58. Hiding Away The Ghost of AMITY: The Narrator's Fake Endings as Screen Memories in Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010) [1]

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Abstract

Although studies on trauma have grown exponentially since 1990s with Trauma Studies, in different shapes and identities, trauma has been a part of personal and cultural space for much longer. After the formal recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder as an ailment that affects both the body and the mind, Trauma Studies has expanded to other fields of study including literature. Trauma studies in Literature is a movement that focuses on how trauma is handled in literature both thematically and functionally. Literature can play a performative role in its representation of trauma through literary and narrative devices. This essay aims to explore how Andre Levy imitates the effect of screen memories, which are a symptom of trauma, with her experimentation with metanarration in *The Long Song* (2010). Screen memories are essentially substitute memories which replace the traumatic events in memory. They are attempts of self-preservation of the mind. Levy's narrator July tries to replace some traumatic parts of her life in her autobiographical story in order save herself the pain of reliving them through narration. This results in abrupt and unexpected endings to her story at two different parts of the novel, where she tries to break off the narration with a seemingly happy ending. However, her disputes with her son, Thomas, prove that there is more to the story as she picks the story back up only to reveal an increasingly painful and traumatic proceeding. Therefore, this makes her attempts to end the story prematurely screen memories that hide the traumatic truth, not from the reader, but from July herself through a self-imposed alienation from her previous life as a slave in a Jamaica sugar plantation.

Keywords: Slave Narrative, The Long Song, Screen Memory, Trauma, Andrea Levy

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Amity'nin Hayaletini Saklamak: Andrea Levy'nin *The Long Song* (2010) Adlı Romanında Anlatıcının Sahte Sonlarının Perde Anı Olarak Incelenmesi[3]

Öz

1990'lardan beri Travma Çalışmaları ile birlikte travma üzerine yapılan çalışmalar artmış olmakla beraber, travma öyle ve ya böyle kişisel ya da kültürel alanda çok daha uzun süredir hayatımızın bir parçası olmuştur. Travma sonrası stres bozukluğunun kişiyi hem fiziksel hem de zihinsel olarak etkileyen bir hastalık oluşunun resmi olarak kabul edilmesiyle Travma Çalışmaları farklı alanlara da genişlemiştir. Edebiyatta travma çalışmaları, travmanın edebiyatta tematik ve işlevsel olarak nasıl işlendiği üzerinde duran bir edebi akımdır. Edebiyat edebi ve anlatım teknikleriyle travmanın temsili konusunda edimsel bir işlev görür. Bu makale Andrea Levy'nin *The Long Song* (2010) adlı romanında kullandığı deneysel üst anlatı tekniğiyle travmanın bir belirtisi olan perde anıları nasıl taklit ettiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Perde anılar temelde hafızada travmatik anıların yerini alan yedek anılardır. Bu anılar zihinsel bütünlüğü korumayı amaçlar. Levy'nin anlatıcısı July anlatısı üzerinden hayatının en travmatik anlarını tekrar tecrübe edip acısını tazelememek için bu anları kendi hayatını anlattığı otobiyografik eserinde bu anları perde anılarla değiştirir. Bunun sonucunda iki ayrı noktada eserini görünürde mutlu bir sonla bitirmek amacıyla ani ve beklenmedik sonlar yazar. Fakat oğlu Thomas'la yaşadığı tartışmalar hikayenin devamı olduğunu gösterir ve July yazmaya devam ettikçe giderek daha travmatik ve trajik bir hikaye ortaya çıkar. Bu nedenle, July'ın yazdığı sahte ve zamansız kapanışlar travmatik gerçeği okuyucudan ziyade kendinden saklayarak bir şeker kamışı plantasyonunda köle olarak yaşadığı geçmişine yabancılaşmasına yardım eden perde anılar olarak göze çarpmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kölelik Anlatısı, The Long Song, Perde Anı, Travma, Andrea Levy

Andrea Levy uses an unreliable narrator in her 2010 novel The Long Song where July shares her life story as a slave girl in Amity sugar plantation during the final years of slavery in colonial Jamaica. She also directly addresses the reader at intervals to talk about the writing process of her story. It is revealed during these intervals that she tries to cut her story short by writing two fake endings so that she can save herself from the pain of reliving the moments of her life when she was vulnerable the most. The gaps covered by the two endings contain the most traumatic times of her overall tragic life. The aim of this article is to analyse the two fake endings in terms of their narrative function as screen memories, which surrogate July's traumatic experiences.

