a destructive event, people and communities struggle with the remains of their past identities and the uncertain possibilities of their future selves. The process of recreating identity is filled with tension, as individuals navigate the conflicting desires of reclaiming a feeling of normalcy while

acknowledging the irrevocable truth that nothing can fully revert to its previous state. The lingering presence of past traumas and memories, like to a shadow, creates uncertainty about the future and adds complexity to the process of healing.

However, amidst this challenge exists the possibility for profound change. Identity, despite its strong connection to the past, is not unchanging. It has the capacity to be transformed, reinvented, and envisioned in new ways. The upheavals that disrupt the traditional modes of existence also generate opportunities for novel narratives to arise. These new stories are crafted through the intense process of enduring and adapting, influenced by the knowledge gained from previous experiences but not completely restricted by them.

The individuals who have endured the catastrophe find themselves at a critical juncture, where the way ahead is ambiguous but brimming with potential. Within this transitional area, individuals are faced with the task of incorporating their encounters with grief and distress into their developing identity. Individuals may want to commemorate history by safeguarding its recollection, while others may strive to liberate themselves from its influence, constructing a fresh sense of self that mirrors the current reality and aspirations for the future. Ultimately, the act of reconstructing one's identity after a crisis is a form of resistance against the forces that attempted to annihilate it. This statement asserts that, even in the face of terrible experiences, life persists, and along with it, the ability to transform, to develop, and to redefine the concept of completeness. The remnants of previous experiences may never completely vanish, but they can be assimilated into a more comprehensive fabric of significance, where they function as prompts of both the vulnerability and the tenacity of the human psyche.

Alexievich's writing explores the intricate nature of identity in the aftermath of a crisis, specifically focussing on the shared and personal experiences of individuals who lived through the

Soviet era and its consequences. Her books eloquently portray the intricate connections between trauma, memory, and identity as they intersect in the process of rebuilding one's sense of self. A notable aspect of Alexievich's work is her adeptness at capturing the disintegration of one's sense of self that arises in the aftermath of a disaster. The individuals she studies frequently communicate through fragmented and disconnected narratives, which accurately depict the fractured nature of their experiences. The fragmentation described here reflects the wider societal breakdown and the dissolution of shared identity that numerous individuals went through during and after the decline of the Soviet Union. The individuals she records are not simply passive recipients of historical events; they actively engage in the task of recreating their own identities. By engaging in storytelling, individuals assert their control and combine their recollections, suffering, and aspirations into a cohesive narrative. This narrative, although influenced by grief, also demonstrates the enduring ability of humans to persevere and rejuvenate.

Narrative remembering is conceived as a communication mechanism that establishes a connection between the narrators and their audience. Healing is conceptualised via these voices: it arises from the dialectic between the expression of intergenerational trauma and the recognition of the precarious conditions that perpetuate the cyclical recurrence of trauma. Thus, those who were haunted now become the healers, and the broken pieces of one's sense of self are reconstructed into a mosaic that, although distinct from its original form, remains equally exquisite and significant. The crisis ultimately serves as a catalyst for the formation of a new self, which is more enduring, richer, and more complicated, rather than just causing misery.

Chapter V

Reimagining History Through Polyphonic Narratives

Within the domain of historical discourse, the portrayal of events has conventionally been shaped in a linear and in an authoritative manner, frequently influenced by those in positions of authority. Nevertheless, the emergence of postmodern philosophy and its impact on the investigation of history has brought about a significant change in the perspective. This has prompted researchers and authors to thoroughly reevaluate the notion of the historical truth and the methods used to express it. In the midst of this context, Svetlana Alexievich's literary works stand out as a profound examination of the various facets of historiography which challenges traditional representation of history and presents a diverse range of voices that provide perspective on the intricate subtleties of human existence.

Taking the backdrop of Soviet and post-Soviet socio-political conditions, the purpose of this chapter of the dissertation is to investigate the significance of Alexievich's literary corpus, with a particular emphasis on her creative storytelling methods, the notion of polyphony, and the consequences that these techniques have for comprehending the truth about history. This chapter aims to throw light on how Alexievich's works straddle the conventional boundaries between fact and fiction, providing nuanced understanding into the socio-political dynamics of both the past and the present.

Plurality of voices come together to create a complex representation of the events of history and the subsequent aftermath of those events. This is the notion of polyphony, which is at the core of Alexievich's narrative method. Alexievich challenges the prevailing narratives that are pushed by historical institutions by amplification of the voices of those who have been marginalised and suppressed. She does this by drawing on multiple conversations with the witnesses, victims, and

common people. By employing this polyphonic method, she displays the nuances of everyday life within the framework of historical events, confounding the basic dichotomies of heroes and the victims.

An examination of the concept of truth as it appears in Alexievich's writings is among the most important aspects of this investigation. Alexievich maintains that truth is intrinsically subjective and fragmented, and that it is formed by personal viewpoints, experiences, and emotions. This is in contrast to the conventional notions of historical truth, which views it as an objective and verifiable reality. She highlights the fundamentally elusive character of truth by putting the subjective testimony of her interviewees in the limelight. She also invites readers to confront the ambiguities and inconsistencies that are inherent in the creation of traditional historical narratives.

Furthermore, this chapter aims to examine the socio-political consequences of Alexievich's narrative interventions within the framework of Soviet and post-Soviet scenarios. Alexievich challenges dominant narratives of power and ideology by giving prominence to the perspectives of everyday people, such as those who survived war, victims of political oppression, and marginalised minorities. In doing so, she reveals the grave human toll caused by authoritarianism, warfare, and societal turmoil. By reimagining history from a marginalised perspective, she invites readers to address the ethical obligations of seeing and remembering, even in the midst of societal amnesia and collective forgetfulness.

The term polyphony, which is commonly associated with the concept of harmony within music, has discovered a significant relevance in the field of literature. Utilising polyphony as a method of narration results in the creation of a symphony of voices, with each voice contributing to the rich tapestry that constitutes a literary work. In the beginning the chapter will progress on to

investigate the origins of polyphony in literature as well as its development across time. In an effort to shed light on the origins of polyphony, its conceptual foundations, and its transformational influence on literary discourse we explore it through an interdisciplinary lens that incorporates literary theory, historical analysis, and textual interpretation.

An explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of polyphony is necessary before exploring its literary history. Etymologically the term polyphony is derived from the Greek word 'Polyphonia' breaking down into 'poly' meaning 'many' and 'phone' meaning 'sound,' and it characterises the works of literature that have multiple voices or viewpoints. The traditional idea of a single, authoritative voice is challenged by this multi-faceted storytelling method, which invites readers to engage in a dynamic discussion among multiple views. David Lodge states that polyphonic novels are those "novel in which a variety of conflicting ideological positions are given a voice and set in play both between and within individual speaking subjects, without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 34). Mikhail Bakhtin in, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* published a research paper titled, "Discourse in the Novel," in which he was the one who first proposed the concept of the polyphonic novels. He provides a rigorous and comprehensive analysis and re-evaluation of the novel's stylistic characteristics and functions. Bakhtin's profound fascination with the genre of the novel motivated him to investigate the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, a renowned author in the realm of globally recognised literature. In his influential book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin presents significant insights on Dostoevsky's literary works. In his examination of polyphony, Mikhail Bakhtin used the terms 'voice' and 'consciousness' interchangeably (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 6). According to him, "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels"

(6). Bakhtin introduces another term ‘heteroglossia’ which refers to, “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 324). He defines heteroglossia as a contradictory discourse that exists within languages but is universal to all languages; examples include vernacular, regionalisms, and other language variations that occur within a given language. This concept foreshadows and, to a certain extent, impacts subsequent post-structural understandings of the structural variations present in a given language.

Polyphony, according to Bakhtin's theory, is most commonly linked with dialogism and heteroglossia, in which the collaboration of voices creates an experience of multiplicity and complexity in the narrative style. According to Bakhtin, novels are, “phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice,” (261) therefore novels can be recognised as works comprising of “several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls” (261). In conventional notions of literature, the writer is seen as the sole authority who is responsible for crafting the narrative cosmos. However, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of polyphony, which proposes a more nuanced and dynamic view of authorship and narrative control, challenges this traditional concept. According to the conventional conception of literature, the author is frequently shown as a sovereign person who exercises complete authority over the characters, the storyline, and the conceptual framework. The great philosopher Roland Barthes is credited for announcing the ‘death of the author,’ which is an argument that once a work is created, it exists independently of the person who wrote it. The landmark piece *The Death of the Author* (1967) written by Jacques Derrida is a crucial contribution in literary theory. It challenges the notion that authorial intention is the ultimate source of meaning in a document. According to Derrida, the existence of the author inside the text is inherently pushed

back, fractured, and subject to interpretation. By exploring the historical and philosophical foundations of authorship, Derrida reveals the inherent multiplicity of voices that are present in each literary work as well as the instability of meaning. According to Derrida, the phrase ‘death of the author’ does not refer to the demise of the specific author in the conventional sense; rather, it refers to the decentring of authorial power and the dissemination of meaning throughout a network of textual signifiers. As a result of this deconstruction of authorship, a more nuanced view of texts as spots of contestation, negotiation, and the unending postponement of meaning is made possible. However, conventional concepts, still continue to exist, and they continue to perpetuate the idea that the author is the final authority in constructing the story.

The concept of distributed authority is fundamental to both polyphony and the Derridean criticism of authorship. In this approach, meaning is not imposed from on high but rather arises via a shared process of interpretation and negotiation. When analysing polyphonic literature, readers are encouraged to become involved with the text by navigating opposing views, decoding ambiguous sections and developing their own interpretations of the text. This form of reading, which involves participation, is a reflection of Derrida's idea of ‘readerly’ texts, which are the texts that defy closure and encourage endless reinterpretation. By distributing authority over a number of different voices, polyphony gives readers the ability to become co-creators of meaning. This not only challenges the traditional hierarchies of interpretation, but it also opens up new opportunities for debate and exchange. To put it simply, polyphonic narratives are a manifestation of the democratic principles of deconstruction. They emphasise the radical capacity of literature to unsettle established meanings and discharge language from the clutches of authorial domination. When it comes to contemporary writings, the idea of polyphony provides a rich environment for investigating the intricacies of textual authority and the legacy of Derridean deconstruction.

