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### HISTORICITY IN SARA SULERI'S MEMOIR'S MEATLESS DAYS AND THE BOYS WILL BE BOYS; A DAUGHTER'S ELEGY

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Memoir, truth, memories, past, personal experiences.

#### Abstract

Using qualitative research methods and employing textual analysis technique, this study formally explores historicity in two nonfictional works of Sara Suleri namely *Meatless Days* (1989) and *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter's Elegy* (2003). Even though Suleri's works have been described as memoirs but there is a dearth of in-depth analysis of these two texts in the light of the theories of memoir writing. Memoir is defined as a genre of creative nonfiction critically analyzed by practitioners, such as Lee Gutkind (2003), Bill Roorbach (2001), Judith Barrington (2000), William Zinsser (1998), and Philip Lopate (1994). Writing a memoir can be an act of re-living and re-experiencing the past by the process of recall. Suleri attempts to find a relationship with her past in these works. Her works revolve around multiple phases of her life. She has penned her experiences in an artful and fictionalized manner, by sketching the picture of her life in such a way that it reveals different meanings centered on her individual memories. She has defined her past through the echoes of the voices and the silences of her characters.



## 1. Introduction

This study will help readers to see the writings of Sara Suleri as creative nonfiction in general and memoirs in particular. Many critics and writers have critiqued them as books which present historical accounts and deal with postcolonial elements but the difference is that they provide the history of the writer's own inner world and experiences. Creative nonfiction is an important vehicle of delivering one's thoughts through writing (Gutkind, 2012, p. 7) Memories are snapshots of the past. They are the glimpses of days gone by and are an important part of human consciousness and cognizance; they help us to define our present-day and current moments. People recall their memories (mostly the sweet ones) and experiences because they feel the urge to tell other people about all that they have been through. Writers give voice to the realities of the society by connecting themselves with their past. Memories are not fixed or constant. They are "fluid" and temporal (qtd. in Agnew, 2005, p. 72). Human beings have a deep connection with their memories. They re-create their past to shape and build their selves (Roorbach, 2001, p. 79). Vijay Agnew quotes Gayle Greene on memory in his book *Diaspora, Memory, And Identity: A Search for Home* while clarifying that, "[memory] is an act of remembering that can create new understanding of both the past and the present. 'Memories create meanings; they are not mere depositories of fact'" (p. 8). The word "memoir" is derived from the French term 'Mémoire' which means memory or reminiscence (oxforddictionaries.com). Writer Judith Barrington in her book *Writing the Memoir*, describes it as "'Memoirs' (always preceded by a possessive

pronoun: 'my memoirs', 'his memoirs') were a kind of scrapbook in which pieces of a life were pasted" (p. 19). It is categorized as a sub-genre of biography and autobiography. Memoirs are defined as the stories of life that are said to be realistic. It is a mind game which interprets the personal past that is frozen at a specific time. A major part of it deals with the memory which in most of the cases is faulty no matter how much a writer struggles to make it accurate and truthful for the readers (Roorbach, 2001, p. 2). Memoir is a subjective form of writing in contrast with history which is said to be objective (W. Knight, 2007, p. 12). It holds up the truth of someone's life and brings it to the surface by depicting and representing the realities of people through some memories and experiences. As a result, it helps the memoirist to discover his or her own self by giving voices to that unheard persona of the past. The author's voice is the essential component in a memoir. It is important for the writer to involve his voice in the memoir. By using this technique of self-indulging, the memoirist struggles to make his memoir moving and the best for his readers. In a nutshell, the reader gets the whole truth in the memoir and experiences how it feels to be at the center of a place. Memories can be faulty but in fact this is what makes or represents the real human being who is re-creating their past (Roorbach, 2001, p. 81). The individual living in the present shares the burden of his/her past with the readers by giving it the shape of a memoir. Memoir, a more focused and centralized form of writing, is associated with subjective memory that is individualized in style and tone. Struken in a few lines defines different types of memories in his article by explaining that:

“Memories, then, are fluid. Collective memories are renegotiated. Personal memories are re-drafted and re-thought” (Agnew, 2005, p. 72). So, the writer re-invents and re-interprets his memories and events according to his required needs to make it considerably true for the reader and to make the story work in a better way. The other major distinction in writing a memoir is that a memoirist can begin from anywhere and is free to choose any memory of their past. It deals with the specificity and particularity of time and event. Gore Vidal in his memoir *Palimpsest* defines the difference between memoir and autobiography, “A memoir is how one remembers one’s own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked.” Although some memoirs do, in fact, call for research, the verifiable facts are not generally as important as they are in autobiography, where the author includes much that is beyond the realm of memory. (qtd. in Barrington, 2000, p. 24) Usually, in writing memoir, the memoirist tends to share those memories that she/he feels safe to remember and share. Use of the first person gives impact to the reader that the memoirist is passionately involved in presenting himself and is not hiding his real self in a veil like most of the fictional writers do. The writer indirectly encounters with the reader where he feels unsafe but that does not mean that he is hiding. The other major feature of the memoir is language. Language helps to arouse the drama and performance in the historical narrative. It also brings accuracy and clarity in the memoir. Through the means of language, a memoirist gives voice to the unheard voices of himself from the past, gives voice to the formerly

silent and also helps in “beating the shame” (Roorbach, 2001, p. 80). Sara Suleri is a Pakistani born American author and an English professor at Yale University. She is also acknowledged for being a founding editor of *The Yale Journal of Criticism* and highly praised as a post-colonial literary figure famous for her works. She has written three books, *Meatless days* (1989), *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992) and, *Boys Will Be Boys; Daughter’s Elegy* (2003). Her book, *Rhetoric of English India* is considered as a landmark study of Suleri. Her first memoir named *Meatless Days* was originally published in 1989. *Meatless Days* is a “sad, poignant and graceful elegy” (Ahmad 744). Critic Rukhsana Ahmad describes it as a memoir on a personal level “intense in loyalties, skillfully written and moving” (p. 744). Critic Moore Gilbert surmises that may be the source of inspiration behind Suleri’s *Meatless Days* is Ghalib’s memoir *Dastanbuy*. Ghalib’s *Dastanbuy* is also considered a literary work which talks about the story of loss and grief written in times of political crises (Shamsie, 2017, p. 245). She has devoted this memoir to her mother and her sister Iffat. By using the genre of memoir, Suleri’s subjective self mainly focuses on the time and experiences she lived through in her homeland. Her narrative again and again speaks about her people and her homeland. Her memoir is recapturing the past memories through many major characters by whom her life and experiences are affected. Both the books are considered as remarkable piece because of the ideas, her use of language, metaphor and prose in the narration. Writer Ambreen Hai said that, “few south Asian writers in English have produced as distinctive an

idiom or density of thought and metaphor” (p. 272). Muneeza Shamsie in chapter “Sara Suleri: The First Writer of a Creative Memoir in Pakistani-English Literature” quotes Suleri’s comment on her own writing: “*Meatless Days* is structured like a *ghazal* because each chapter can be read individually as a ‘*sher*’ [couplet] even though the whole holds together. You can easily read each chapter separately just as in a *ghazal* you can read each *sher*. I wasn’t conscious of it at times, but in retrospect you can see it” (p. 245). The second book she wrote, *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter’s Elegy* was published in 2004 after a gap of fourteen years. It is also considered as a memoir as she pays tribute to her late father in the book. This book shares many nostalgic experiences and memories of Suleri with her father to whom she referred by his nickname ‘Pip’ a short form of ‘Patriotic and Preposterous’. A notable feature of this memoir is the titles of the chapters. Each chapter has an Urdu heading which Suleri has translated in the form of unique phrases. Most of the titles are verses from Urdu poetry, songs or sayings written with English translation by Suleri. The memoir *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter’s Elegy* is enriched with the classical poetry of Ghalib, Iqbal, Insha, and Mir Taqi Mir and so on. Fragments of Urdu poetry, Noor Jahan’s songs, pop songs, and war ballads inform the semantic structure of these works.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 An Introduction to Creative Nonfiction