In order to understand how trauma transitioned into a field of study in literature, it is crucial to look at the historical journey of the term within the field of medicine and later on in psychology. Davis and Meretoja explain that trauma is a word of Greek origin referring to a physical wound (2020, p.1). It may

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also encompass any complications created by receiving a physical wound. Trauma is still used in this sense in the field of medicine. However, the term historically has been carried over to other fields and its meaning has been expanded. According to Davis and Meretoja, the first incidents where post-traumatic symptoms were observed and connected to trauma date back to early-nineteenth century Europe (2020, p.2). Industrial European countries were in the process of expanding their web of railroads during which railroad accidents were common. The survivors of these accidents showed delayed responses.

> Sometimes, survivors of crashes found their behaviour changed; they became unable to work or function normally, even if they showed no signs of physical injury. Medical experts nevertheless sought to find physical causes, albeit ones which at the time remained invisible. The surgeon John Erichsen (1866) propounded the theory of "railway spine", suggesting that the traumatized victims of railway accidents suffered from spinal damage, which, in the absence of X-rays, could not be directly observed. A leading German neurologist, Hermann Oppenheim (1889), named this phenomenon "traumatic neurosis", which he took to involve neurological damage. These approaches explained mental phenomena in terms of underlying organic, physical injury; but, after heated debates on the topic by scientists and scholars across Europe, trauma started to be seen, more and more, as a form of mental distress. One of the first to attribute a principal causative role to mental shock was the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1889), who emphasized the role of hysteria in understanding trauma. At the turn of the century, traumatic disorders were increasingly seen as different in nature from purely physical illnesses. (Davis and Meretoja, 2020, p. 2)

The lack of a physical wound led the researchers to look for other underlying causes that might explain the conditions of the survivors. However, it was not until the works of Sigmund Freud and his contemporaries that trauma became an acknowledged field of study for psychology. The world experienced one of the greatest traumatic events in history with the first world war. Aftermath of World War I and large numbers of shell-shocked soldiers requiring treatment diverted further clinical interest to the field. Since then it has been an established interest in studies in psychology, especially psychoanalysis.

Having evolved from the terminology listed above, the psychological ailment caused by a traumatic stressor was titled Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by American Psychological Association in 1980. Its official inclusion in DSM 3 recognised ptsd as a formal diagnosis. Cathy Caruth who is one of the pioneers of trauma studies defines ptsd as follows:

> While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is 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.

According to Caruth's definition, ptsd is the affected person's response to an intensive stressor which can be a singular event or series of events. The stressor damages the psyche to the point that it interrupts its normal function through intrusive symptoms. Commonly observed stressors include but not limited to life threatening experiences, loss of loved ones, violence, abuse, and sexual assault. While the stressors can affect individuals, they can also have collective affect. Wars, genocides, natural disasters, and slavery can be listed as examples for the stressors that affect large groups of people. Although the stressors listed are regarded objectively as traumatic, the individual's response to traumatic stressor might vary in degree and is subjective. In other words, two individuals might present different responses to the same stressor. Accordingly, McNally argues that in order for a patient to be diagnosed with ptsd, the assessor should determine whether they were subjected to a stressor that meets the criteria as well as the severity of their symptoms in proportion (2003, p.79). Depending on the magnitude of the stressor, the response

of the individual can range from disturbing thoughts, behavioural change, repression, nightmares, hallucinations, flashbacks to dissociative disorders, amnesia, and overall cognitive malfunction.