Polyphonic narratives present readers with the task of rethinking older modes of interpretation and engaging in active participation with texts. This is accomplished by challenging the conventional notion of the single authorial voice and embracing the radical multiplicity of the language. The dispersion of authority and the celebration of diversity are two of the ways in which polyphony represents the lasting relevance of Derrida's critique of authorship. Polyphony invites us to embrace the fundamental uncertainty and contingency of meaning that we experience in our interactions with literature and language. Polyphony serves as a compelling reminder of the transforming capacity of narrative plurality and the boundless possibilities of textual interpretation in the age of postmodernism.

The concept of polyphony, as expressed by Bakhtin, poses a challenge to the author's hegemonic position by bringing to the forefront the several voices that are present inside a story. A cacophony of voices, each having a distinct autonomy and point of view, is included in polyphonic writing. This is in contrast to the traditional literary style, which includes a solo, authoritative voice driving the plot. These voices create an intricate web of implications and meanings by interacting, colliding, and using resonance with each other. Polyphonic compositions are characterised by the distribution of narrative power among numerous voices, which blurs the lines separating the author and the characters depicted in the work. There is a sense of autonomy and voice in the characters, which frequently challenges the supremacy of the author and brings an element of surprise into the story. As a result of this decentralisation of control, conventional power structures are not only destabilised, but readers are also invited to participate more actively in their interpretation of the piece of writing.

The advent of the novel as the pre-eminent literary genre in the modern age ushered forth a plethora of new opportunities for the display of polyphony. Polyphony arose as a fundamental

narrative method in the works of writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and George Eliot. This strategy made it possible to convey intricate social milieus and psychological landscapes in their works. *War and Peace,* written by Tolstoy, is a prime example of the polyphonic text because of its expansive cast of characters and panoramic extent. It provides readers with a comprehensive and multifaceted investigation of love, conflict, and existential thought.

A seismic shift occurred in literary aesthetics throughout the twentieth century, when writers belonging to the modernist and postmodernist school of thoughts endeavoured to question the standard narrative norms of the time and explored alternative ways of representation. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, two of the most influential modernist authors, are credited with revolutionising the novel form via their experiments with stream-of-consciousness narrative technique and internal monologue. In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a masterpiece of polyphonic fiction, the story transpires over the course of a single day in Dublin. It weaves together a variety of voices and points of view to create a multicoloured kaleidoscope of human experience.

Polyphony emerged in a radical shape during the postmodern era, when writers were struggling to come to terms with the fragmented characteristics of contemporary realities. The use of polyphony as a method for examining the intricacies of identity, history, and power was adopted by the authors like Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Toni Morrison. *Gravity's Rainbow*, a massive epic written by Pynchon and set amid the backdrop of World War II, navigates a complex network of personalities and plots, posing a challenge for readers to recognise patterns within the chaos.

In this age of digital technology, the introduction of cutting-edge media technologies has resulted in the endangerment of the novel forms of polyphony in literature. This has provided readers with unparalleled chances to participate with different narrative threads and viewpoints,

interactive narratives, hypertext fiction, and transmedia storytelling techniques. Examples of works that demonstrate the polyphonic possibilities of digital literature include *House of Leaves* by Mark Danielewski and *A Visit from the Goon Squad* by Jennifer Egan. These works blur the lines between text and technology.

It is becoming increasingly clear that polyphony has evolved into an essential component of literary expression, transcending both the borders of time and culture. Polyphony continues to engage readers and defy the traditional rules of narrative structure, from its early beginnings in ancient narratives to its present expressions in digital literature. Polyphony's origins may be traced back to ancient narratives. As humanity moves forward with the advancement of literature, it is essential for practitioners as well as academics to continue investigating the numerous facets of polyphony, elucidating its complexity and revealing its enduring significance in the process of sculpting the literary landscape of the future. From a researcher's perspective, Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is utilised to acknowledge and appreciate the existence of various epistemological and ideological viewpoints. It is particularly valued for its ability to empower marginalised communities by providing them with a platform to express their voices. However, it is important to note that polyphony has been subjected to criticism for its perceived lack of cohesion and social character. This criticism stems from its portrayal of the fractured and fragmented reality of our contemporary era. However, polyphony is highly effective as an interpretative instrument for comprehending the connection between diverse and sometimes contradictory narratives in the text.

Alexievich utilises her authorial position to cement strong narrative discourse and adopts the practice of polyphonic authorship. The goal of polyphonic authorship is to provide readers the opportunity to interpret the conclusion dependent on the multiple dimensions of the voices of individuals that are participating in the text or conversation. In contrast to history texts, which both celebrate and, at times, conceal the gruesome nature of the real event, the message that is

communicated to the reader is conveyed by first-hand individuals who have been a part of the incident. This enables a connection that is strong, giving the reader the opportunity to feel a connection that is intense. While majority of the literary works, force the author's point of view on the readers, polyphonic authorship seeks to empower readers to decipher the outcome based on the multifaceted voices of the individuals participating in the narrative or dialogue.

In the process of attempting to comprehend literary history in addition to literary historiography, we encounter constant difficulties created by the authors. There is no means to get around them on any account. The history of Soviet & Post Soviet literature, like the history of any other kind of literature, is moulded by the authors and the works that they have produced. It is noteworthy that this specific aspect is highly prominent, not only with regard to the self-expression of the past era but also with respect to our own view of those eras. Although we may suppose that authorship is merely one of the many functions that the texts perform, it is noteworthy to learn that this particular feature is extremely dominant. Given that interpretation inherently involves traversing boundaries, the fact that we are reading texts originating from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and historical periods should not pose an insurmountable barrier. On the contrary, by employing hermeneutic strategies and recognising semiotic structures that possess universal validity, as opposed to merely attributing objectivity, we can do so while preserving an awareness of the circumstances under which these texts were composed. When analysing historical documents, the term "author" appears to be an essential component. Despite our choice of getting rid of it, its effects and functions would continue to exist. Hence, inquiring about the hermeneutic connotations that the term "author" provides may prove beneficial (Bennett 118). It can be argued that the name of an author is closely associated with a specific textual realm, and conversely, any body of text is often associated with a particular author. This author is

associated as a historical figure as well as being a source of specific ideas and concepts. Anonymous works can present to be a challenge since they question our understanding, and prompt a quick and instinctive search for the true author. Undoubtedly, as mediaeval studies have elucidated, there are valid justifications for this inclination towards reconstruction. The author's goal, as well as their biography, provides insight into their specific political, social, and cultural context, making them a valuable historical witness. While analysing the historical environment, other important components of the author's capabilities have been overlooked, such as the epistemic significance and the discursive frontiers (Foucault 124). Throughout the twentieth century, the theoretical arguments that have taken place have been characterised by a profound lack of faith in the author. If we take a more in-depth look at the history of literature, we will see that there is a reciprocal scepticism: the reader holds it towards the author, and the author harbours it towards the reader, and can even harbour it towards himself at times. It may be seen in Galen's hermeneutic reminiscence on the poet Parthenius, which was conveyed through Arabic-Latin translations, this exhibited scepticism is by no means a phenomenon that is solely modern and post-modern. A brief overview can be summarised as follows:

> The poems by Parthenius (d. after 73 B.C.) reach a foreign people while he is still alive. He goes there and encounters two philologists who quarrel about the interpretation of a passage. One understands it as Parthenius wants it to be understood, the other differs from this reading. Parthenius, traveling incognito, tries to convince the latter by telling him that he had heard Parthenius explaining the meaning. But the philologist would not accept this line of interpretation. Parthenius, then, is forced to reveal his true identity in order to regain the authority over the interpretation (Spoerhase 443).

It is interesting to note that by the time the narrative comes to a close, it is not quite obvious if the conflict is resolved by the revelation of the name of the poet. The issue of misunderstanding, or to be more specific, the fact that a text allows space for interpretation, appears to have been a concern during Galen's time because he considers applying certain rules in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding.

Understanding the contextual setting and circumstances of a particular historical event may be facilitated by the use of textual archaeology and reconstruction, both of which are practices that are common in the fields of study that are concerned with historical texts. There is, however, the possibility of continuing research on authorship past this stage. The author appears to be the most important factor in determining how to access the meaning of his work at the outset of any hermeneutic action. According to Harold Love's concept in *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction* toward authorship, he says: "not as a single essence or non-essence but as a repertoire of practices, techniques and functions – forms of work – whose nature has varied considerably across the centuries and which may well in any given case have been performed by separate individuals" (Love 33). Therefore, to challenge the author's authority, one approach is to view the author not just as a biographical individual or a historical character, but rather as an organisational concept. This concept serves as a framework that allows us to explore both the possibilities and constraints of a text at the same time.

Written communication is characterised by its permanence, explicitness, and precision, in contrast to oral communication. A literary element that describes the manner in which an author elects to present arguments or concepts is referred to as a style of writing in literature. Language and tone serve as supplementary elements that explicate the author's chosen writing style. Readers frequently establish a psychological bond with the genre of literature to which they are exposed,

regardless of their varied backgrounds including their cultural, social and linguistic affinities. The understanding of written communication among readers is closely connected to their personal perspective and individual experiences. The influence of written stories can either have a significant or negligible impact on readers, depending on the author or creator's skill in facilitating a more focused mental process. Contemporary polyphonic works employ many methods to accurately replicate the manner in which we construct and communicate our current narrative identity in the global community. Each author adheres to a specific trajectory, and every piece meticulously constructed by an author will elicit varying responses from the reader. The variations in how ideas are conveyed, and these are the essential aspect of style in written communication. Writing styles demonstrate how an author conveys a concept, encompassing the entirety of the writer's choice of words, sentence structure, usage of literary techniques, and use of meaning, therefore influencing the overall impression created by the author's deliberate and inadvertent choices. Different kind of literary devices are employed by authors in their creation of the work of art in order to bring together many elements of the story, such as the plot, context, theme, style, characters, subject matter, and genre. For the purpose of presenting the various events in their work, authors make use of techniques such as flash-forward, backstory, flashback, foreshadowing, etc.