Creative nonfiction writing was popular officially or unofficially before the term was actually coined. Lee Gutkind is said to be as both the editor and founder of the term creative nonfiction and the

magazine. He was also the one who had initiated the education of creative nonfiction in the United States, Europe and Australia with the help of presentations and workshops. Moreover, Gutkind is also claimed as the first who founded the creative nonfiction program and MFA degree at the University of Pittsburgh (creativenonfiction.org). The Term Literary nonfiction was approved by Chris Anderson (Hesse, 2013. p. 251). In 1983, the genre became official to the world (Gutkind, 1997; Fletcher, 2003). By the year 1986 literary nonfiction was considered as the fastest spreading genre. It was verified by Associated Writings Programs (qtd. in Hesse, 2013. p. 238). The writings of creative nonfiction were all around. Writers have written different pieces of writings related to their experiences to mark their identities of the colonial period. The most acknowledged writers of that time are Mark Twain and his memoir *Recollections of Mississippi*, John Muir’s book *The Mountains of California*, and Truman Capote’s nonfiction novel *In Cold Blood* etc. Through these writings, the writers have encouraged and inspired the readers. The autobiographical works and memoirs of different writers in colonial era helped them to mark their names in the history though. Writer Jay Gore Vidal categorized Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography as the first major and well celebrated writing (qtd. in Clasen, 2018, p. 4). And then in the late 1970’s, the term ‘Creative Nonfiction’ was coined in the United States. It is believed that the roots of creative nonfiction emerged from Journalism. In 1960, different social and radical reforms took place in society. These reforms deeply impacted the writings of journalism. Later a new

genre emerged as a result of these changes in a society in the form of letters in America which is often called as New Journalism (Gutkind. 2012, p. 50). Author and social commentator Tom Wolfe coined this term in early 1960's and it has lasted too many years. (Gutkind, 2003, p.8; 2012,Gutkindp. 14). Literary scholars and writers in the United States observed the advancement of the genre creative nonfiction through New Journalism. In 1983, the term (creative nonfiction) was formally approved by the organization, National Endowment of the Arts, as a literary genre (Mahood,2015, p. 1; Gutkind, 1997, p. 7). In analyzing what is creative nonfiction, commonly arguments are raised on the issue of what is actually 'creative' in nonfiction. Creative nonfiction writers are always being asked about how they produce creativity in their nonfiction writings. Lee Gutkind solves this ambiguity by defining the meaning of being 'creative' in creative nonfiction. He defines that, "The word 'creative' in creative nonfiction has to do with how the writer conceives ideas, summarizes situations, defines personalities, describes places—and shapes and presents information" while "The word 'nonfiction' means the material is true" (p. 7). Moreover 'creative' in the term 'creative nonfiction' also does not mean that the writer should make up the things which are not related to him and are based on false ideas because "there's no place for invention in this genre" (qtd. in Williams, 2003, p. 297). Creative nonfiction writings are dependent on the experiences of a person which become the central point in the writings as they help the writer to interpret his recollected and observed experiences (Root, 2008, p. 9). Creative nonfiction writings

become ineffective for the reader if a writer denies presenting his personal experiences (p. 25). Writer's presence is encouraged in this genre, as it allows the writer to present his self by connecting the past experiences and urge him to be the central part of the story (Fletcher,2008, p. 14: Root, 2008, p. 20: Gutkind, 2003, p. 13). According to Lee Gutkind, the genre creative nonfiction is a combination of five R's concepts which include different characteristics. The first R describes the "real-life aspect of the writing experience." The second R gives a reflection to the "writer's feelings and responses about a subject" which is also encouraged in the genre of creative nonfiction. The third R deals with "research and reportage" which forces the writer to explore and investigate the truth and facts. The fourth R focuses on the aspect of reading, as both researching and reading develop the proficiency in their works. The fifth and the last R is "the riting, the most artistic and romantic aspect of the whole experience" which deals with the idea of creation by the writer or the process of writing the story (p. 17-20).

## 2.2 The Memoir

This present age is the age of memoir (Zinsser, 1998, p. 3). In the 21st century, the main focus is shifted to the traditional form of memoir writings. Till the twentieth century, Folkenflik observes the memoirs were titled as "self-life writing" (Smith and Watson 2). Writer Tracy Kidder claims, "[w]e live in an era surfeited with memoirs" (p. 278). A memoir is the most celebrated and an honorable form of creative nonfiction (Couse, 2012, p. 146). Patricia Hampl in her personal essay "Memory and Imagination" defines memoir as, "a peculiarly open