The possibility of representation of the traumatic stressor has been a matter of debate within trauma studies. In fact, approaches to whether the source of trauma avoids representation or not are the defining characteristic of two waves of trauma studies. The first wave which was pioneered by Cathy Caruth argued, building on Freud's research, that the traumatic experience causes a cognitive malfunction that results in the individual forgetting it. Yet, it returns through intrusive phenomena such as flashbacks, nightmares, etc. in often symbolic form. Pederson summarises Caruth's approach as follows:

> For Caruth, trauma is an experience so intensely painful that the mind is unable to process it normally. In the immediate aftermath, the victim may totally forget the event. And if memories of the trauma return, they are often non verbal, and the victim may be unable to describe them with words. Yet Caruth maintains that imaginative literature—or figural, rather than literal language—can "speak" trauma when normal, discursive language cannot, and fiction helps give a voice to traumatized individuals and populations. Hence, her theory of trauma is a ringing endorsement of the testimonial power of literature. (2014, p. 334)

This approach requires that the symptoms are close-read and dissected to find symbolic traces of the traumatic experience. Only than analysis can pave the way for the psychiatrist to uncover the source of trauma. However, the relation between memory and trauma has been reassessed by the new waves of researchers in the field. McNally is a key figure among those who oppose the idea that trauma avoids representation. He analyses clinical studies conducted on trauma's impact on memory and claims that heightened emotion, as experienced when exposed to traumatic stressors, in fact improves how much one remembers of the incident. He argues, "intense emotion enhances memory for the central aspects of stressful experiences, sometimes at the expense of peripheral details. Activation of the amygdala enhances the ability of the hippocampus to establish long- lasting memories of emotionally arousing positive as well as negative experiences" (2003, p.77). Although the memory of traumatic experience can be altered and distorted, it is not lost. His approach negates traumatic amnesia. Even then, it does not necessarily mean that the traumatised individual cannot refrain from talking about the experience. It only discards the impossibility of remembering and talking about the stressor literally. In this article, the screen memories devised by July will be analysed in accordance with the newer approach exemplified by McNally. In other words, the gaps in the narration that are covered by the fake endings are intentionally left out to save July from the pain of reliving them through narration. Therefore, they are not outside the boundaries of representation.

Ever since the expansion of trauma studies into the field of literature, and its further inclusion of postcolonial studies, slavery and its traumatic legacy have been points of interest for scholars of the field. Slavery's history of violence, racism, and degradation are subjects of study for trauma studies in literature on both personal level such as slaves being the victim of trauma and cultural level as a source of transgenerational trauma being transmitted through generations to descendants of slaves and black culture in general. Therefore, neo-slave narratives, coming out centuries later than slave narratives, provide contextual insight into both personal and cultural aspects of trauma through literature in that they are fictional recreations of original slave narratives, telling realistic stories of the lives of slaves and having implications for contemporary struggles for racial equality and identity. Moreover, they bring into focus parts of British history, which somewhat elude critical interest as Anim-Addo and Lima suggest, "The neo-slave narrative genre is particularly relevant to Black British writing since most received historical accounts have downplayed, or completely ignored, Britain's role as a slaving nation" (2018, p. 2). In light of this, it can be argued that neo-slave narratives address the academic amnesia

about history of slavery in Britain as well as staying relevant to contemporary society through its key concepts such as racial equality and freedom.

Apart from having trauma as its subject matter, literature can also employ narrative strategies that can enhance the representation of trauma. According to Nicole A. Sütterlin, literature, with its array of strategies that are similar to symptoms of trauma, can imitate "processes of trauma" with "flashbacks, re-enactments and dissociative states" (2020, p. 19). In this respect, literature can play a performative role in representing trauma as well as representing it in its content. Certain narrative devices such as flashbacks are similar in their nature to the symptoms of PTSD patients. Therefore, literary representation of traumatic experience is not limited to recounting tragic stories of victims. It can add performative depth to the surface level representation through artistic craftsmanship of its author.