While most of the writers stick with a single narrative technique to build their stories, Alexievich incorporates three types of literary narrative techniques of writing together in one single text. She uses Non -Linear, Descriptive and Viewpoint narratives. Being a writer, she adopts the narrative techniques by skilfully collection of fragments of memories. Though trauma memories are scattered and disoriented Alexievich owing to the polyphonic authorship creates distinct narratives that are a combination of the above mentioned three types of literary narrative

techniques. In the art of storytelling, a non-linear narrative is a method in which the chronological sequence of events is disturbed. This means that the story does not continue in a straight line i.e. from the beginning to the finish. The story may instead move back and forth in time, or it may begin in the middle and then disclose events that occurred before or later through flashbacks or conjecture about the future. This method is frequently utilised in order to generate tension, develop the depth of characters, or disclose events from a variety of perspectives when applied. Analysing the account of Pyotr S, a psychologist, in *Chernobyl Prayer* wherein he says,

> I wanted to forget. Forget everything. And I was forgetting. I thought the worst was behind me, the war years, and that now I was safe. Protected by my knowledge, by what I'd gone through there. But … I went into the Chernobyl Zone. Been there many times now. It was there I realized I was helpless. And I'm falling apart because of this helplessness. (Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayer* 37)

There is a constant struggle between revisiting the past and living in the present, which is haunted by the memories of the past horrors. The speaker articulates a need to erase and progress beyond the atrocities of the past, linked to warfare, only to discover that the Chernobyl catastrophe revives and amplifies his perception of susceptibility. This corresponds to Alexievich's investigation into the manner in which traumatic occurrences return in unforeseen manners, interrupting any perception of sequential advancement or recuperation. The passage's structure mirrors the non-linear temporal experiences frequently encountered by Alexievich's characters. The speaker transitions chronologically from the past, specifically referring to "the war years," to the present, where he mentions his experience of entering the Chernobyl zone. Finally, he expresses a condition of introspection and vulnerability, attributing his emotional distress to a

sense of powerlessness. This reflects the manner in which memory operates, particularly in the setting of trauma, where the past and present are intricately intertwined.

A descriptive narrative technique is the approach in which the reader is given the opportunity to experience the world that the characters inhabit. When writing a story that is descriptive, the author uses words and phrases that are descriptive in order to evoke vivid pictures to form some kind of attention for the readers and create a mental image of the characters and the story setting. This allows the readers to visualise the backdrop of the plot, which includes the time and location where the story has taken place. Taking the instance to elucidate Alexievich's technique of creating descriptive narratives, in one of the interviews, Masha Ivanova, who was eight-year-old when WWII had taken place, depicted in *Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories*, Masha shares,

> We had a close-knit family. We all loved each other… My father fought in the Civil War. After that he walked with crutches. But he was head of a kolkhoz; his was a model farm. When I learned to read, he showed me clippings from the newspaper *Pravda* about our kolkhoz. As best chairman, he was sent before the war to a congress of "shock kolkhozniks" and to an agricultural exposition in Moscow. He brought me back pretty children's books and a tin of chocolates. (Alexievich, *Last Witnesses* 209)

The excerpt exemplifies Alexievich's utilisation of descriptive narrative techniques to elicit a vivid and emotionally impactful portrayal of the speaker's past. She employs precise details to vividly animate the narrative. The inclusion of the father's crutches, the *Pravda* newspaper clippings, and the "pretty children's books and a tin of chocolates"(209) all contribute to the formation of a vivid and palpable depiction of the speaker's recollections. These unique details not

only enhance understanding but also establish the story firmly in a certain period and location, thus creating a more immersive experience for the readers. The paragraph predominantly centres on good memories, yet it also has an underlying contrast that amplifies the descriptive potency of the narrative. The father's physical impairment, as seen by his use of crutches, contrasted with his notable achievement as the leader of a kolkhoz, serves to emphasise his unwavering determination and the admiration he garnered. This juxtaposition enhances the depiction, introducing intricacy to the father's character and the speaker's emotions towards him.

While experiencing a viewpoint narrative, the reader is given the opportunity to experience the story from the perspective of the narrator. By writing in a narrative style that is based on the narrator's point of view, the reader is provided with the chance to comprehend the narrator's thoughts, emotions, and mood, as well as other sensory elements, consequently enhancing their ability to connect with the entire experience. The viewpoint narrative technique of Alexievich can be identifies through the narrative of a private logistics driver, in *Boys in Zinc*. The narrator recounts,

> That’s how we ended up in Afghanistan … Soon we saw the wounded and the dead, and we heard the words ‘reconnaissance’, ‘action’, ‘operation’. It seems to me … The way I see things now, I was in a state of shock. It was months before I even started recovering, started getting a clear idea of my surroundings. (Alexievich, *Boys in Zinc* 40)

The narration is presented from a first-person perspective, a frequently used narrative viewpoint in Alexievich's work. This viewpoint enables the reader to gain insight into the speaker's innermost thoughts and emotions, establishing a direct and emotional connection with their experiences. The consistent use of the pronoun "I" in the story places the reader within the

narrator's perspective, enabling them to directly encounter the feelings of bewilderment, astonishment, and growing comprehension towards the narrator. The narrative style mirrors the speaker's own perspective, specifically conveying the confusion and intense emotional distress they experienced. Expressions such as "It seems to me…" and "The way I see things now…"(40) emphasise the narrator's lack of certainty and the gradual development of his comprehension regarding his circumstance. Alexievich's style relies on subjectivity to highlight the malleability of memory and perception, particularly in relation to horrific events such as war.

In her polyphonic works, Alexievich uses a blend of all three forms of narrative techniques. This gives real-life characters the opportunity to convey their particular versions of the events that transpired during wartime and tragedy, using their personal tone and vocabulary. There is pure truth presented in its original state, despite the fact that the language is crude and gloomy, which is a result of the aggravation and hopelessness associated with the situation. In his writing, Bakhtin discusses the author's point of view and states, the authorial viewpoint in a polyphonic work is distinct from its monologic equivalents in terms of both the manner in which it is expressed and the sort of viewpoint it expresses. Bakhtin's detractors frequently interpret him as claiming that a polyphonic work does not lack unity. However, this is not the case. Based on Bakhtin's criterion, a piece of work that does not possess any kind of unity would be considered a faulty piece of work. Polyphony, on the other hand, necessitates a distinct form of unity, which Bakhtin refers to as "a unity of a higher order " (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 298). Morson and Emerson assert that Bakhtin describes the monologic cosmos as "Ptolemaic," with the earth symbolising the writer's consciousness and serving as the central point around which the other consciousnesses orbit. The polyphonic nature of the cosmos is analogous to the Copernican model, where the earth is just one of several planets. Similarly, the author's consciousness is but one among numerous

consciousnesses. Emerson and Bakhtin draw a parallel between the transition from monologic to dialogic writing and the movement towards a heliocentric to a Copernican understanding of the world (*Creation of a Prosaics* 240).

Bakhtin argues that in Dostoevsky's writings, a protagonist emerges whose voice is crafted in a manner similar to the author's own voice just like in a usual novel. The perspective of a character about themselves and their surroundings holds equal significance to that of the author. It is neither subordinate to the character's objectified representation as a mere property, nor does it serve as a conduit for the author's voice. The text's structure exhibits a notable level of autonomy, seeming almost as if it exists independently from the author's identity (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 7).

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin explains the idea of a polyphonic hero and asserts the following:

> A character in a novel always has . . . a zone of his own. . . This zone surrounding the important characters of the novel is stylistically profoundly idiosyncractic: the most varied hybrid constructions hold sway in it, and it is always, to one degree or another, dialogized; inside this area a dialogue is played out between the author and his characters – not a dramatic dialogue broken up into statement-and response, but that special type of novelistic dialogue that realizes itself within the boundaries of constructions that externally resemble monologues. The potential for such dialogue is one of the most fundamental privileges of novelistic prose, a privilege available neither to dramatic nor to purely poetic genres. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 320)

Furthermore, Bakhtin asserts that the author should not focus on discovering or characterising the hero's specific existence or fixed image. Instead, the emphasis should be placed

on the "*sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the hero's final word on himself and on his world"* (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 48).

Mikhail Bakhtin's investigation into Fyodor Dostoevsky has sparked other investigations in this field, prompting several critics to provide their own insights on the concept of polyphony. Uma Viswanathan contends that Bakhtin's polyphony is an exceedingly comprehensive idea.

> In Bakhtin's theory of the novel, polyphony becomes a very inclusive concept. It encompasses not only the transcribed dialogues among the various characters, but also the implicit voices of the characters. That is, the thoughts and consciousnesses of the different characters, the explicit or implicit voices of the author, and even the voice of the reader(s) who engage in a dialogue with the novel. (51)

Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of Fyodor Dostoevsky's fiction has led him to conclude that polyphony is not an exclusive attribute of Dostoevsky's works, but rather an important feature of novels in general. Bakhtin also acknowledges that the concept of polyphony has ancient roots, thereby contradicting his earlier claim that Dostoevsky is the originator of polyphonic novels (44).

Subsequent critics, such as Chris Murray, concur with Bakhtin's assertion that polyphony is the defining characteristic of novels as a whole. Murray states that, "While Bakhtin initially argued that polyphony belonged to Dostoevskii's novels alone, he later changed his position and acknowledged the establishment of polyphony throughout world literature" (Murray 75). In addition to this, David Patterson also asserts that, "… polyphony is not a characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels alone, … No, it is a feature of the evolving novel itself, as Bakhtin indicates in 'The Problem of Text in Linguistics, Philol-ogy, and Other Humanistic Sciences'" (Patterson 135). Therefore, it has been demonstrated that polyphony is an intrinsic property of the novelistic form.

Polyphony, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, refers to the simultaneous presence of several views and focalizers in a text. These perspectives are shown as being partially or completely conflicting with one other, yet they are equally legitimate and remain unresolved inside the text. Polyphony deviates from the conventional notions of the novel by its unique approach to constructing collaborative stories. These communal narratives consist of several equally prominent characters, separate storylines, and different perspectives on the world. The inconsistencies within these narratives are not resolved by an authoritative and prevailing narrative perspective. Alexievich's books are a perfect example of this concept of polyphony since she painstakingly collects oral accounts from a wide variety of people who were impacted by key historical events. These events include the World War II, Chernobyl tragedy, the Soviet-Afghan War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. By employing a technique referred to as 'documentary literature,' Alexievich is able to amplify the voices of everyday people by providing them with the opportunity to recount their experiences, memories, and feelings in their own natural language.

