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**Travellers' Stories: Lived Mobility, Survivor's Guilt, and
Explorer's Relief in Wamariya's *The Girl Who Smiled
Beads* and Strayed's *Wild*.**

*A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for a
Master's degree in literature and Civilisation*

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Dedications

This work is an honest effort to giving back a piece of myself to the world, I dedicate it to,

My father, the force of wisdom that drives me forward, who taught me to always advocate for myself, now I can do it for others.

My mother, I do not recall a time when you did not urge all of us to strive for greatness, to be the best because we can. I thank you for your sacrifices, and I assure you once again, I will always aim highest.

My sisters, my front-line soldiers, Nedjla and Afaf, the ones who truly see me, my compass without which I am lost, I am eternally grateful.

My gem, the one that chose to stand by me for all that I am and all that I am not, you light the way.

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And to the memoirists, thank you for entrusting the world with your memories; it gets us a step closer to humanity.

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Abstract

This dissertation provides a comparative analysis of involuntary movement and voluntary travel, and the contrasting effects and lasting outcomes of both trajectories, through Clemantine Wamariya's *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* (2018) and Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* (2012). This Research serves as a bridge linking mobility to context by contrasting voluntary and involuntary journeys, a comparison scarcely considered in previous studies. Theories and concepts, including Cresswell's theory of mobility and space, Bruner's storytelling, O'Connor's survivor's guilt, and Spencer's survival of the fittest, were used. The research looks into how both memoirs convey the controversial meanings of mobility and its ambiguous aftermath. It determines that Clemantine Wamariya's *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* reveals the burden of travel in war and survival contexts, while Cheryl Strayed's positive accounts of her journey capture the transformative nature of travel through her personal rebirth in her memoir *Wild*. The comparative analysis of these stories communicates the importance of viewing travel in different lights, namely; survival, struggle, trauma and loss.

Keywords: Involuntary movement, voluntary travel, storytelling, survivor's guilt, survival of the fittest, personal rebirth.

ملخص

تقدم هذه الأطروحة تحليلاً مقارناً بين السفر القسري والسفر الاختياري، مع دراسة الأفكار المتباينة والنتائج الراسخة لكلا المسارين من خلال مذكرتي كليمنتين وماريا "الفتاة التي ابتسمت خرزا" ومذكرتي شيريل سترايد "في البراري". تشكل هذه الدراسة جسراً يربط بين مفهوم التنقل والسياق، من خلال وضع الرحلات الاختيارية و غير الاختيارية في تقابل تحليلي، و هي مقارنة نادراً ما تناولتها الدراسات السابقة.. وقد تم توظيف إطار نظري ومفاهيمي يشمل نظرية كريستوفر حول الحركة والمكان، السرد القصصي لبرونر، مفهوم 'ذنب الناجي' لوكونور، ونظرية 'البقاء للأصلح' لسبانسر. تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية نقل المذكرات للمعاني الجدلية للسفر وما يترتب عنه من نتائج غير ثابتة ومشروطة. وتلخص إلى أن مذكرتي كليمنتين وماريا "الفتاة التي ابتسمت خرزا" تكشف عبء السفر في سياقات الحرب والبقاء، بينما السرد الإيجابي لشيريل سترايد يجسد الطابع التحويلي للسفر من خلال إعادة الميلاد الرمزية، التي تخوضها في مذكرتها "في البراري". ويظهر هذا التحليل المقارن أهمية النظر إلى السفر من زوايا مختلفة، خاصة من منظور البقاء، الصراع، الصدمة، والفقْدان.

كلمات مفتاحية: السفر القسري، السفر الاختياري، السرد القصصي، ذنب الناجي، البقاء للأصلح، إعادة الميلاد.

Epigraph

The breaking of so great a thing

should make a greater crack

William Shakespeare,

Antony and cleopatra

I'm a slow walker,

but I never walk back

Abraham Lincoln

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Following the news of her sister's second pregnancy, the husband, Rob, persuaded Claire to take her daughter and Clemantine and travel back to Rwanda; "Why would we start moving again, by choice, not just to Rwanda but through one wrecked country after another?" (128) was Clemantine's reaction to what seemed to her like the most preposterous idea she had ever heard. However different, the emotional weight of mobility in Strayed's narrative serves as a reminder that travel can shift meaning when undertaken voluntarily.....	33