One of the key symptoms of trauma is screening. Screening in its essence refers to replacing a traumatic memory or event with seemingly unrelated memory to supress trauma. Lansky explains that screen memories, proposed by Sigmund Freud, are cover memories that are associated to source of trauma, which can be analysed as constructions of the subconscious, which, in turn render the status of memories as constants for analysis invalid (2015, p. 90). This formulation fundamentally challenges the approach to memory in psychoanalysis and turns memories themselves into symbolic representations which can be analysed. In order to demonstrate how screen memories function, Lansky presents three case studies, one of which is as follows:

> A twenty-five-year-old, single Latino professional man came specifically requesting psychoanalysis. His discussion of his family history soon revealed that he very much idealized his background. His immigrant parents—born "dirt poor"—both worked their way through school, earned doctorates, and became professors. Both sets of grandparents lived close to the parents' home. [. . .] Association after association followed giving a picture of the desolation of his existence at home. His parents were for the most part either at school or studying. Both sets of grandparents, even when they were at his parents' home, had watched television without any involvement with him. [. . .] The previously idealized recollections now gave way to the depiction of a bleak and depressing ambience in a household composed entirely of physically present but emotionally absent people. (2015, p. 94-5)

The example case clearly shows that the initial view of the man about his family and the reality of the situation were very far from each other. By focusing on the success of his parents, the man was screening the emotional neglect he experienced from his family as a child. Therefore, the example demonstrates how screen memory functions in both hiding the trauma while being closely associated with it at the same time. In other words, the cause of the trauma was the family while the screen memory was based around the family as well. Because of this quality of screen memories, Silverman categorises them as having ambivalent nature saying, "screen memory is, then, a performative act in the present; it paves the way for thinking of memory as a creative process of "assemblage" rather than simply as the retrieval of forgotten moments in the past. [. . .] It both covers over the open wound of trauma and, carrying its charge and bearing its imprint, expresses it in indirect from" (2020, p. 124). In other words, screen memories are substitutes that are relevant to memories that cover and act as a way of defence mechanism for the traumatised person. They are not intentionally deceitful because they first and foremost cover the traumatising memories from the owner of those memories rather than anyone else. Because of their screening function, screen memories can be functionally imitated in literature easily by narrative strategies such as unreliable narration, metanarration, and alternative endings. Andrea Levy uses all three of these to a certain extent in her novel *The Long Song* (2010) to enable her narrator to create premature and abrupt endings to her narration in order to avoid going deeper into her traumatic past.

In order to understand how the narrator's fake endings work as screen memories, one must first look at the relationship between the two strands of narration within the novel. The novel consists of narrative chapters which are interrupted by metanarrative chapters which provide insight into the story and the identity of the narrator gradually. The narrative strand deals with the life story of July, a slave girl, working in a sugar plantation called Amity in colonial Jamaica. Her story covers the final years of slavery in Jamaica and the following years after Emancipation in the first half of nineteenth century. During these years July experiences slavery before emancipation, the Baptist's War slave revolt and its aftermath, the emancipation of slavery, and the transitory period that followed it. The narrative of July's life is interrupted by sections where the narrator addresses the reader directly and relates her experience writing July's story and her discussions with her son Thomas, who is to be the publisher of the story in question. The narrator's dissociative stance towards her story and her son's insistence to drive the story forward gradually reveals that the narrator is in fact an older July herself, struggling to narrate the most traumatic parts of her life in this autobiographical work.