Alexievich was influenced by Ales Adamovich who employed polyphony as a tool to build the narratives in the texts. A great presence of polyphony and polyphonic aspects can be seen in his writings, notably in the books that he wrote during the era of the Soviet Union. Polyphony is not only a structural feature in Adamovich's books, but it also serves as a means to capture the complexity and diversity of human experiences within the context of Soviet society (Osovskiy et al). He is well known for *The Khatyn Story* and *The Blockade Book*. The novel *The Khatyn Story*, is an excellent representation of Adamovich's use of polyphony. The work chronicles the horrifying events that occurred during the Khatyn slaughter amid World War II. The numerous point of views and voices that are depicted throughout Adamovich's narratives are a clear indication of the presence of polyphony in his works. A complex tapestry of contrasting points of

view is created by these voices, which frequently reflect a variety of social, political, and ideological stances. Through the incorporation of a variety of voices and different points of view, Adamovich brings to light the complexity and tensions that were present in Soviet society, as well as the oppressive nature of the regime. Furthermore, the existence of polyphony in Adamovich's literary works serves to emphasise the intricacies of individual and social identities within the framework of the borderlands. In the works of Ales Adamovich, the use of polyphony as a method of storytelling is a key aspect. Alexievich in one of her lectures says:

> My teacher, Ales Adamovich, whose name I mention today with gratitude, felt that writing prose about the nightmares of the 20th century was sacrilege. Nothing may be invented. You must give the truth as it is. A “super-literature” is required. The witness must speak. Nietzsche’s words come to mind – no artist can live up to reality. He can’t lift it. It always troubled me that the truth doesn’t fit into one heart, into one mind, that truth is somehow splintered. There’s a lot of it, it is varied, and it is strewn about the world. (Alexievich, “On the battle lost”)

In spite of the fact that Alexievich draws influence from Adamovich's polyphonic approach, she exceeds him in her ability to build a narrative that is more compelling and emotionally impacting. According to Jonny & Devi:

> Svetlana Alexievich assimilates polyphony to facilitate readers to visualize anecdotes which is closely associated with cognitive psychology. The sequencing of multiple voices with interrelated emotions enables precise comprehension of her writings. Alexievich features the polyphonic narrative technique, in her collection of monologues, to depict the reality of unsung heroes and innocent war victims. She

> relinquishes monologic control over the work and allows the characters to interact in their own terms which are iconic of polyphonic authorship. (5239)

As a result of the polyphonic aspect of Alexievich's accounts, her works are infused with a diverse array of voices, each of which provides a unique viewpoint on the events that are being taken into consideration. A mosaic-like structure is created as a result of the presence of several points of view, in which individual accounts connect, diverge, and overlap, therefore contradicting conventional concepts of just using the linear storytelling. Alexievich is able to expertly choreograph a multitude of voices in all her projects, shifting between testimonies in a fluid manner in order to produce a narrative collage that is comprised of several facets. These elements are constantly present in all her works. In an interview she says:

> In my books, real people narrate the main events of their times—war, the disintegration of the socialist empire, Chernobyl—all of which taken together is the history that they leave behind in words, the country's general history. Both old and new. Each is a history of one small, human destiny. All of history misses out on the history of the soul. Human passions are so often not included in history. My task is to hold them back from the darkness of disappearance and, most importantly, not to think up anything but to listen and hear about how people thought at a particular time, in a concrete situation, that is, during my time, the time that I had witnessed (Kuruvilla, "Svetlana Alexievich: A History of the Soul").

Effective storytelling requires a number of vital components, including reader engagement and emotional connection, which contributes to the development of a deeper relationship between the audience and the story itself. A reader's entire experience of reading is improved when they are interested in the story they are reading since they are more likely to be emotionally connected in

the narrative overall. Empathic connections enable readers to establish a personal connection with the characters and their experiences, typically resulting in heightened empathy and comprehension of other viewpoints. According to Green & Brooks, transportation into a narrative world significantly enhances empathy by allowing readers to experience emotions and events through the eyes of the characters. This immersive experience can lead to a more profound understanding and emotional connection with the story, ultimately making the narrative more impactful and memorable (702). Therefore, it is essential to cultivate reader involvement and establish sympathetic relationships in order to craft impactful and emotionally charged narratives. Readers are charged with a great sense of empathy and identification as a result of the polyphony that is present in Alexievich's works. Alexievich humanises historical events while making them approachable and relatable to a large audience by putting the voices of ordinary people at the forefront of the narrative. By allowing readers to immerse themselves in the complexities of her subject's feelings, problems, and resiliency, she invites them to experience what it is like to be in their(sufferer's) shoe. An increased comprehension of the complexity of history and the long-lasting effects of collective trauma is fostered by this intimate interaction.

Reflecting on the story of Zinaida Vasilyevna, a woman who speaks about her part of the experience during WWII. She mentions,

> I was embarrassed to tell anybody, a girl wounded, and where—in a buttock. In the behind … When you're sixteen, it's embarrassing to tell anybody. It's awkward to admit it. So I ran all over, bandaging, until I fainted from loss of blood. My boots were full of blood … (Alexievich, *Unwomanly Face of War* 154)

The statement and testimonial description of Zinaida, evokes generally identifiable emotions like humiliation, discomfort, and vulnerability, particularly within the setting of

adolescence ("When you're sixteen"). Many readers can easily remember a moment when they themselves experienced embarrassment or self-consciousness regarding something personal. This builds an instant emotional bond with the storyteller. The collective encounter with a universal human sentiment captivates the reader and fosters a sense of empathy. The narrator's utilisation of direct address ("When you're sixteen") encourages the reader to empathise with the narrator's perspective. This strategy obfuscates the demarcation between the narrator and the reader, thereby enhancing the reader's propensity to actively participate in and empathise with the narrator's encounter. The intimate tone, akin to the narrator confiding in the reader, intensifies this bond. The text exhibits an intrinsic juxtaposition between the banal preoccupation with humiliation and the grave, life-endangering circumstance of bleeding. This tension generates a nuanced sense of anticipation; the reader ponders how the narrator will manage this dual obstacle. The suspense in the story captivates the reader and makes them deeply interested in the result of the scenario. The story addresses universal issues including the challenges of self-perception, the sensation of physical discomfort, and the aspiration to uphold one's self-respect despite humiliation. These topics have a broad appeal and are easily understood and are highly relatable, prompting readers to identify with the narrator's experience. This universality facilitates the connection between the narrator's particular experience and the reader's own life, promoting a more profound sense of identification.

There is a common belief that literary works may be classified as either true or false, and this classification is not based on whether the works are factual or fictional. Therefore, a work of fiction can possess literary veracity, while a piece of non-fiction might be devoid of it. This assumption poses evident challenges for understanding truth. Novels consistently communicate realities pertaining to the human experience. These phenomena might be psychological in nature,

pertaining to the character, feelings, or behaviours of people, or they can include the relationships between persons. These ties might be social in nature, involving interactions between individuals and a group or many groups. The relationships that individuals or group of individuals have with non-human things, such as animals, material items, or actual or imagined forms of life, may be something that they are concerned with. They seldom address the relationships or characteristics of non-human entities, unless such entities contain human attributes and thus that become the focus of investigation. Consequently, because to this limitation, a novel has the ability to express moral or aesthetic truths about its subject matter, which is commonly seen as one of its primary purposes. An issue that arises in the discussion of truth in literature is the difficulty of clearly defining the main areas of contention and accurately distinguishing specific arguments and counterargument. A top-down, monologic discourse was forced on the people of the Soviet Union by the state, according to Bakhtinian rhetoric. It built ‘truth’ from the perspective that was dominating at that point in time, which was driven by Soviet ideology. The prevalent Soviet monologism, rendered perspectives that were both socially and culturally, silenced and unrecognized.

Alexievich's initiative puts a significant emphasis on the investigation of truth and authenticity in the art of storytelling. Alexievich welcomes the subjective and fragmentary characteristics of human memory, in contrast to the traditional approach to history, which frequently gives more weight to objective accounts of historic events. By putting human testimonials at the forefront, she undermines the idea that there is a single, authoritative truth, instead she places an emphasis on the variety of experiences that people have really experienced first-hand. Through this action, she highlights the inherent subjectivity of historical interpretation, in turn pushing for a narrative representation method that is more inclusive and empathic.

There exists a subtle distinction that delineates our perception of history and fiction. Naturally, we have always conceived history as real occurrences carried out by real individuals, substantiated by specific dates and years. For instance, the ruler of Country A initiated hostilities against Country B, resulting in a prolonged conflict that persisted for a specific duration. Eventually, one nation emerged triumphant while the other endured defeat and bore the subsequent repercussions of their loss. It is certain that some portions of history are based on factual evidence. People, often unknowingly embrace these narratives of past events as legitimate facts or reality merely because the title on the first page of the book states 'The History of This and That'. Furthermore, our conviction is strengthened by the narrative framework of the text, which we recognise as ‘historical’ due to its formal language and the inclusion of specific dates and years of occurrences. According to Popper, our ability to see and understand history through our senses, “… is an optical illusion” (Popper 134). Considering the consumers of the texts, it is often assumed that historical narratives provide accurate accounts of past events, which have been carefully reconstructed to enhance our understanding and knowledge of these historical events. To put it simply, the act of writing history is often seen as the act of documenting factual information.

A common person's understanding of history is that it pertains to real incidents that transpired during specific years, including actual people who were involved in these events (Davies, *Empiricism* 69). All of these claims are purportedly supported by traces of historical artefacts, which can manifest as physical constructions like buildings, roads, and monuments, or through written narratives preserved in dusty volumes in libraries or old texts discovered at archaeological sites. Historians rely on these sources to construct a reliable and factual narrative of the past. Southgate in her text, *History Meets Fiction*, argues that the premise that the fact and fiction are distinct has been questioned by contemporary developments. Genres including docu-

dramas, historical-fiction, non-fiction novels, and novelised biographies have blurred the line between truth and fiction. She claims that

> …historians, no less than novelists, rely on questionable evidence; so that the public must once for all be warned that the author's individual fancy very likely supplies much of the narratives; and that he forms it as best he may, out of stray papers, conversations reported to him, and his knowledge, right or wrong, of the characters of the persons engaged. (Southgate 27)

Upon closer examination, it becomes evident that history is comprised of a combination of historical events embellished with fictional elements. Furthermore, these fictional elements might occasionally portray genuine conditions.

