



NARRATING WAR AND VIOLENCE IN *WAR JOURNEY: A DIARY OF A TAMIL TIGER* BY MALARAVAN AND *TAMIL TIGRESS* BY NIROMI DE SOYZA

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INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses how violence and gendered roles are represented in the memoirs *Tamil Tigress* by Niromi de Soyza (2011), and *War Journey: A Diary of a Tamil Tiger* by Malaravan (2013). Although both authors have joined the LTTE as child soldiers, their stories are different in many ways and this comparison brings to light the intersections of gender, class and nationalism. What do these aspects bring to light about the connection between gender and violence? *Tamil Tigress* is the autobiography of one of the first female cadres of the LTTE as well as the first narration of a Sri Lankan female guerrilla soldier to be published as a memoir in English in 2011. Malaravan's diary *Por Ula*, which is an account of his experiences in battle as a Tamil Tiger was published first in Sri Lanka in 1993 and has been translated to English by N. Malathy in 2013.

This comparative analysis will focus on gendered representation, violence, love and marriage, family and autonomy. How gender affects the way in which violence is represented and how gender comes into play for the narrator and the reader is examined. Some of the questions that are addressed are: How does this memoir and autobiography intersect in terms of gender, violence, political imagination and class? What are the differences in the way they put forward their reasons for joining an armed movement? How does the medium of the autobiography come into play in this retelling of personal histories?

The complexities of treating an autobiography as fact will also be discussed with reference to these two texts in the light of objective writing in memoirs, and its contradictory nature.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that was used is one of qualitative analysis and a deconstructive approach in which I will apply the below mentioned theories to these texts pertaining to class, gender, and politics of representation. The primary texts will be analysed and compared under the aforementioned categories. The theories that are applied are Nira Yuval Davis's theories on the connection of gender and nation, Nanthini Sornarajah's theories on the connection between gender, nationalism and agency, Thomas Larsons's views on the memoir; Ashley, and Gilmore, and Peters' views on the Autobiography.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The way in which the narrators portray themselves and their experiences are coloured by gender. The comparative analysis has revealed that similar experiences can be narrated in the same way by both male and female militants. However, the circumstances and the prescribed gender roles in society change the way in which they represent themselves and others. Concepts such as love, family and marriage are represented very differently by the two narrators due to differences in gender, class and context. Their reasons for joining the LTTE cadre are also posited very differently due to the way gender and nationalism intersect. Gender, class and nationalism intersect at many levels in these narratives.

Although both texts are memoirs, the question of authenticity and autonomy can be questioned under the circumstances that they have been produced and the discussion looks into why the genre of the autobiography and memoir are problematic.



CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the conclusions from this study is that the genre of autobiographies/memoir are problematic as they can be biased but it is also a means of writing personal history. It is also obvious that this writing is coloured by many aspects such as gender, class and context etc. The comparative analysis also revealed the complexities of narrating violence within a nationalistic context. The rationale for joining an armed struggle is easier for Malaravan because he is male and his narrative does not attempt to justify his reasons as much as Niromi De Soyza. This comparative analysis also shows how the role of gender colours experiences of war and violence.

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