Although the identity of the narrator is revealed later on in the novel, the earlier parts of the novel can be seen in a new light once the reader has that information. July's traumatisation can be observed firstly by how she distances herself from her life story by dissociation. She directly undermines the possibility of her story being based on a real person by claiming that it is completely fictional. Therefore, she refers to her story as "a tale of my making" (Levy, 2010, p. 9), suggesting that the whole story is the product of her imagination. According to Öztabak-Avcı, July's insistence on the fictionality of her story is a strategic counterargument to the original slave narratives which were edited by white abolitionists and were intent on making the stories as believable as possible (2017, p. 120-21). While this approach certainly serves a functional purpose in terms of ownership of the story both for July and Levy by extension, it is also indicative of July developing a distanced stance to her story to make it more bearable for herself to recount. It is not until July's first attempt to end the story with a premature ending that the reader learns that the narrator is July herself. Reading the script of the ending, Thomas insists that he knows there is more to July's life story than what has been written. While the narrator insists that "What befalls July is for me to devise", her son reveals that the story is "of your life lived" (Levy, 2010, p. 185). Thomas's revelation of the narrator's identity is promptly proven to the reader by the fact that July gives birth to a boy, whom she leaves at the door of a pastor after the incidents following the Baptist War in Amity. In fact, this revelation can be connected to an earlier argument between the narrator and her son, where she claims,

> Now, you may feel that it is for a mother to wag a finger upon her child and not the other way about. But hear this, reader, although my son was pulled with great agitation and pain from my body, let me unfold to you that he has not always known the blessing of a mother's affection. So you must forgive him this small fault of finger wagging. (Levy, 2010, p. 25).

This early reference to lack of motherly affection is a foreshadowing of July abandoning her firstborn child later on. In fact, Thomas's bitterness towards his mother stemming from abandonment can be observed throughout the metanarrative sections of the novel. Even so, the narrator's insistence on fictionality indicates an attempt to disown her story as her own life story. Moreover, her use of third person non-participant narration throughout the work supports that stance. In addition, cunningly humorous narration and overly humble perception of her story go hand in hand with her distancing. July repeatedly gives the reader verbal indications that her fanciful story is worth no serious consideration or attention from anyone. However, her humorous style and humility act as tools to talk down the severity and seriousness of her subject matter to make it more bearable to relate. Her roundabout approach to her life story is an indication of avoidance to face her traumatic past as it is,

which is one of the definitive symptoms of PTSD. While each person might react differently to trauma, there are certain criteria for diagnosis. Kaminer and Eagle explain avoiding talking about the traumatic experience as follows:

> Trauma survivors also often wish to avoid talking to others about the trauma, as this makes them feel anxious and distressed all over again. For many survivors, talking about or remembering the trauma feels as dangerous as actually experiencing it. This may be hard for family and friends to understand, as there is a popular notion that trauma survivors should talk about what happened in order to feel better. Survivors may also find that they attempt not to think about the trauma at all, forcing themselves to think about something else if a thought about the trauma enters their mind. Usually these attempts at mental avoidance are only partially successful, and intrusive thoughts and images repeatedly push their way into consciousness. In addition, the survivor may try to avoid the distressing feelings associated with the trauma by numbing themselves emotionally, resulting in feeling cut-off or emotionally detached much of the time. (2010, p. 32)

Accordingly, upon her son's persistence on continuing the story, July feels resentment towards him for making her live through all of it again, partially accepting that it is in fact her own life story, as she says, "For I know that my reader does not wish to be told tales as ugly as these. And please believe your storyteller when she declares that she has no wish to pen them. It is only my son that desires it. For he believes his mama should suffer every little thing again. Him wan' me suffer every likkle t'ing again" (Levy, 2010, p. 191-92)! Therefore, when Thomas claims that her story is "not written in truth" (Levy, 2010, p. 362), he fails to understand that July is not being purposefully deceitful towards her reader, but it is an attempt of self-preservation of the mind. Furthermore, all her methods to dissociate from the story and lessen its gravity are employed to that end. The discrepancy between July and her son stem from two different functional approaches to July's story. Re-enactment of her life story through her narration means reliving the darkest parts of her past for July. However, for Thomas, who was never the victim of slavery like July, July's story is a preservation of history for generations to come. In accordance, Adair argues that for Thomas "that the aim of a story of slavery should not only be remembrance, so that the story is 'never [...] lost', but also that it should aim to rival the family stories of wealthy, white colonial Jamaicans, suggesting that colonial historiography and even colonial family legends define the playing field of this story" (2019, p. 87). Therefore, Thomas represents a different era of post-slavery struggle, which render him uncompromising with regards to the documentation of July's life.