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

MRND: Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement

PCT: Pacific Crest Trail

PTG: Post Traumatic Growth

RANU: Rwandese Alliance for National Unity

RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

US: United States

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

WWI: World War I

General Introduction

The power of stories has shaped humans' understanding of the world since the beginning of time. It connected them and helped them make sense of life. Though storytelling comes in different forms, it is globally defined as the exchange of history, culture, traditions, customs, and emotions through sharing. Literature occupies an important role in maintaining the flow of that exchange and in preserving tales and histories beyond the barriers of time and space. The invention of autobiographies and memoirs emerged as an expansion of storytelling, by providing better insight and knowledge on personal experiences marked by significant life events relevant to many around the globe. Despite the variety of historical, cultural, and psychological dimensions represented through memoirs, the genre contributes to the perception of reality. Travel writing transmits personal accounts of journeys taken under different circumstances, characterising the story with subjectivity and interpretation. War survivors around the world sought refuge wherever they could find it and many felt compelled to travel through different countries in search of a secure and decent life.

One of the most catastrophic episodes of mass violence in the Twentieth Century was the Rwandan genocide that happened in 1994 and was sparked by the extremist Hutu forces that sought to eliminate Tutsi civilians and moderate Hutus. It resulted in the death of around 800,000 people in about three months. During the striking attacks of the genocide and immediately afterwards, about 2 million of the population fled to neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, another 1-1.5 million were forced to be displaced within their country (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 545). The survivors of the mass murder who managed to escape Rwanda were exposed to extremely harsh conditions; hunger, thirst, lack of hygiene and constant threat of being caught by the war so the sole choice they were presented with was to run.

The trauma that resulted from the monstrous actions of the genocide resides to this day in the identities of those who lived through it. The tragedy is reflected in seminal works that recount the horrors of 1994. Immaculée Ilibagiza; the writer of *Left to Tell*, had to hide in a bathroom for 91 days during the killings. In her memoir of survival, she advances an ethic of forgiveness and abandoning hatred “Forgiveness is all I have to offer”, she states, and affirms her stance on the political conflict that erased a people “Hatred imprisoned me more than the bathroom ever could”. Another key figure is Scholastique Mukasonga who dedicated her autobiography *Cockroaches* to honouring the memory of the dead, giving them a place to exist in forever. Ilibagiza’s narrative is characterised by confinement and spiritual awakening, while Mukasonga’s account primarily focuses on the experience of life in exile. Clemantine Wamariya recounts her life during and after the events of 1994. Her narrative is marked by loss and suffering, tackling her whole journey of displacement and continual movement through seven countries. She serves as a case study of the aspects of involuntary travel and the legacy of survival. Although traditionally categorised as a war memoir, *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* fits within travel writing.

Clemantine Wamariya is a Rwandan-born author, public speaker, Yale graduate and human rights advocate. She is best known for her memoir *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* (2018), a recollection of her journey as a refugee from the start of the genocide until 2017. Wamariya was the youngest girl in her Tutsi family. As a result of their unplanned escape, she and her older sister Claire were separated from their parents and displaced at the ages of six and fifteen. The sisters move through multiple African countries and finally resettle in the United States.

Travel evidently is not experienced only amidst war and violence, but most notably as a positive, enriching experience. Hiking emerged in the late eighteenth century as “leisure walking” during the Romantic period. Writers like Jean Jacques Rousseau contributed to the

popularity of reflective walking. The true emergence of hiking culture occurred in the Nineteenth Century, as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, which inspired walking in nature as a recreational activity. By the twentieth century, national parks and protected trails had appeared, such as the Appalachian Trail, a 2,190-mile-long trail that runs from Georgia to Maine, established in 1937. The Pacific Crest Trail was completed by the end of the century in 1993. Wilderness hiking became more recognised following the establishment of the National Trails System in the United States.

The transformative force of travel became a trend in contemporary literature, capturing journeys of physical movement as pathways to healing and identity reconstruction. Jon Krakauer idealises nature by rejecting modern society, where he tracks the life of Christopher McCandless, a young man who went on an adventure in the wild in search of authenticity. *A Walk in the Woods* is another account of wilderness hiking by Bill Bryson, who reengages with American culture through his attempt to hike the Appalachian Trail. Cheryl Strayed is an influential author in the genre whose work represents the transformative nature of voluntary travel in this dissertation.