form, inviting broken and incomplete images, half-recollected fragments, all the mass (and mess) of details” (p. 33). For Zinsser, “[m]emoir is how we try to make sense of who we are, who we once were, and what values and heritage shaped us” (p. 6). So, memoir enables the writer to identify his real self through this process of writing about the past. In memoir writing, memories play an important role in the construction. “In memoir the heart is the brain” (Karr, 2014, p. 151) which a memoirist uses in the process of recalling memories. Writer Patricia Hampl also concludes this idea by saying that memoir is not reliant on memories only rather “[i]t’s an effort to translate memory into language and to disentangle the associations that inevitably arise from memory” (qtd. in Root, 2008, p. 187). William Zinsser also focuses on the aspect of language. According to Zinsser, in describing past, a memoirist needs “the power of language” to describe his memories with “grace” and “humor” (Zinsser, 1998, p. 4). One of the practitioners of memoirs Steven Harvey, have rejected fixed idea which people have associated with memoir writing. As for them, to become a memoirist does not demand a writer to have an extraordinary life full of exciting events (p. 275). Rather it only demands truth and facts and it matters a lot in writing a memoir (Larson, 2007, p. 112). As Mary Karr claims that the “[f]acts are the meat and potatoes of writing” (p. 122). It enables them to communicate intimately with the readers about their personal experiences (Barrington, 2000, p. 22) as well as it helps them to confess their uncertainties openly to the world (Franklin 2). By being subjective a memoirist puts forward her voice in the narrative in

a “conversational” manner (Barrington, 2000, p.22). Ben Yagoda in his book *Memoir: A History* also praises this form by saying that, "Memoir has become the central form of the culture: not only the way stories are told, but the way arguments are put forth, products and properties marketed, ideas floated, acts justified, reputations constructed or salvaged" (qtd. in Couse, 2012, p. 8). But despite everything the truth is that memories are never a reliable source.

### 2.3 Creative Nonfiction Writings in Pakistan

Interestingly this genre has played a major part in South Asian English writings. Through this genre many writers have shared their experience of life before and after the partition of the subcontinent. Pakistani writers have contributed a lot to this genre. Their contribution has also diversified the range of Pakistani English literature. South Asian Pakistani writers have published an immense number of Pakistani-English literatures in the form of biographies, essays, memoirs, autobiographies and political commentaries.

### 2.4 The Tradition of Memoir Writing in Pakistan

The tradition of memoir began by the writer, Sake Dean Mahomed. Sake Dean Mahomed was an Anglo-Indian traveler. He is considered as the first Indian writer who published his book in English. In 1794, he published a memoir, *The Travels of Dean Mahomed*. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century and the colonial times gave a new direction to the South Asian English Literature. Moore-Gilbert says, “[l]ife-writing became an increasingly popular genre in the Indian sub-continent in the nineteenth century and by the end of the Second World War, a considerable

number of auto/biographies had been written by colonized subjects across many other regions of the European empires” (p. xi). To share their experiences, writers and different scholars wrote their autobiographies before and after the partition. Writers such as Sultan Mohammad Shah, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Cornelia Sorabji and many other have gained their reputation in pre-partition era. Later in the newly independent state of Pakistan, Shaista Suharwardy Ikramullah and Feroz Khan Noon were the two prominent pre partition writers who contributed after the partition. *From Purdah to Parliament* by Shaista Suharwardy Ikramullah is acclaimed to be the first noteworthy autobiography. Later another autobiography *From Memory* by Feroz Khan Noon was published in 1966 (Shamsie, 2017, p. 570). Sara Suleri is the first Pakistani English woman writer who is praised for her creative memoirs. These writers discuss the concept of individuality and self in their memoirs. They have captured different aspects of their lives and experience in their memoirs.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study followed an exploratory research design and had incorporated qualitative methodology to conceptualize the historical underpinnings in Sara Suleri’s creative non-fictional works namely *Meatless Days* (1989) and *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter’s Elegy* (2003) using the conventions of memoir writing. Textual analysis was used as an analytical strategy. The diverse themes of nostalgia, sense of place, confessions and sensuous imagery emerged out of the literary life world of the memoirs.