Loss of a loved one is one of the primary causes of trauma and both of July's screening attempts are characterised by loss. In order to understand the screening function of the first fake ending, one must take a close look at the events leading up to it with a comparative approach what is revealed after Thomas forces July to keep writing the story. Analysed individually, the series of events that take place in Amity plantation on the wake of the Baptist War can themselves easily be sources of trauma. Within the span of a single day, July witnesses the suicide of the plantation owner; is framed for his murder along with Nimrod by her biological father with whom she does not share a father-daughter relationship; subjected to a manhunt; experience a violent subjugation of a small-scale slave revolt; watch her mother brutally murder her biological father; feel the burden of her mother's inevitable death for the murder of a white man to protect her. This intense series of events and their narration lead up to the first fake ending in the novel. However, distressing narrating them might have been for July the narrator, she pushes herself to keep writing until a certain point. If one considers these as the part of her story, which she can bear to recount, what is being left out can be considered as the true source of her trauma at the time. Namely, that traumatic event is her decision to abandon her child, who was conceived on the same day of the revolt before the suicide of the plantation owner. She refrains from telling it before the fake ending. And she, clearly distressed at reaching this point, addresses the reader asking them to turn away from her narrative, saying: "I can go no further! Reader, my story is at an end. Close up this book and go about

your day. You have heard all that I have to tell of a life lived upon this sugar island. This wretched pen will blot and sputter no more in pursuance of our character July I now lay it down in its final rest" (Levy, 2010, p. 183). Writing through one of the most tragic points of her life brings her so much pain from reliving those moments to the point that she cannot bear to tell the rest. Instead, she writes an ending for her story. It alludes to symbolic funeral ceremonies held after the emancipation of slavery where the coffin of slavery is buried along with handcuffs and chains (Levy, 2010, p. 182). It is the day of emancipation of slavery and thousands of slaves are celebrating their newly-found freedom after years of bondage. It is depicted by July as a milestone of history for all the enslaved as she says

> Some in this congregation fell upon their knees, others mumbled prayers on halting breath, or rocked within the rhythm of a softly sung hymn. Until suddenly, the minister raising both arms heavenward shouted, 'The monster is dead. The negro is free!'
>
> Although the hour was midnight, the elation that rıse from all glowed like a sunrise to light this splendid occasion. As the coffin with the words, 'Colonial slavery died July 31, 1838, aged 276 years', was lowered into the ground, a joyous breeze blew. It was whipped up from the gasps of cheering that erupted unbounded. When the handcuffs, chains and iron collars were thrown into that long-awaited grave to clatter on top of slavery's ruin, the earth did tremor. (Levy, 2010, p. 181-82)

With this ending, July paints a happy ending not just for herself but all the enslaved blacks in general. Therefore, it can be argued that she employs a historical and cultural memory for all effected by slavery as a substitute to her personal tragic memory to create the effect that July finally finds happiness after the devastating events of the revolt. However, as she gradually reveals it, the real memory paints a contrary picture, where so many of slaves of Amity suffer gruesome punishments and death, to this ending. July herself is punished severely. Even then, it is the narrative strategy she chooses to employ to relate how she leaves her son at the door of the wife of a white Baptist minister, Jane Kinsman. Usage of Jane Kinsman's report instead of narrating the day she left Thomas at her door is highly suggestive that it was this separation constituting her deepest trauma at that time period. While remaining the narrative voice, July writes this section in reported speech through an article written by the same woman who raised Thomas. In an essay on her time in Jamaica, she "found a negro slave child abandoned outside the door of their manse. After taking in the child and baptising him Thomas, she then ventured to find out who had mothered this slave. [. . .] When this slave realised that the woman who had her pickney was now standing before her, she did begin to shake with fear. She then begged Jane Kinsman to keep her son or else her missus was determined upon selling her slave baby away" (Levy, 2010, p. 194). By referring to Jane Kinsman's narrative instead of telling what happened from her own perspective, July further distances herself from the memory. Considering that her cover as the unnamed narrator is blown by Thomas by this point, July is devising a new level dissociation from her source of trauma. The fact that she abandons Thomas on account that he is not sold away, further indicates the emotional damage she suffers from this unwilling separation. Consequently, as she continues to write the story of her life afterwards, the ending she writes remains a failed screen memory due to the insistence of Thomas to drive the story forward in its true course.