Cheryl Strayed, a contemporary American writer, memoirist, and essayist, is best known for her memoir *Wild*; a recollection of her solo hike on the Pacific Crest Trail. She grew up in a working family; her childhood was marked by her father's domestic violence and alcohol addiction, causing family and financial struggles. The memoir acts as a testimony of trauma recovery and self-reconstruction through travel and reconnection to nature, a journey she took nearly four years following her mother's death.

I always thought to myself and occasionally said out loud: the person that gets me the most is myself. That no matter how much effort I put in telling myself to others, it would never be enough to make them understand me. That might explain my endless devotion to learning

new languages, so that I am articulate in different tongues and able to pour who I am into words. Maybe, that is the reason why I am drawn to memoirs. Memoirists never cease to write themselves in the most authentic and captivating ways, using nothing more than words, and are beyond understood; they are revered and recognised. Growing up in a country that loves Palestinians as its own, I always dreamt of becoming a superhero for them, a doctor that crosses borders and saves lives, a soldier brave and intimidating, but even seventeen-year-old Sarrah would not have foreseen that I would never fulfil any of those roles, that I would yield a much calmer power; words. My interest in positive experiences compelled me to compare global travel experiences across the contrasting contexts of war and freedom. The universal experience of war survivors worldwide is a reminder of the luxury of choice we often take for granted.

Through this MA dissertation, “Travellers Stories: Lived Mobility, Survivors Guilt and Personal Rebirth in Clemantine Wamariya’s *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and Cheryl Strayed’s *Wild*”, the researcher aims to explore the themes of detachment and engagement with the experience of travel and identify the aftermath of involuntary and voluntary movement in contextually different contemporary memoirs by comparing narratives of forced displacement to accounts of self-affirming mobility.

The selection of the two memoirs is based on the following criteria:

Autobiographical memoir form: both texts belong to the autobiographical memoir genre; Wamariya and Strayed’s memoirs are grounded in lived experience and personal testimony. This allows the research to focus on real-life accounts of mobility instead of fictional representations.

First-person narratives: the two memoirs at the centre of this dissertation are recounted through a first-person point of view, which foregrounds personal accounts and offers immediate access to the narrators’ perceptions of travel and responses to travel and displacement.

Thematic relevance: *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and *Wild* share a strong focus on the concept of mobility, including both voluntary and involuntary travel, which allows for a comparison-based analysis of divergent travel trajectories and their contrasting outcomes.

This study's methodological design and structure follow the guidelines set out in the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

To frame this study, the following research questions were formed:

- I. In what ways do voluntary and involuntary travel shape lived experience in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and *Wild*, and produce lasting behavioural changes through processes of adaptation?
- II. How do the outcomes of travel differ between Clemantine Wamariya's forced displacement and Cheryl Strayed's self-directed journeying?

In an effort to answer these research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Firstly, it is hypothesised that Wamariya's journey characterises her experience of travel with inattentiveness, helplessness, and discomfort. Due to the circumstances of her movement, adaptive mechanisms result in long-term identity fragmentation and an inability to belong. While Strayed's narrative, characterised by agency and purpose, reveals the powerful impact of nature in transforming travel into an enriching and mesmerising experience. The voluntary hike of Strayed manifests later in the emotional and physical resilience she develops on the trail.

Secondly, it is hypothesised that Wamariya's necessary displacement ultimately culminates in her survivor's guilt. Although she was exposed to the same violence as the other people of her country who were murdered, her survival is burdened with shame and hyper responsibility. The end of her memoir challenges the notion of a happy ending, even after

reaching a stable destination. However, Strayed's self-directed hike serves as a pathway to renewed hope, identity and possibility, which is illustrated by the Pacific Crest Trail itself.

This research work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter lays the foundation for the expansion of the dissertation: the first section provides the historical context relevant to the selected works. It highlights key events in history that shaped the Rwandan violence, which culminated in the genocide of 1994 and caused the deaths and displacement of thousands of people. The section also offers a brief look at the backstory of building and hiking the PCT and how it evolved from an idea in the late 1920s into a scenic trail that has witnessed several life-changing journeys. The second section presents the main theories and concepts related to mobility, storytelling and trauma and their impacts on individual growth, especially in contexts of war and loss. The third section provides a literature review and engages with the existing body of literature on loss and travel narratives in Clemantine Wamariya's *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*.