The field of history is founded on the philosophy of empiricism, which forms the basis for its ideas and beliefs. Empiricism posits that our comprehension of history is acquired by observation or experience (Davies 85). This experience can be derived either from the perspective of a historian or from a secondary source who has personally experienced the event. Nevertheless, the belief that history consists solely of objective facts was challenged when postmodern intellectuals emerged and had an impact on other fields, including history. Postmodernists have a strong tendency to scrutinise and question established cultural norms, theoretical frameworks, and political systems. They asserted that our society is experiencing significant transformations due to advancements in technology such as the internet revolution and digital media, as well as the emergence of new types of knowledge and shifts in socio-economic systems. These developments are giving rise to novel approaches and perspectives in understanding our society. Best and Kellner supports this by stating that, "[t]hese processes are also producing increased cultural fragmentation, changes in the experience of space and time, and new modes of experience,

subjectivity and culture" (3). An essential tenet of postmodern thought is the recognition of the legitimacy of many viewpoints within any given discourse. The composition of historical accounts has been subject to debate due to the varying perspectives of different historians, resulting in the contestability of specific events. Just as historians claim that their subject is scientific and accurately represents reality, so do fiction writers. Indeed, the majority of literary writers focus on topic areas and concepts that are directly connected to their culture. Without a doubt, the challenges and problems presented in literary writings that afflict a society are a manifestation of reality. Southgate says that, "[t]he author is concerned to retrieve and represent the 'inner lives' of such characters… and that involves the inclusion of material that had often been previously neglected in conventional histories" (5). It is that the personal lives of the represented individuals in the text might offer alternate interpretations to certain historical events and challenge the idea of how history is universally perceived and understood. Regarding personal identification, Southgate argues that there are no immutable essences that enable us to depict an individual's character as having set(already established) personalities. Instead, the character is shaped by temporary creations. In simple terms, a character is comprehended and formed by an observer who is influenced by their own prejudices, beliefs, and moral values. Thus, history is unveiled as

> subjectively constructed and incorporated within a narrative, in a language which has a questionable relation to the external world and must always be less 'perfect', and in a form that is inevitably subject to cultural constrains and limitations. (Southgate 45)

The terms 'fact' and 'truth' have distinct meanings. In common parlance, the former term often denotes something that is tangible or that actually exists, namely the state of being or have been. The latter word often conveys an elevated significance - a scientific deduction

of universal applicability formed from logical analysis of specific data, or a literary statement on the human condition that is similarly seen as universal and drawn from observations of human existence. The scientists favour the term ‘law’ above ‘truth,’ therefore relegating the latter term mostly to the domain of authors and philosophers. Creative authors employ their imagination to imbue the term with ethical and emotive importance, whereas reviewers primarily assess the aesthetic achievement of a work of literature based on its capacity to convey this type of truth. Merely presenting factual information, no matter how correct, is insufficient to create a successful book, even in the case of a historical novel. A narrative that is limited to only such reporting lacks aesthetic truth and even literary meaning. Undoubtedly, the mundane details of everyday life can be uninteresting even to the people living them. Therefore, a narrative, whether it is based on real events or a work of fiction, that simply focuses on these facts is also likely to be uninteresting. Interestingly, most of these texts consist of a combination of interpretation, generalisation, and factual information. The key is to organise these parts in a way that allows the generalisations to support and convey the facts, rather than just overwhelming the readers.

Committing errors are a separate matter, of course; intentional breaches of the historical account are entirely different. The most significant disparity between the approaches taken by the historian and the historical fiction may be observed here. Despite its seeming contradiction, the historian is always bound to uphold the accuracy of the historical record, while the historical writer is free to alter it without facing consequences. The historian is not permitted to fabricate ‘facts,’ individuals, and dialogues; but the writer is often required to do so. The historian is required to accurately depict events based on how things actually unfolded, but the writer has the freedom to modify, juxtapose, and reorganise events according to his own perspective. In short, the historian is constrained by the factual evidence, but the writer has greater liberty in terms of adhering to it.

Nevertheless, there is a caveat to the desirable liberty that the author possesses. It is based on a thorough understanding of historical documents, not on a lack of information about them. The author has the liberty to create, manipulate, and fabricate, but only when they are aware that they are doing so. This awareness only comes when they have thoroughly acquainted themselves with a multitude of historical facts via diligent study and investigation. The researcher's findings provide him with factual information, while his creative imagination guides him in determining how to utilise the acquired facts. Although the imaginative act may be considered more significant, research remains an essential component. In the case of a meticulously researched historical novel, the abundance of accurate data ensures that occasional deviations from the historical record will go largely unnoticed by the average reader and be readily accepted by historians who recognise the distinction between history and fiction. If the author fails to fulfil their investigative duties and substitutes historical facts with myth, common sense, preconceived notions, and opinion in the eyes of the audience, the novel will quickly diminish in both its literary and historical significance.

The transmission of significant meaning is the ultimate justification for the indispensability of authenticity and legitimacy in a historical novel. Historians do not assemble facts with the intention of allowing them to ‘speak for themselves’ as the common saying suggests, because facts alone tend to remain silent. The primary responsibilities of a historian are discovering, choosing, organising, and analysing factual information in order to provide it with relevance. For this assignment, he often needs to rely on borrowing from his colleagues in different fields. The economic connotations are partially derived from economists, while the political ones are derived from scholars of politics, and so forth. Novelists deal with morality and emotive significance, among other things. Historians, who frequently overlook these important aspects of their topic, might greatly benefit by consulting a well-crafted work of fiction related to the field. However, he

is only able to do so if he has faith in the writer's knowledge of the facts and the factual authenticity, and a confidence that the author has conducted his required investigations and understands the subject matter in the same way the historian does.

Mainstream historiographical viewpoints frequently idealise or rationalise the actions and policies of authoritarian regimes. This can lead to a distorted representation of historical events, highlighting only the merits or achievements of these regimes while minimising or disregarding their adverse effects and human toll. Primary literary accounts may mirror or sustain these idealised perspectives, influencing public perception and historical recollection in a manner that favours authoritarian viewpoints. These narratives have the potential to become deeply rooted in historical records, educational materials, and many forms of media, thus shaping the comprehension and instruction of history.

Traditional historiography or Top-down historiography and historical narratives of the USSR predominantly emphasised the acts, choices, and policies of the Soviet elite, frequently overlooking the experiences and viewpoints of ordinary Russians. This method highlighted the significance of prominent individuals like Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Gorbachev, together with the political structures and state machinery that influenced the course of Soviet history. Historiography sometimes entails scrutinising government papers, official declarations, and policy choices, presenting history as a sequence of high-level strategic moves and ideological conflicts. This viewpoint emphasises the centralised structure of Soviet rule, the application of Marxist-Leninist theory, and the strategic objectives of the Communist Party. Although this approach offers valuable understanding of the motives and behaviours of the Soviet leadership, it frequently neglects the actual experiences of the general people, such as the effects of collectivization, purges, and the everyday hardships of living under Soviet governance. Furthermore, it has the ability to

conceal the intricacies and inconsistencies present in the Soviet system, including differences across regions, movements of resistance, and the informal connections that upheld society. By primarily emphasising the upper class, hierarchical approach to studying history, top-down historiography runs the risk of offering a limited perspective on the USSR, overlooking the varied and complex structure of Soviet society.

Parallel to this, nationalist historiography also marked an influential narrative pattern in defining the socio-political conditions of the USSR. Nationalist historiography manipulates historical accounts to promote and reinforce national identities and narratives. It frequently highlights the magnificence and accomplishments of the nation while minimising or excluding unfavourable aspects, such as persecution, setbacks, and the hardships endured by minority groups. This form of historiography is seen in the creation of heroic national narratives and the exaltation of historical individuals. These two major historiographic perspectives formed the socio-economical image of the mighty USSR as a grand super power. No accountability was held towards the representation of common people, the actual subjects of the nation. There was hardly any perspective that was significantly covered in the official accounts. Though the nation was always subjected to various wars and crises, there was always a glorified version of the nation and the nationalistic heroism.

Svetlana Alexievich's approach to Soviet history diverges significantly from conventional historiographical methodologies and prevailing narratives. She challenges prevailing viewpoints by employing her own technique, which she refers to as ‘the history of the human soul.’ She has employed three major types of techniques to have a relook at the history that she is trying to portray. The image of history that was buried under the carpet of glorification of war and its heroes. She digs out the reflections of the unspoken and unheard. Alexievich applies a broad mixture of the

following methodology of documenting: a) Documentation of oral history through testimonies b) Uncovering emotional and psychological depths c) Focusing on suffering and trauma.

The first methodology which Alexievich adopts is documentation of oral histories. Alexievich's main approach is gathering oral testimonies to register oral histories. She conducts interviews with large number of humans, giving them the opportunity to describe the events in their own words. This strategy promotes the democratisation of history by amplifying the voices of marginalised individuals, including soldiers, women, and children. Through this action, she highlights the diversity of experiences and the subjective aspect of historical fact.