### **4. Analysis**

#### *4.1 Characteristics of a Memoir in Sara Suleri’s Works*

Life writings deal with the idea of creativity. These writings produce something new out of memory and imagination and are claimed as the best “search mechanism” (Zinsser, 1998, p. 6). These literary nonfiction writings are used as “psychodynamic understandings of the human condition” and “the quest for meaning” (Hart, 2009, p. 218). This article chiefly explores the ways through which the memoirs of Sara Suleri are categorized as creative nonfiction. *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter’s Elegy* are analyzed as pieces of creative nonfiction which will help to define the components of memoir in detail. Writers and critics have identified Suleri’s works as a memoir but they have not thoroughly analyzed this form memoir as a genre. In this thesis, I take the conversation forward and analyze Suleri’s works according to the parameters described by the practitioners of creative nonfiction about the form of memoir. This thesis is a thorough investigation of the texts as works of memoir. By applying the theories of the practitioners, I analyze Suleri’s memoirs as creative and literary piece of nonfiction. Further, by thematically analyzing the texts, I focus on several major themes incorporated by the writer through memory in her memoirs. *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys* are “a collection[s] of meditative autobiographical tales or essays gathered into a memoir” (Scanlon, 2008, p. 411). Both memoirs explain the writer's memories of the past related to her family and friends. But when it comes to death, it seems as if she is describing the haunting reflections of her past. Each chapter in her memoirs

talks about her memory with different people and their stories to which she was also connected. She talks about such a family which is not bounded by a string of emotions but has an egotistic patriarchal male and surely has a mysterious mother who is sympathetic and self-effacing. Her story intermingles/ blends political and personal events as she belonged to a family which has a profound political association. According to Shamsie, "[t]his configuration between political and personal loss, between exile from the homeland and a secure certain past, of both family and country emerge with great clarity in *Meatless Days*" (p. 244).

#### 4.2 Form

*Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys* are remarkably well-written memoirs in a creative manner. These books have been classified into several genres by the critics. I have looked upon them as a part of creative nonfiction writing in this thesis. The University of Chicago Press also declared it as a "finely wrought memoir of life in postcolonial Pakistan" (qtd. in Rachel, 2011, p. 80). Suleri's memoirs *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys* present a perfect picture which urges their reader to read them as creatively written pieces of nonfiction. Both memoirs tell a story which is complete in itself as well as each chapter works as a creative piece of essay and presents a separate story to its reader. Suleri has given an impression to her readers as if she is musing upon particular events of her life. As Practitioners Judith Barrington and William Zinsser claim that memoir works opposite to autobiography and biography so it never takes emphasis on maintaining any order or chronology. So, Suleri's stories are described without

chronology in her memoirs. She herself declared, "In any case, my instincts have never led me to chronology" (Suleri, 2003, p.47). Memories of Sara Suleri in her memoirs are a kind of response through which she sets the idea of relationships with her parents or siblings, to womanhood, politics, history, and culture. Through her narrative techniques, she gives an appropriate response to each memory of her life. As a memoirist, Suleri has described her truthful events and experiences in her memoirs. Her memoirs deal with the idea of truth that ensures her reader to trust her stories.

#### 4.3 Nostalgia

The memoirs portray a detailed picture of her nostalgia about the past. Most part of her life is lived in Pakistan or under the aura of Pakistan "Each time I return to Pakistan, I realize that I have quite forgotten what it is, the fragrance of real tea" (Suleri, 1989, p. 95). She recalled a memory about her home in Lalazar when Tillat and Irfani have new pet rabbits. Suleri thought that her father did not pay any attention to his surroundings while writing but when the rabbits died, she observed that he was aware of his surrounding as her father mumbled, "I would be sitting out here in the sun, writing about Muslim nationhood, and these bunnies would be jumping round me — more than you ever do!" (Suleri, 2003, p. 17). Sara quotes a jovial kind of memory from her past trip about Tillat. As when they went to the mountains of NathiaGali and Tillat her sister had roasted only one chicken and her father mentioned that there were four of us to eat the meal and Tillat, after giving explanation said to her father that chicken had four legs (p. 4).

#### 4.4 Sensuous Imagery



Her stories have a complex structure but also provide readers with the comprehensive details of her experiences. Writer Mary Karr also describes that sensory details make a memoir an interesting piece of writing (p. 72). Using sensory details to describe her stories, Suleri has also made her stories remarkable which are filled with emotions as well. She uses the sensory details in picturing the old city Lahore. She describes "stalls full of garland, the red roses, and the easily bruised white motia, smelling so sweet, and smelling so sour." (Suleri, 2003, p. 12-13). She accounts for details about the month of Ramzan. She draws the imagery of Ramzan from her recollection. She adds on the sensory detail, "how busy Lahore would get! Its minarets hummed, its municipalities pulled out their old air-raid sirens to make the city noisily cognizant: the moon has been sighted, and the fast begun" (Suleri, 1989, p.33). Suleri constructed the imagery of war in New Haven by connecting to her past memories of the 1971 war. As she states, "New Haven thus allowed me to congratulate myself on my own bravery, as though I were living in a war zone again: certainly, the police cars do very well at replicating the shriek of air-raid sirens. On fanciful days, I can imagine that I am back, listening to the brigadier bark out of his commands, in the pink house on the hill" (p. 205).