The two chapters that follow are analytical and aim to evaluate the research hypotheses outlined above. The second chapter delves into the differences in lived mobility between travel undertaken to survive and chosen movement. It uncovers the reality of refugees' experiences through Wamariya's raw account of the living conditions that featured her travel, and highlights the luxury of voluntary travel by exploring the sensory elements in Strayed's memoir. The third and last chapter of this dissertation examines the outcomes of Clemantine's and Cheryl's journeys. It questions the imbalance of geographical luck by positioning survivor's guilt and personal rebirth as contrasting aftermaths of the same phenomenon.

This dissertation employs a comparative textual and interdisciplinary analysis of Clemantine Wamariya's memoir *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* (2018) and Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* (2013).

Chapter One: Contextualising Travel Memoirs: Between Choice and Necessity

Travel is both a form of escapism and a way of life, sometimes even the only way to survive. People from all over the globe suffered immeasurable displacement and loss, leading to both voluntary and involuntary movement. This chapter provides a roadmap to the main events that shape the memoirs. Hence, the first section is dedicated to exploring the historical facts relevant to the selected works. The second section provides an insightful look at the theories used to draw a connection between travel in contexts of war and survival and the post-traumatic legacy, and also investigates the contrasting experiences depicted in the selected narratives. Furthermore, it tackles the influence of storytelling on travel accounts and the shifting expression of journeys contingent upon agency. The last section of this chapter serves as a literature review, exploring key works that address the important themes in the selected works.

1. 1. The Historical Background of a Genocide Survivor and a Crest

Trail Hiker

Each of the memoirs carries the traces of different histories in two widely different and distant contexts. Clemantine Wamariya is a genocide survivor and a former refugee with Rwandan roots; tackling the history that shaped the events she witnessed offers a better understanding of her memories and narration. On the other hand, Cheryl Strayed is a hiker from the United States of America who undertakes a journey on the Pacific Crest Trail, not long after its completion and is urged by an internal force to travel rather than an external one. A brief history of the PCT provides further example and illustration of the culture behind Strayed's choice.

1. 1. 1. Historical and Political Context Leading to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Before being a republic in 1962, Rwanda was a group of kingdoms in coexistence from the 14th to the 17th centuries (Tutsi, Bugesera, Gisaka, Bwanacyambwe) and the Nyiginya kingdom, which would conquer all the others in the 15th century. Hutu did not belong to any kingdom and formed chiefdoms until the 19th century. Then the Germans took over Rwanda in 1897 (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 182). After being home to several ethnic groups who shared the language and most religious beliefs and practices and being under the colonial control of Germany, the Belgian forces took control during WWI and solidified the Ethnic Identity Cards, which ensured a strong tension between the superior Tutsi and the inferior Hutu in 1926. The latter eventually led to the Hutu revolution in 1959. The rivalry between the two groups continued until it resulted in the Rwandan Civil War (Rwandan Patriotic Front Invasion) in 1990 and led to the most appalling events of mass murder the world had ever witnessed in 1994 (517-518).

1. 1. 2 Pre-1994: Historical and Colonial Roots of Violence

Before the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the exile crisis, violence was said to be rooted in beliefs brought to the population by external sources: those tied to colonialism. Rwanda had a long history of violence and discrimination under German rule, while its people held common beliefs and shared similar customs, languages and traditions before. The German rule and the changes that were brought upon the country did not stop even after being replaced by the Belgian rule, which enforced more division between Rwandan ethnicities and created deep hatred between the different groups of the population. The colonial ideologies later impacted the harmony of the Rwandese and ultimately resulted in the genocide of 1994.

1. 1. 2. 1. Colonial Rwanda

The legal start of German East Africa was on February 27th, 1885, as a German colony, and Rwanda was included in that territorial claim. However, the practical start of German Colonial Rule in Rwanda did not occur until 1897, after the queen mother and her brothers accepted German protection due to the circumstances the country was facing, not realising what the flag and the *Schutzbrief* meant (Reyntjens 25). Germany saw ethnicity as a clearly distinguished matter of fact based on physical appearance and colour and used it to create a system of categorisation (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa). That meant the negation of fluid coexistence. The German Government adopted an indirect rule that enhanced the hegemony of the Tutsi ruling class led by the *mwami*.

In the early 20th century, Rwanda witnessed a drastic change in the political, social and cultural regard after the missionaries of the catholic white fathers and German-speaking protestants. The church expanded later following Germany's loss in WWI which reinforced the perceived division between Hutu and Tutsi (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 315).