In her novel *Unwomanly Face of War* she writes

> History through the story told by an unnoticed witness and participant. Yes, that interests me, that I would like to make into literature. But the narrators are not only witnesses-----least of all are they witnesses; they are actors and makers. It is impossible to right up to reality. Between us and reality are our feelings. I understand that I am dealing with versions, that each person has her version, and it is from them, from the plurality and their intersections, that the image of the time and the people living in it is born. (xxi)

The creation of the history of the ‘unnoticed’ is the central idea of her accounting and reflection. This unnoticed person’s reflections had not been found in the dominant historiographical accounts that ruled the ideologies of the people reading it and getting influenced by it. Alexievich knows that she is dealing with the different versions of the different people and that these pluralities give her an edge towards the history that she is trying to reflect upon. Pointing towards oral histories and justifying Alexievich’s interest towards the subject matter, Paul Thompson says, “The challenge of oral history lies partly in relation to [the] essential social

purpose of history. This is a major reason why it has so excited some historians, and so frightened others" (Thompson 3). While, recreating a history of people through the collection of oral testimonies, Alexievich in her novel *Chernobyl Prayer* writes,

> This is not a book on Chernobyl, but on the world of Chernobyl. Thousands of pages have already been written on the event itself, hundreds of thousands of metres of film devoted to it. What I am concerned with is what I would call the 'missing history', the invisible imprints of our stay on earth and in time. I paint and collect the mundane feelings, thoughts and words. (Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayer* 24)

It is this 'missing history' that the traditional methods of creating historical accounts have missed out. Talking profoundly about the obsession of creating accounts that deal with the feelings and aspirations of the common people. Alexievich takes an account of the mundane activities as a means to understand their sense of belongingness to the world. This missing history deals with the lost image of the common man which has been subjected to the socio-political turmoil, yet never found representation in true sense. Another influential oral historian, Portelli observes that, "Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did" (Portelli 50). Oral history is highly regarded in progressive circles due to its capacity to uncover and safeguard the gaps and omissions in conventional historical accounts. The approach of oral history is derived from a motivation to record the ordinary occurrences and social experiences of common individuals, who would not typically be the focus of a conventional biography. While Alexievich has experienced harsh circumstances in her life, in *Boys in Zinc* she says,

> How can you simultaneously experience history and write about it? You can't just grab any chunk of life, take the entire existential mire by the scruff of the neck and

> drag it into a book. Into history. You have to 'crack open' the times and 'capture their spirit' (10).

It is not just the superficiality of the experiences that she is talking about, the characters that are part of the novels are subjected to the rewind and review of their past lives in totality to the occurrences of the various events. The events of war, catastrophe and broken national identities are major events that shape the discourse of their mental and spatial identity. The narratives that are present in all the novels are the wholesome representation of crises of the collective exposure to the various occurrences the individuals have endured.

Oral history is distinct from journalism. Oral history is conducted with the assistance of an interviewer, who enables the narrator to recount their own narrative. While journalism involves the careful selection of sources of information, editing, and verification, oral history is a more personal account of a recollection, with less interference from the interviewer. While the majority of individuals in advanced nations possess the ability to read and write, only a small number have the skill or talent to write in a manner that effectively conveys an intriguing narrative or tale. Paul Thompson observes that "the overwhelming majority of published autobiographies are from a restricted group of political, social, and intellectual leaders" (Thompson 28). Skilled writers, regardless of their field such as history, creative writing, or memoirs, are few. However, many individuals, regardless of their literacy level, possess the ability to narrate a compelling story. These compelling narrators are the central characters to Alexievich's record of historical accounts.

The second strategy that Alexievich incorporates in her texts is to approach history from a unique perspective by uncovering emotional and psychological depths of the common people. Exploring the emotional and psychological aspects of ordinary individuals provides a fresh perspective on history, greatly enriching historical investigations. This approach offers a more

nuanced and empathic comprehension of historical events by emphasising on the personal narratives, emotional reactions, and psychological effects. It redirects attention from overarching narratives to personal experiences, uncovers the human toll of historical events, and laying emphasis on a range of viewpoints, consequently enhancing our understanding of history and cultivating a stronger emotional bond with the past.

The story narrated by Maria Voiteshonok, a 57-year-old writer, reopens the emotional insecurities and pain she has encountered. In the story she opens up and narrates,

> I have very few memories…There aren't enough of them. I root around in the darkness trying to unearth anything I can. It doesn't happen very often…It's very rare that I will suddenly remember something that I didn't remember before. My memories are bitter, but they always make me happy. I'm terribly happy whenever a new one floats up. (Alexievich*, Second-Hand Time* 287)

The narrator contemplates her memory difficulties, acknowledging the scarcity of recollections and the need to diligently search through the abyss of her mind to retrieve them. This written representation effectively portrays the challenge and exertion required to retrieve previous memories, highlighting the elusive quality of memory. This battle (struggle to retrieve memory) emphasises the emotional significance of the memories that may be accessed, emphasising the psychological difficulty of dealing with a fragmented past. The contrast between 'bitter' memories and the 'happiness' exemplifies the intricate complexity of human emotions. This juxtaposition demonstrates how memories, regardless of their distressing nature, can serve as a catalyst for happiness and contentment, therefore enhancing the narrator's comprehension of their emotional condition. The memory fragment offers an in-depth investigation of the significant emotional and psychological aspects associated with remembering. The narrative explores the intricate

relationship between memory and emotion by delving into the narrator's difficulties in recollecting old experiences, the mixed feelings associated with memories, and the occasional yet delightful instances of rediscovery. This method not only enhances the reader's comprehension of the narrator's inner world but also emphasises the crucial function that memories have in influencing emotional encounters and individual identity.

In *Last Witnesses*, the memory account of Raya Ilyinkovskaya, who was fourteen- year-old during WWII. He remembers his experience and tell that,

> I'll never forget the smell of the lindens in our hometown. Yelsk. During the war everything that had been before the war seemed the most beautiful in the world. That's how it stayed with me forever. To this day. (Alexievich, *Last Witnesses* 175)

The narrator combines his wartime experiences with recollections of their hometown, Yelsk. The fragrance of the lindens and the aesthetic appeal of the pre-war era are shown with a nostalgic sentiment, emphasising how the events of warfare imbue past events with a heightened feeling and an idealised perception. This idealisation exemplifies a prevalent psychological reaction to trauma, in which individuals retrospectively see pre-trauma periods with intensified fondness and yearning. The emotional profundity is in the manner in which the past is recollected with a deep feeling of deprivation and longing, creating a stark contrast with the present or events during conflict. The narrator establishes a connection between his own recollection and significant historical events, offering a distinct and intimate viewpoint on the interplay between personal human histories and dominant historical narratives. This illustrates the crucial significance that psychological and emotional depth play in the formation of historical events. The narrator explores the strong emotional connections that form his historical awareness by idealising pre-war memories, emphasising the power of sensory memory, and highlighting the continuing

significance of past beauty. This offers a deeper understanding of how individual experiences and memories contribute to a more intricate and emotionally impactful depiction of historical events.

Finally, Alexievich's strategy to represent history is through focusing on suffering and trauma. Her emphasis on pain and trauma confronts official or idealised narratives of history that may minimise or disregard the human toll of past historical events. Her art presents an alternative storyline that directly addresses the most undesirable elements of history and challenges the prevailing, frequently censored, narratives. Alexievich's emphasis on the individual and emotional components of historical events encourages readers to engage in a thoughtful analysis and reconsideration of established historical accounts. Her concentration on individual suffering and trauma aids in the preservation of personal and collective memories that may otherwise be disregarded or neglected. She contributes to a more comprehensive historical record by ensuring that the experiences of individuals who endured sufferings are documented and recognised. Her approach of centring on anguish and trauma offers a deep and compassionate portrayal of history. Through a focus on individual experiences, utilisation of spoken accounts, emphasis on the lasting consequences of psychological distress, and questioning of authoritative accounts, she presents an exceptional and profoundly humane outlook on history. This representation of trauma and history falls directly in line with Caruth's idea of trauma as, "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other uncontrolled phenomenon" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 11).

Analysing the story of Slava Konstantinovna, a doctor of agricultural science, presented in the *Chernobyl Prayer*, she expresses her thoughts on the Chernobyl incident and its aftermath, Slava gives her remarks and reveals that,

> The largest man-made disaster in history. Our losses have been astronomical. The material losses we can more or less calculate, but what about the non-material damage? Chernobyl has blighted our imagination, our future. We are running scared of the future. (Alexievich, *Chernobyl Prayer* 157)

Usually, official reports of disasters such as Chernobyl tend to prioritise the quantifiable aspects such as financial losses, physical harm to infrastructure, and the ecological consequences. These criteria are measurable and frequently used to evaluate the magnitude of a disaster. By including such accounts in her text, Alexievich redirects attention towards the concept of "non-material damage"(157), emphasising the psychological, emotional, and cultural distress caused by the catastrophe. This encompasses the apprehension, unease, and profound existential fear that Chernobyl created in people, which are intangible yet profoundly meaningful. Alexievich's deliberate concentration on these factors allows her to provide a comprehensive history that encompasses the entirety of the human experience, rather than solely focussing on the tangible or financial outcomes. She emphasises that Chernobyl had a profound negative impact on people's collective imagination and instilled fear in society over their future. This depicts the deep-seated psychological trauma caused by the catastrophe, wherein apprehension and ambiguity over the future have supplanted any prior sense of assurance or optimism. This viewpoint questions the notion that history can advance in a linear and progressive way following an event, highlighting instead the enduring psychological distress that hinders any clear and direct account of healing or advancement.

In *Unwomanly Face of War*, while remembering the past experiences and being a part of the war, a woman testifies,

> But there's no need to pity us. We're proud. Let them rewrite history ten times. With Stalin or without Stalin. But this remains—we were victorious! And our sufferings. What we lived through. This isn't junk and ashes. This is our life. (Alexievich, *Unwomanly Face of War* 112)

This narrative account reveals Alexievich's alternative positioning, as evidenced by her numerous references to similar accounts that substantiate her perspective on an alternate history and the representation of marginalised individuals often excluded from the historical narrative. Official historical accounts frequently highlight triumphs and accomplishments, especially in situations such as the Soviet Union, where stories of power, endurance, and success were of great importance. These official accountings ignore, minimise and even misinterpret the pain experienced by individuals in order to align with a more heroic or idealised narrative of national achievement. Alexievich justifies on the fact that individuals derive a sense of satisfaction not only from their triumph but also from the hardships they have faced. This suffering is not something to be pitied or disregarded, but rather it is essential to their identity and historical experience. She questions the conventional belief that history should only highlight triumphs and accomplishments. She asserts that the pain and trauma faced are just as important as the triumphs. The story shared by the woman steadfastly rejects the act of belittling the actuality of suffering by reducing it to mere "junk and ashes." Contrarily, she affirms that the pain faced is "our life," emphasising that these ordeals are not insignificant details in the past, but rather crucial for comprehending history. This prioritises the experiences of regular individuals, guaranteeing that their suffering is acknowledged as a vital component of collective historical recollection.