#### 4.5 Comments and Judgments

She has developed a trust relationship with her reader by putting herself as a major character in her memoirs. She has effectively merged her personal voice in her memoirs by using a useful technique of commentary or judgment that is thought to be as an important part in the construction of a memoir. The

act of judging tells her readers that she is a reliable interpreter of her life experiences. She makes a judgment by mentioning that how much her father was enthusiastic about her journals. As Suleri says, "[a] saddening thought. But you were, Pip, always exuberant about your editorials and your articles, even when you did them every day" (Suleri, 2003, p.16). At times Sara is making her confirm presence through her voice by commenting on several issues. As when she talked about her father and his busy routine in England as he told her himself that, "he spent most of the day around Whitehall," (p. 128). And Sara remarks that "Papa could not have been at Whitehall all the time, for the next year he met my mother" (Suleri, 1989, p.128). Her father's comment that "On Judgement Day, I will say to God, 'Be merciful, for I have already been judged by my child.'" (Suleri, 2003, p.20) urges her readers to memorize about the judgments she made in her previous memoir about her father. Writer Suleri very confidently making a comment on the politicians of Pakistan. As she states, "the first Benazir era promised some hope until she married her scoundrel" (p. 7) a comment on Asif Ali Zardari 11th president of Pakistan. And then she commented on Nawaz Sharif "Bobby Shafto, fat and fair, with his Model town estates and innumerable mills of corruptions" (p. 8). As a reader I observe most is that in her second memoir *Boys Will Be Boys* she is deliberately commenting on every bit of memory she remembers about her life. As she ironically states about newsprint, "newsprint, begone. I really do not wish to wonder what you did and did not do to my father's life. After all, he loved

newsprint, so who am I to set up vociferous complaint against its texture?" (p. 12).

#### 4.6 Confessions

She has placed her 'self' at the center of her stories. She has highlighted her relationship with the world outside as well as the world that existed inside her. Her stories are a kind of confession to her readers. As she tells her readers that her father was not satisfied with her marriage with a non-Muslim, she adds her comment on this matter in a way that her father is acting as a listener and says, "Pip, you must put these things from your mind. You see me married, domesticated. But one thing I know still agitates you. Sometimes in the middle of the night, I can hear you whisper, 'make him a Muslim: make Austin a Muslim!'" (p.21). Suleri made a confession that in her childhood she was fond of eating cauliflowers from her garden. She remembers that how as a child she faced the embarrassment on eating it as she was "exposed as a cauliflower despoiler" (p. 28). Later in a closing chapter of her memoir *Boys Will Be Boys*, she shared a memory about her pregnancy. Suleri tells her readers that her sister Ifat ran away from college at the age of nineteen to marry a polo man. Moreover, she mentioned "for unmarried women are not supposed to be in any need of a pregnancy test in Pakistan" (p. 136).

#### 4.7 Idea of Credibility

The thorough accounts of Suleri's life develop a sense in her readers that they have read a complete story of an author's life. The style of Suleri brings out the originality in her text helps to create credibility relationship with her readers. As nonfiction writings are meant to be reliable, many

times Suleri confesses that she does not remember full knowledge or memory about a certain story about which she is telling in her memoirs. As she says, "I cannot remember why Shahid and I were together in Karachi at that time. It couldn't have been for Nuzzi's funeral" (Suleri, 2003, p.2). Again, while discussing a memory related to Pakistan, she was unable to recall the name of her gardener, she says, "I have forgotten his name; it doesn't matter" (p. 9). As a truthful storyteller, this aspect in her memoirs gives an impression to her reader that she is truthful about her stories and does not have concrete knowledge about her memories. As memoirs are related to memory so I, as a reader understand the fact that it's impossible to possess complete knowledge through memory. Admitting the truth also creates credibility between the writer and the reader. Moreover, at certain points in her memoirs, she also limits herself and her readers by consciously telling the fact that she did not want to indulge us more in the story or to the character. As when she mentions about a woman named as Dale in her memoir, she never discloses other information about this character and chooses to present minor details about this character. A character in her story is only mentioned hardly. She introduced the character of Dale in the first chapter and then little she mentioned about this character in the chapter of Mustakori where she addresses her in a manner of conversation "so though I know that you're here against your will" and then in the closing pages Suleri addresses her readers, "I will not mention Dale at any length, although great length occurs to me (be distracted, elsewhere, Dale, as you read through this shortest sentence)" (Suleri, 1989,