The transition to Belgian colonial control in 1916 happened abruptly after they took over the land as part of their victory against the German troops. Rwanda became not a protectorate but a neighbouring area of Belgian Congo. Later, Rwanda became a Belgian trusteeship under the supervision of the United Nations in 1923. Belgium introduced the ethnic identity cards in the years 1933 and 1934 ending the period of flexible coexistence and creating a major rift between the three categories (Twa, Tutsi and Hutu). Belgium ruled Ruanda-Urundi indirectly relying notably on Tutsi elites for decades but by the early 50s, Belgian authorities and Catholic missionaries shifted their support to the Hutu majority. In 1952 Belgium made some political reforms offering local councils a chance to political participation. Consequently, these reforms intensified ethnic political tensions and grudges. The social revolution erupted in 1959, and violence overwhelmed the Hutu and Tutsi communities dismantling the monarchy

and marking the collapse of the colonial rule. Rwanda gained independence from Belgium and became a free republic in 1962 led by Grégoire Kayibanda (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 404).

1. 1. 2. 2 Exile Cycles and the Genocide Against the Tutsi 1963-1990

Rwanda saw three decades of exile, during which the population of Tutsis were hunted out of their homes and country causing both political and social turmoil inside and outside of Rwanda. In 1963, between 25,000 and 35,000 Tutsis in Rwanda were killed in response to a military attack by exiled Tutsis from Burundi called Inyenzi by the regime (Byanafashe and Rutayisire 420). The massacres solidified the exile as a long-term condition rather than a temporary displacement. The formal refusal of repatriation was declared by the government in late 1964 because the country was too small to absorb the dense number of refugees who were condemned to leave. This normalisation of exile meant settlement in host countries: Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Zaire. The Tutsi who stayed were confined and strictly bound to internal exclusion due to discrimination in education and employment opportunities. In Uganda, many young Rwandan refugees joined the military forces growing a strong ideology of return (Golooba-Mutebi 8).

On the other hand, Burundi experienced tremendous violence in 1972 targeting Hutus. These events intensified the hatred and the anti-Tutsi discrimination and that was publicly displayed in schools and administrations, setting the stage for the 1973 coup by the army chief of staff Juvénal Habyarimana who took control of Rwanda and set up a one-party state: the MRND (Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement). Against repeated massacres and mass violence the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity was born in 1979 by some Rwandans in the diaspora with the objective of uniting the country, maintaining safety for all civilians and allowing refugees to return to their homeland. In 1987, RANU became the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF); a Tutsi dominated organization that would take control of Rwanda in 1994. In 1990, the Rwandan army began to train and arm civilian militias known as

Interahamwe (“Those who stand together”), the RPF invaded Rwanda on October 1ST of the same year (UN source).

1. 1. 2. 3. The Rwandan Civil War 1990-1994

The conflict between the Hutu government and the RPF lasted for only four years, and it went through three major phases. The first phase lasted from 1990 to 1992 when Habyarimana’s party; the MRND had all control over the state’s apparatus. The government’s behaviour was a calculated counter insurgency in response to the RPF guerilla warfare (Siraj et al. 16-18).

March 1992 marked the beginning of the second phase when the main opposition Hutu parties and the MRND joined forces and formed a coalition to rule the country. This dynamic created confusion on who holds the real power. The second phase was characterized by the encouragement of ceasefires and peace talks interrupted only by the events of February 1993 which eventually led to the RPF and the regime signing the Arusha Peace agreement on August 4th of the same year. The agreement was never implemented because it lacked all the necessary details that needed utmost consideration for both parties-(whose agreement was taken for granted.

Moreover, the Hutu power holders were not even in attendance when the paper was signed, instead they sent representatives which was a clear message of disinterest in whatever it was that Arusha meant. Hence, the third phase began on April 6th, 1994, by the assassination of the president. The phase was characterized by an escalation of the armed conflict and by a genocide campaign against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The conflict ended on July 4th, 1994, with the victory of the RPF group (Juan Pablo Caicedo 80-86).

The genocide against the Tutsi happened swiftly by the half of 1994 and resulted in killing over 800,000 Tutsis. After a long-term hatred between the two groups and the encouragement of the government, private and public institutions to kill the Tutsi; "the Bahutu

should stop having mercy on the Batutsi" was published in Kangura journal, the Hutu extremists gave in to their long-stored grudge. They spread their ideology in society through radio and called the Tutsi "cockroaches" and "snakes" to dehumanise them .