Alexievich's imaginative method of reinterpreting history by including several perspectives provides a significant challenge to conventional narratives. She crafts the perspectives of

ordinary individuals, creating a complex and diverse portrayal of shared recollections that goes beyond official narratives and singular historical explanations. Her novels explore the profound emotional and psychological aspects of the human experience, portraying the intricate truths of suffering, trauma, and resilience that are frequently overlooked or suppressed in conventional historical accounts.

Alexievich employs polyphony, a technique that combines several voices, each offering their distinct viewpoints and experience, to construct a comprehensive and multi-faceted comprehension of history. This approach not only makes historical narrative accessible to a wider audience by amplifying the perspectives of marginalised individuals, but also uncovers the intricate and conflicting aspects of human encounters with major events. The multitude of voices she portrays defies easy categorisation, emphasising the fractured and even distressing quality of memory and history.

Her approach of prioritising the personal experiences of individuals over overarching narratives or political ideologies presents an alternative historical perspective that is both intensely intimate and widely relatable. Her work serves as a reminder that history is not a static record of events, but rather a fluid and continuous dialogue influenced by numerous individual narratives and perspectives. Alexievich employs polyphony to reconceptualise history as a collaborative and multidimensional actuality, whereby the truth does not arise from a single authoritative voice, but rather from the interaction of several perspectives. By doing so, she alters our usual comprehension of history, providing a more comprehensive, compassionate, and genuine portrayal of the human experience.

Conclusion

The research titled “Of Cathy Caruth and Trauma: A Study of the Works of Svetlana Alexievich” has explored the impact of trauma on the psychology caused by the violence, war, genocides, political persecution, and other instances of social and political turmoil. Alexievich's body of work provides a deep examination of the intricacies of trauma, memory, and history, which closely coincides with the ideas of trauma theory, as expressed by Cathy Caruth. This dissertation has analysed Alexievich's literary works using trauma theory to reveal how her stories not only record the incidents and experiences of trauma but also function as a means of comprehending the fragmentary and continuous character of traumatised memory.

A prominent motif in Alexievich's oeuvre is the act of observing and testifying. It underscores Alexievich’s capacity to encapsulate both the collective and individual aspects of history, thereby establishing her as one of the most inventive and influential writers of modern literature. Alexievich employs an oral history technique to give prominence to the accounts of survivors, observers, and participants in historical events. This approach allows her to construct a collective narrative that goes beyond individual experiences. This is consistent with Caruth's concept that trauma is an incident that is not completely understood at the time it happens, but is later experienced in the act of recounting it. Alexievich's works, however, do not just depict the events that have occurred, but rather explore their enduring impact on individuals who experienced them. The author's works demonstrate how trauma distorts the chronological structure of narration and memory, resulting in a fragmented portrayal of the past. This fragmentation is reflected in the non-linear(non-sequential), repetitive, and disjointed testimonials of the individuals.

According to Caruth, trauma is defined by its inability to be represented and its refusal to be fully incorporated into narrative memory. The author's depiction of catastrophes and conditions of socio-political instabilities such as World War II, Soviet-Afghan War, Chernobyl Nuclear

disaster and the collapse of the Soviet Union, reveals that the recollections of survivors are frequently fragmented, inconsistent, and marked by omissions. She does not approach her writings to provide a sense of order or consistency on these recollections. Instead, she displays them in their unprocessed and unaltered state, effectively capturing the indescribable nature of trauma. The fragmented and polyphonic form of her narrative accounts reflects the fragmented character of traumatic memory, as described by Caruth. This highlights the challenge, and at times the impossibility, of completely expressing horrifying experiences.

Another crucial component of this study revolves upon the ethical ramifications of remembering and suppressing traumatic experiences. According to Caruth, trauma entails a contradictory form of survival; the person who experiences trauma continues to be troubled by the terrible incident, which cannot be fully recollected but also cannot be completely erased from the memory. Alexievich's works eloquently depict this dilemma. Her narratives delve into the dichotomy between the imperative to recollect and testify to the past, and the inclination to forget the incident in order to move ahead in life. Alexievich highlights the moral obligation of remembering by amplifying the voices of those who have been ignored or silenced. However, she also exposes the significant weight that remembering imposes on both individuals and the community as a whole.

All the novels contain profound elements of collective pain. By emphasising on the significant events that have influenced the shared awareness of many generations, the author reveals that trauma is not just an individual occurrence but also a communal one. Her narratives illustrate how horrific events such as war and tragedy get embedded in the shared memory of a society, shaping national identity and understanding of history. Caruth's focus on the delayed manifestation of trauma is relevant in this context, since Alexievich's writings frequently expose the difficulties, the societies confront in reconciling with their painful pasts. These memories

reappear years later, posing a challenge to official narratives and collective amnesia.

The work challenges the boundaries of language in its portrayal of trauma. According to Caruthian idea, trauma is inherently resistant to being expressed via language and cannot be entirely addressed through narrative. Alexievich's fragmented and polyphonic approach, characterised by the use of repetition and silence, effectively conveys this issue. Her novels frequently evoke a feeling of the unresolved, the unthinkable, and the unfathomable elements of trauma in the reader. By doing this, she not only accurately portrays the fundamental nature of a horrific event, but also compels the reader to confront the moral consequences of trying to comprehend and depict such experiences.

The novels, such as the *Unwomanly Face of War*, *Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories* and *Boys in Zinc*, present direct exposure to the war and the agony caused by the people because of the war circumstances, whereas the novels *Chernobyl Prayer*, *Enchanted by Death*, *Second-Hand Time: The Last of the Soviets*, present the reference of the war in a more symbolic form, like the post Chernobyl life is depicted as a life filled with struggle and a fight to survive. Similarly, the altered socio-political landscape following the dissolution of the USSR resembled a struggle for survival and adaptation for individuals accustomed to a particular lifestyle.

The study has deduced that all the novels employ a deliberate approach to combine the fragmented nature of memory, the significance of narration in the process of healing, and the transmission of trauma throughout generations. This is done with the aim of redefining the identities that have been altered as a result of exposure to horrifying experiences. Alexievich's literature delves into the complex essence of identity in the aftermath of a catastrophe, with a particular emphasis on the collective and individual encounters of those who experienced the Soviet period and its aftermath. Her writings skilfully depict the complex relationships between trauma, memory, and identity as they converge in the process of reconstructing one's self-

perception. An outstanding characteristic of Alexievich's work is her skill in expressing the disintegration of an individual's identity that emerges in the aftermath of a catastrophe.

Alexievich subverts prevailing narratives of authority and ideology by elevating the viewpoints of ordinary individuals, including war survivors, victims of political repression, and the marginalised people. By doing this, she exposes the significant human casualties resulting from dictatorship, wars, and societal upheaval. Through the act of reconstructing history from a marginalised viewpoint, the author creates a parallel historical account. The research suggests that this history is a reinterpreted history with the perspective of common people taken into consideration. The preconceived notion of the history is in contrast with the dominant historiographic narratives that are prevalent. Alexievich's historical interpretation is a direct attack to the authoritarian accounting.

The Unwomanly Face of War delves into the fragmented and intricate nature of memory, examining how trauma, cultural norms, and the passage of time impacted women during war conditions. The fragmented recollections in this book offer a more complex and intelligent portrayal of experiences of women as compared to the conventional, uniform, and male-focused narratives of the war. The memories of women are profoundly impacted by the trauma they experienced during the war, leading to a sense of identity crises. The challenges faced by women in shedding a combatant identity and transitioning back to domestic life have been intricately portrayed in the novel, which diverges from the conventional heroic narrative often found in war literature.

Last Witnesses: Unchildlike Stories depicts the experiences of children affected by conflict and their efforts to adapt to new realities, alongside the persistent shadows of childhood trauma. In the text, the narrators intertwine their experiences during the war with the memories of their parents, siblings and homeland. the artistic charms of the pre-war era are shown with a nostalgic

attitude, highlighting how the experiences of combat intensify previous events with a heightened emotion and an idealised view. This idealisation is a common psychological response to trauma, when individuals look back to moments before the experience with heightened affection and longing. The emotional depth is the way the past is remembered with a strong sense of loss and yearning, providing a striking contrast with the present or incidents during the conflict. The representation of the children during the war and their emotional and psychological alterations are the centre of attention.

Boys in Zinc provides an unfiltered portrayal of the personal accounts of soldiers, nurses, medical officers, mothers, prostitutes, sons, and daughters who shared their experiences of the Soviet-Afghan war. The depiction of the coffins in the novel transcends the concept of death; they symbolise the demise of their faith in the ideologies once upheld by the nation's authorities. These narratives reveal the hidden aspects of the conflict that were kept away from the public eye, as well as the profound emotional and enduring societal effects sustained.

Enchanted by Death and *Second-Hand Time* recognises the profound impact of the socio-political disruption on individuals who have lived through the later stages of the USSR. Many of these individuals have directly or indirectly experienced the horrors of war and persistent change in the political scenarios, resulting in a significant disruption to their lives. The survivors articulate their emotions of sorrow, disillusionment, and a sense of being misled. The central theme of these novels revolves around the challenges of displacement and the process of adapting to a new national identity. The decline of communist ideology and the rise of capitalist society profoundly affected individuals, leading some to tragically take their own lives, leaving their families behind. This portion of history remains undisclosed, underscoring the significance of these two novels in the construction of an alternative historical perspective.

Ultimately, Svetlana Alexievich's literary corpus, when analysed using Cathy Caruth's

trauma theory, is a compelling testimony to the long-lasting influence of trauma on both individuals and civilisations. Alexievich's distinctive narrative approach and her emphasis on the perspectives of everyday individuals yield a profound and multidimensional examination of traumatic memory. This work not only challenges conventional historical accounts but also encourages readers to confront the intricate nature of memory, pain, and resilience. Her writings emphasise the significance of observing and documenting traumatic experiences, while also drawing attention to the challenges involved in this process. As a result, she is a vital figure in both modern literature and the field of trauma studies. This dissertation has demonstrated the immense value of Alexievich's work in enhancing our comprehension of trauma. It offers a complex and profoundly human viewpoint on the various ways in which trauma is encountered, recollected, and depicted.