p. 198). About Richard X she only has devoted some paragraphs and, in the end, she tells her readers, "he was with me, and then was not, is the only simple way of putting things" (p. 76) Through memory, Suleri has dwelled into the reality of her world and experience. It seems as if memory is a primary baggage for her and she is lifting the weight of these memories on her shoulders. In some cases, Suleri has shared her inner feelings with her readers. As she states, "there was a voice that used to say to me 'put back your body where your life belongs,' but I have never been particularly good at heeding that piece of advice, happy instead to let life and body go grazing off to their own sweet pastures" (p. 76). And then later she says, "I have always mourned in museums. They remind me too much of how each time you walk into your own room you are forced to take stock of it, to look around and say, 'so this is it, my life'" (p. 88). "I used to think that it would be refreshing to live in a house that was shaped like a mosque" (p. 89).

#### 4.8 Importance of Places

Place acts as an integral part in memoirs. Giving details to the readers about the place shows memoirists' intimacy and memories situated with the specific place. Her memoirs are filled with the details and description about places where she lived or studied or to which she is nostalgically connected. She has placed proper addresses of her home in the specific city and country. As she mentioned Fowler lines house in Karachi to the 23-H Gulberg house Lahore. Suleri has given the geographical details by connecting to her siblings to different places. As she describes, "Nuz without seeing simultaneously Karachi's maniacal sprawl,

its sandy palms, and crazy traffic. Shahid looks like London now, in the curious pull with which London can remind, 'I also was your home.' Tillat in desert land is buzy, surrounding herself with oases, pools of infancy, converting in my mind a grain of sand into signs of impressive fertility and it is still difficult to think of Ifat without remembering her peculiar congruence with Lahore, a place that gave her pleasure" (p. 204). Suleri has defined her love and intimacy by driving her readers towards its archeology. She has described Charing Cross with all its history and amendments in that place. As she says, "there was a sweet pavilion at its center, a little marble edifice that housed in my childhood a larger-than-life statue of Queen Victoria . . . [then] in her place was an aquarium a fish show for the public's delight . . . [and now] in the Charing Cross pavilion, a huge cement *rehal* has been placed. Suffice it to say that it purported to be a Holy Book Stand for an invisible Quran" (p. 27). Her college was a mere jail as she notes that "Kinnaird College for Women! On Jail Road in Lahore . . . The College was indeed on Jail Road, as was the jail" (p. 52). These all descriptions about the places which Sara Suleri has woven in the text show her familiarity and acquaintance to the city of Lahore.

#### 5. Conclusion

This research has explored the work a memoir does in revealing the experiences of the writer Sara Suleri. Suleri's writings have been regarded as examples of creative nonfiction. The books *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys: A Daughter's Elegy* are written in the shape of memoirs. Being a memoirist, Suleri is truthfully citing her memories for her readers. Her memoir

becomes the means through which she is interacting with her memories as well as with her family. Her memoir *Boys Will Be Boys* gives a perspective to her readers as if she is reliving her memories with her father and interacting with him as well. This direct interaction helps her to talk with him and to make confessions. Through her prose techniques, Suleri has woven symbolic and metaphorical meanings into her texts for the readers. Her style of writing is individualized as if every character of her life is telling his/her own story. Suleri has very artistically selected the characters from her life with whom she had spent her life or she is connected emotionally. Memoir writing has helped her to re-invent her character in the light of her past. Suleri has shared her family history with her readers by mixing it together with public history. Her memoirs are written without chronology which also separates her books from autobiography or biography. Suleri has incorporated all the major characteristics that make her works memoirs with the element of creativity. Suleri's writings deal with the truth and realities of her life rather than some imaginative world. Sara Suleri's memoirs give a complete picture of creative nonfiction writings to her readers. She has talked about her experience related to her society, culture, and family which helped her to shape her being. She has coded different meanings for her readers through her experience. Suleri has profoundly focused on her persona in her memoirs. She has built up her voice throughout the memoir. She is telling her life story and making comments on some of her experiences as well. Her stories are full of sorrow and sadness but still she does not allow her readers to be passive interpreters of her stories and for this,

she herself interprets her stories and ideas for her readers.

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