After the assassination of the president, the government managed to establish all the names and addresses of most of the Tutsi living in Rwanda and went door to door slaughtering the Tutsi, and exercising all forms of violence and torture against women as a main weapon of the genocide. The RPF put an end to the internationalised genocide until July 1994 after taking full control of the country (Nikuze 7).

1. 1. 2. 4 Post-1994 Rwanda and the Great Refugee Crisis 1994-1996

The genocide was the catalyst for the huge refugee crisis; fleeing Rwanda to other neighbouring countries, but the movement out of Rwanda began years before the genocide took place, as many civilians fled in fear of being trapped and slaughtered during the civil war 1990-1993. Kigali fell on the 4th of July 1994 along with the formerly Hutu led government. The first massive cross-border movement occurred on the rusumo bridge 28-29 April where 250,000 Rwandans crossed to Tanzania within 24 hours and the Benaco camp was established to host them in no time (UNHCR 9-10).

Following the RPFs victory, between 800,000 and a million people crossed from Gisenyi to Goma and by the end of the month Rwanda would have 2 million refugees outside of it including the 1.2 million Rwandans who fled to zaire (Prunier 190-192). The speed at which people were moving in terror marks the event as The Exodus of Goma. Refugees faced a mortality crisis afterwards primarily due to the absence of hygiene and malnutrition. By December 1994 refugees were scattered around zaire, Burundi and Uganda. Around 30 % of Rwanda's population remained outside the country until 1996.

Violent dismantling of refugee camps in Goma and Bukavu in October 1996 caused thousands to flee again (Reyntjens 132). Eventually November 1996 saw one of the fastest large-scale forced repatriations with over half a million Rwandans returning to Rwanda from zaire (Salama et al. 1805). The history of Rwanda serves as the frame to the genocide and the catalyst to shaping the experience of its victims and survivors that had to move through several refugee camps for years, whereas a brief history of the Pacific Crest Trail will highlight the initiative that resulted in having a track witnessing countless adventures of hiking enthusiasts, eager explorers and others searching for something that was only found on the trail.

1. 1. 3. The History of the Pacific Crest Trail

The Pacific Crest Trail is a long track that stretches from Mexico to Canada that was fully completed in the near the end of the 20th century and despite not having a long or rich history, it goes back to the culture of wilderness hiking and recreational activities. Its history revolves mainly around the birth of the idea and the process of its construction which took more time than what the date of the first sparked idea of a long pacific trail would suggest. Political impact and social influence also contributed to the realisation of the track along with other factors.

1. 1. 3. 1. The Construction of the PCT

The pacific crest trail was not a product of one idea but a continuation of what started as early as the 1920s: The Cascade Crest Trail in Washington, Oregon Skyline Trail in Oregon, and John Muir Trail in California, were the initial portions in construction at that time. The idea of a crest trail stretching from Canada to Mexico originated in the mind of Catherine Montgomery in 1926 who was a retired teacher from Bellingham, Washington. Clinton Clarke took up the cause six years later (Strayed 230).

In March 1932, Clarke organised the Pacific Crest Trail system conference, where he proposed interconnecting existing trails through new constructions. In 1935, Region 6 of the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service established the PCT and Washington, which followed the Cascade Crest and Oregon Skyline routes. A diamond-shaped symbol was used to mark the route (USDA Forest Service 2). The progress of the trail depended on volunteers; regional hiking clubs, mountaineering organisations and private citizens from the beginning and until the 60s as no federal authority or funding were granted. The absence of federal coordination made large-scale completion of the trail difficult before it became a unified national project, rather than a proposed vision by passionate groups (US Service 4).

Real change occurred after the National Trails System Act in 1968 establishing the PCT and the Appalachian as the first national scenic trails. The act served as a recognition for the project and a bridge for federal coordination, but it did not replace the volunteer involvement, it rather officialised it (National Trails System Act 5). The crest was only completed until 1993 and the completion was celebrated on June 5, 1993, with a golden spike ceremony in Soledad Canyon California when the route finally formed an uninterrupted corridor stretching from Mexico to Canada after continuous cooperation of countless volunteers, the United States forest service, the national park service and the bureau of land management (Pacific Crest Trail Association).