The study reveals eight principal findings derived from the examination of Svetlana Alexievich’s oeuvre via trauma theory through the lens of Cathy Caruth. Each finding underscores specific narrative aspects or thematic issues in Alexievich’s works that illustrate or enhance Caruth’s concepts regarding trauma, memory, and testimony. These findings elucidate how Alexievich’s narratives encapsulate the intricacies of trauma and articulate suffering.

a. The Persistence of Trauma as a Haunting Memory: Alexievich’s narratives depict trauma as a haunting element that endures beyond the initial occurrence of the event, reflecting Caruth’s notion of trauma as an unassimilated experience that resurfaces as reoccurring recollections. In her representation of survivors, she conveys the enduring nature of trauma, as individuals relate to the experiences that disrupt their current existence. This finding highlights the non-linear nature of trauma, which cannot be completely processed and repeatedly emerges in unforeseen manners.

b. The Incoherence of Trauma as Reflected in Fragmented Storytelling: A notable characteristic of Alexievich's work is her employment of fragmented storytelling, reflecting Caruth's assertion that trauma frequently eludes coherent narrative articulation. The fragmented and disjointed narratives offered by Alexievich's participants in the interviews show the inherent challenges of completely articulating or comprehending trauma. This fragmentation represents a literary embodiment of trauma's elusive nature, with each narrative thread adding to a collective yet incomplete recollection.
c. The Limitation of Language and the Silence of Trauma: Alexievich's oeuvre underscores the unarticulated aspects of trauma, aligning with Caruth's assertion that trauma is expressed through the unspeakable. Numerous individuals interviewed by Alexievich find it challenging to express their anguish, frequently hesitating, missing details, pausing or communicating distress through silence. This employment of silence exemplifies the limitations of words in addressing trauma, encapsulating elements of sorrow that defy verbal expression and imparting to readers an understanding of what remains unarticulated.
d. The Position of Listener in Witnessing Trauma: Consistent with Caruth's focus on the listener's role in trauma transmission, Alexievich identifies herself as a witness to the suffering of her interviewees. By permitting survivors to articulate their experiences, Alexievich facilitates a mode of testimony witnessing wherein she functions as a listener validating and acknowledging every tale of trauma. This discovery highlights the ethical aspect of witnessing trauma, indicating that the listener is essential in the recognition and dissemination of trauma.
e. The Collective Voice as an Embodiment of Shared Trauma: Alexievich's storytelling technique, which interlaces the perspectives of various survivors, embodies Caruth's notion of trauma as a shared, collective phenomenon. Alexievich constructs a social

narrative through a chorus of voices, transcending individual pain and depicting trauma as a common burden. This collective voice enhances the emotional significance of each narrative while underscoring the interconnectedness of trauma throughout an entire community or nation.

f. Intergeneration Trauma and the Resonance of Historical Suffering: In her writings, Alexievich encapsulates the transmission of trauma over generations, aligning with Caruth's notion that trauma can reverberate beyond the direct victims to influence subsequent generations. The intergenerational transmission is apparent in the manner in which survivors of historical catastrophes such as warfare or disaster, articulate the impact of trauma on their progeny. This finding underscores that the effects of trauma extend beyond the individual, influencing familial and community interactions over time.

g. Dualities of Resilience and Survival in the Face of Trauma: Ultimately, Alexievich's narratives present a complex perspective on trauma that encompasses both suffering and survival, providing an understanding of resilience as an integral aspect of the traumatic experience. Although trauma presents as a source of suffering and fragmentation, Alexievich's participants in the interviews also convey instances of resilience, endurance, and adaptation. This duality illustrates the idea that trauma, though deeply unsettling, can also catalyse a rethinking of identity and existence following experiences of suffering.

h. Polyphonic Structures as Collective Memory: Alexievich's employment of polyphony, incorporating several, sometimes conflicting, perspectives, mirrors the communal aspect of trauma, corresponding with Caruth's assertion that traumatic events, while personally endured, typically need a social context for comprehension. By permitting varied voices to convey their recollections of the Soviet past, Alexievich creates a communal narrative space, embodying Caruth's concept of trauma's transhistorical essence that spans both

individual and social memory. This approach illustrates how trauma may evolve into a 'living history' that influences identities and memories within a society.

These findings demonstrate that Alexievich's works not only engages with trauma theory but also broadens its application by offering a literary form that encapsulates the intricacies of trauma. These insights collectively enhance our comprehension of trauma, revealing it as both a personal and shared experience, and highlighting the lasting impact of historical suffering as shown in Alexievich's narratives.

The following outcomes reflect the broader insights, theoretical ramifications and the contributions the thesis offers to both the fields of trauma studies and literary scholarship concerning Alexievich.

a. Deepened Insights into the Narrative Framework of Trauma in Literary Works: The research explores Alexievich's fragmented, multi-voiced narratives in order to demonstrate the effective conveyance of trauma in literature through disrupted storytelling, reflecting on the fractured essence of traumatic memory as articulated by trauma theorists. Through an analysis of the non-linear, disjointed narrative techniques utilised by Alexievich, this thesis enhances the comprehension of how literary writings can effectively convey the elusive nature of trauma, offering a structural framework for its representation through narratives. This outcome enhances the understanding of trauma theory by demonstrating how the very structure of literature can reflect traumatic experiences.
b. Expanding the Framework of Trauma Theory to Capture Collective and Historical Trauma: This thesis builds upon Caruth's trauma theory, which primarily focusses on individual experiences, to investigate the dimensions of collective and historical trauma as presented in Alexievich's oeuvre. Through an emphasis on occurrences like warfare, nuclear

catastrophe, and societal breakdown, Alexievich's narratives uncover the collective aspects of trauma and its capacity to affect whole generations. This outcome illustrates that trauma transcends individual psychological experiences, emerging as a collective phenomenon influenced by socio-political, as well as historical dynamics. This thesis thus broadens the scope of trauma theory to encompass the examination of shared sufferings and collective memory.

c. Exploring the Significance of Testimony and the Ethical Implications of Witnessing: This research emphasis the significance of the listener in trauma narratives, with Alexievich embodying the role of a witness to witnesses. Expanding upon Caruth's notion that trauma necessitates a listener to fulfil the act of witnessing, the thesis demonstrates how Alexievich's oeuvre legitimises and elevates survivors' voices, promoting a collective recognition of suffering. This outcome highlights the ethical obligation associated with witnessing trauma, pertinent to both the interviewer and the reader, enriching trauma theory's investigation of testifying as a moral obligation that validates and honours survivor experiences.

d. Displaying Literature's Capacity to Cultivate Resilience and Facilitate Emotional Processing: The thesis demonstrates that Alexievich's narratives not only express the anguish of trauma but also provide avenues for resilience, solidarity, and healing in traumatised communities. Although trauma frequently involves separation and anguish, Alexievich's writings demonstrate that narratives of communal suffering can cultivate resilience and a common identity. This outcome indicates that literature can both depict trauma and create environments for processing and connecting over shared experiences, thus enhancing trauma theory's capacity to explain post-traumatic growth and resilience following suffering.

These outcomes jointly underscore the theoretical, ethical, and emotional aspects of trauma as portrayed in Alexievich's narratives. This enhances trauma theory by expanding upon Caruth's concepts to include collective, ethical, and healing dimensions of trauma representation, in turn deepening the discourse in trauma studies and shedding light on Alexievich's distinctive narrative contributions.

Assessing Svetlana Alexievich's oeuvre through trauma theory reveals substantial societal implications, particularly in comprehending the enduring impacts of collective trauma on individual identity, communities and historical memory. Alexievich's depiction of individual and communal anguish following wars, nuclear catastrophes, and societal turmoil, analysed through Caruth's perspectives on the belated and incomprehensible essence of trauma, highlights the necessity of ethically safeguarding and recognising traumatic histories. The resulting approach promotes a more empathetic and inclusive comprehension of historical events, emphasising the ethical obligation to acknowledge survivor's narratives as a means of honouring and affirming their experiences. The study highlights the importance of trauma-informed strategies in public policy, particularly in healthcare, education, and community assistance, to address the enduring psychological and emotional effects of trauma. Furthermore, this study advocates for the establishment of memorials, public forums, and educational programmes that promote shared remembrance and healing across generations. This work promotes empathy, resilience, and awareness, contributing to the societal objective of cultivating communities capable of deliberately confronting difficult history and supporting reconciliation, ultimately strengthening and enhancing the social fabric.

The research lays the groundwork for subsequent investigations that can expand on these results by examining various theoretical frameworks, gendered viewpoints, and interdisciplinary

methods related to trauma in Alexievich's writings as well as beyond. Examining Svetlana Alexievich's writings in the context of trauma reveals numerous avenues for future inquiry and research possibilities. Future studies may expand upon this study to enhance the comprehension of various elements and contexts in Alexievich's oeuvre. Alexievich's exploration of Soviet and post-Soviet trauma provides a distinctive cultural framework for the study of trauma. Future investigations may gain insights from cross-cultural comparisons of trauma accounts, exploring the ways in which trauma is experienced, represented, and articulated across various historical, cultural, or political contexts. This may entail an examination of Alexievich's writings alongside trauma narratives from various geopolitical contexts, including Holocaust literature, postcolonial trauma accounts, or experiences of trauma in societies that have survived conflicts. Comparative studies can shed light on the dual nature of trauma as both a universal experience and one that is shaped by cultural contexts, enhancing the comprehension of the various ways societies address and articulate their historical traumas. An additional area for future inquiry involves examining the representation and mediation of trauma across various media forms in the works of Alexievich. Since it is given that her works predominantly rely on oral histories and interviews, subsequent investigations might explore the influence of media in the transmission of trauma. This may entail an examination of how various forms of media, be it written, spoken, or visual, impact the portrayal of trauma and affect the processes through which memories are formed and maintained. Researchers may examine the correlation between various forms of media and trauma, analysing how Alexievich's employment of interviews and personal narratives aids in the formation of public memory regarding trauma and its dissemination throughout generations and different platforms(medium). These directions will assist individuals in delving deeper into the intricate relationships between trauma, memory, and narrative within Alexievich's body of work and beyond.

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