Just as the first screen memory coincides with July's loss of Thomas and her first love Nimrod, the second one coincides with the end of her relationship with the new overseer Robert Goodwin, which parallels the impending bankruptcy of Amity plantation, and her daughter Emily, with him. However, July's narration is more straightforward as to how Emily is taken from her compared to how Thomas is given away. The difference between how the two memories are relayed to the reader is indicative of how guilty July feels about the incidents. In Thomas' case, she intentionally gives him away so that he lives as a free man, which is a burden she clearly still carries as an old lady. In Emily's case, she is tricked by Molly to hand her over so that she be fed with fresh milk without realising that Molly is to betray her

and leave with the Goodwins for England, taking Emily with them. She recounts, "July thought nothing of it as she handed her pickney to her, for Molly often fed her. But perhaps if she had noticed that Molly was wearing a hat—a missus cast-off [. . .] she would have waved her away. [. . .] [S]he would have clutched her pickney tight to her" (Levy, 2010, p. 351). Except for her obliviousness to the trick Molly is playing on her, July has no hand in her separation from Emily. Accordingly, this scene itself is not covered by the screen memory. July presents the story right before the second screen memory, indicating that the more traumatic memory hidden by this screen memory is not how this separation happened but how it shaped the rest of July's life after the bankruptcy of Amity. It is, again with the insistence of Thomas, revealed that July actually never left the grounds of Amity plantation like a ghost haunting the place, living in segregation and poverty until she is arrested for stealing chicken. Contrary to this fact, the screen memory is painting a success story for July for the remainder of her life, where she first opens a shop, earns high incomes, and opens a lodging house (Levy, 2010, p. 360-361). Interestingly, in both the professions she supposedly pursues, she is matched with Miss Clara, who has been a fierce rival of July since the beginning of the novel. Moreover, the ending emphasises how July, with her wit, outperforms her in both professions. In this screen memory, July is projecting Miss Clara's life after the emancipation of slavery to herself to create a seemingly happy ending for herself. Miss Clara becomes a proxy for what July would dream of for herself after freedom. Moreover, by reversing the success of Miss Clara towards herself, she is screening her damaged self-confidence caused by being outdone by her fierce rival. Therefore, her devastation after losing her daughter and the short-lived happiness she felt when she was Goodwins lover, causes the broken state she finds herself in. The second ending she writes act as a screen memory to cover it.

Consequently, when the pictures painted by the two screen memories are brought together, it can be deduced that July uses what she would desire her life to be after slavery for her younger self. Accordingly, the alternative endings, which act as screen memories within her narrative function in a sense to hide the most traumatic parts of her life, namely the loss of her children and love interests, from herself rather than deceiving the reader with a happy ending. In light of this, when July claims, "So, reader, do not feel pity for the plight of our July, for my tale did not set forth to see her so wounded. [. . .] No. July's tale has the happiest of endings—and you may take my word upon it" (Levy, 2010, p. 361), her true motive is not to keep things, or the rest of her story, from the reader, but to save herself from the pain of reliving those memories through narration. Therefore, the two fake endings functionally screen her traumatic experience from herself. While fulfilling the performative representation of processes of trauma through literature, these screen memories enable July to focus on the happier aspects of her past and create an empowering narrative for herself by leaving out the times she was psychologically damaged and vulnerable.

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