1. 1. 3. 2. The History of Long-Distance Hiking on the PCT

Statistics show that very few people completed their hike through the Pacific Crest Trail after its completion in 1993. In 1995 only 10 hikers completed the trail. Then, between the years 1997 and 1999 many others started to join those who shared the same passion and hunger for adventure with an increase of 200% in the number of hikers. One of the first figures to complete the trail was Scott Williamson. He became highly influential in terms of experience on the trail and the challenges one faces during a hike that lasts for about five months. The

background on both the Rwandan genocide and the Pacific Crest Trail contributed to the informative aspect of this research, the conceptual and theoretical framework will endeavour to highlight the analytical tools used to understand the themes explored.

1. 2. Conceptual Framework: Travel, Trauma and Narrative in Life

Writing

The experience of travel is relative to the circumstances surrounding the traveller and is known to be a path taken under the assumption of escaping and leaving something behind; it could be the boring routine that insinuates stagnation, a loss that was so heartbreaking it needed to be replaced with an overflowing sense of adventure or, a war. Voluntary travel can be a road of healing from trauma after being a decision of escapism whereas involuntary travel is forced movement presented as the only way to survive social or political damage.

After the 18th century, documenting personal journeys and adventures came into light and narration played a key role in shaping the readers understanding of the symbolic value of travel and travel writing. Thus, it is necessary to draw the connection of travel to the fluid reality of the world and how it is intertwined with storytelling and writing the self through a theoretical lens. This section is dedicated to exploring key concepts and theories related to the nature of travel and survival including narrative studies, post-traumatic growth studies and escapism.

1. 2. 1. Travel Writing

According to Carl Thompson, travel writing is the narration of the events that occur during the writer's travel which reflect the culture of the writer and the one he encounters. Although it could also be a catalogue of new data gathered on the journey (Thompson 18). Though Thompson's definition sounds plausible, it is believed that there is no singular definition of the field. Notably Hulme and Youngs in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel*

Writing explain that travel literature has only recently come to be recognised as a subject that needs to be critically studied. They describe it as a “vast, little-explored area” due to its diversity (1). Instead of providing a fixed definition Hulme and Youngs offer a flexible perspective implying that travel literature can be fairly understood through the historical and cultural context in addition to its interdisciplinary nature (265).

Furthermore, Carl Thompson does not seek to offer a strictly bordered definition for travel writing as a literary genre. In his book *Travel Writing* he emphasises the fluidity of travel writing and how it collides with other genres due to its wide range functionality (18-21).

1. 2. 2. 2. Mobility and Space

In a broader scope, mobility is referred to as the ability to move from one place to another. However, it is in fact the combination of meaning, power and social shell that surrounds the experience of movement. “Human mobility is an irreducibly embodied experience” (Cresswell 4). Mobility thus is the meaning carried through movement and that provokes the thought of the intertwined relationship of mobile physical bodies to the represented mobilities. As such, mobility gives birth to space and the latter eventually holds the meaning of the experience and the happenings, that; transforms a space from being an abstract location to a “place” with a carefully constructed relationship to how people view and live it. Furthermore, mobility is unequal worldwide because it is a very fluid system that takes the shape of the mobile body. For example, a walk taken by a refugee in torn clothes on a rainy day that takes hours without rest is inevitably entirely different from a morning run with earphones and new trainers of a regular healthy person. “To understand mobility without recourse to representation on the one hand or the material corporeality on the other is, I would argue, to miss the point” (Cresswell 4).

1. 2. 2. 3. The Symbolic Weight of Travel

Travel has been regarded as a symbolic individual journey in modern literature, one of the most common motives for travelling is searching for the self (Cohen 1996). Many backpackers seek an idea of themselves and the world during their trips; their experiences become the foundation for self-transformation, self-realisation, self-fulfilment and self-actualisation. One may also observe another motive in travellers who adopt moving (backpacking, hiking, traveling etc.) as a lifestyle where it becomes a comforting habit instead of a temporary joy or adventure.

In a series of interviews with lifestyle travellers, two main points came to the light; the first is that travel's sole motive could be -for a lifetime: the self, whether one is looking for it or trying to mould it. One of the participants said that moving to new places helped her develop new different selves far away from what she knew and what knew her. The second is that traveling in search of the ever-changing identity of individuals can start as a choice for that specific purpose, or it can at some point inevitably manifest into it (Cohen 6-12).

While travel counts as a luxury through which one can find themselves or restore their lost selves, it also unfolds as the reminder of the world's harsh inequalities for whom forced displacement is disguised as "travel as constant movement", sometimes for a lifetime, in search of a place to call home, in search of a stop to the endless circle of displacement. This thought is apparent in Bauman's metaphor of tourists vs vagabonds; "vagabonds are typified by the ever-on-the move (involuntarily) asylum seekers and refugees" (Bauman 26). Within this framework, the symbolic weight of travel changes shapes in motion with who, when, where and how they are experiencing it; travel can mean freedom or a compass towards self-rewarding outcomes, but it can simultaneously mean a curse that condemns an individual to a life with no relief. From a different perspective, travel is the best way to escape reality both on psychological and a physical aspect.

1. 2. 2. Escapism in a Broader Scope: Psychological and Physical

Dimensions

Escapism is the act of distancing oneself from the unpleasant reality by creating a distraction, it could be achieved by practicing an activity that would occupy the mind, the body or both at once (Oxford English Dictionary). However, escapism is generally referred to as a way of coping and can differ from pessimists to optimists. When the first tend to give up easily, the latter refuse to surrender to the unfairness of life (Blackwell 406). While human beings seek mental and spiritual distance by escaping through yoga, meditation, gaming or media they may as well seek distance on a different dimension than the psychological one; physical escapism.

For some, spatial escapism is not always a luxury or a trauma response at first, it is the only way to survive, resulting from a strong wave of fear not as a negative emotion but as an alarming one. According to Gavin De Becker, fear is sometimes necessary for survival as he explains in detail how intuition helps individuals recognise danger before it occurs in his book *The Gift of Fear* (4-5). As such, escapism can be interpreted differently from a person to another based on context and the traumatic events shaping the experience. Trauma theory covers the depths of the psychological experience and inner struggle of individuals undertaking physical and spiritual journeys.

1. 2. 3. Trauma Theory

Trauma is an overwhelming experience of cathartic or painful events to which a reaction results only after the happenings in recurring images. A person can freeze at the time of the incident only to relive it later; a trauma response can also be described as the desire to experience an event again through putting oneself in similar conditions as an attempt to step into a zone of comfort even when the experience itself is unpleasant (Caruth 181). The study of trauma came into consciousness after the hysteria in the late 19th century, the two world wars

and the violence during the feminist movement. In literature, trauma is depicted as the reflection of the inner state of a person who experienced or witnessed loss, violence or political terror (Herman 4-5).

1. 2. 3. 1. Responses to Trauma: The Possibility of Growth

Generally, trauma is linked almost instantly to bad emotions and phases of life. While that is not entirely wrong, it is only fair to note that trauma can leave the traumatised with more than painful fragments and post-traumatic stress; strengths or quirks in the aftermath of a life crisis such as coherence which is described as the ability to thrive under objectively stressful situations and hardiness; a concept developed by Kobasa (1979) that implies commitment to duty despite stressful events and regarding them as challenges to be overcome (Tedeschi, Park, Calhoun 8).

Post traumatic growth can be reflected in the perception of the self and that starts with how a person labels themselves after experiencing traumatic events. The main labels thus are “survivor” and “victim”, and real growth can happen when someone stops seeing themselves as a victim and start recognising they are a survivor of trauma which suggests that the aftermath of a crisis could be oriented to a more positive outcome (10).

Another common layer of PTG is self-reliance also known as self-efficacy which is in simple words a strong sense of ability to face any hard situation or overcome any loss or pain that may come their way due to the everlasting effects of the previous trauma they survived, making them persons with experience in the field who can sort which coping strategy might prove useful (10).

Vulnerability is one more positive outcome in reports of PTG; people who survive emotional shock and traumatising events happen to develop an acute awareness of the fleeting nature of life and embrace the human need for support and openness because they understand

the importance of help. This growth improves their interpersonal relationships and enhances their quality of life thanks to their experiences that serve as evidence for welcoming unity and appreciating the gift of existence (11).

Furthermore, the acquaintance with what trauma means and causes after enough time has passed, pushes the survivor to realise that there is something to offer; compassion and giving to others. Naturally, survivors of trauma have an unmatched level of understanding for others who are experiencing what they had once gone through, enabling them to offer guidance and empathy. Many feel the urge to help others in this case and find meaning in doing so (12).

While developing a strong appreciation of life is true for many people who overcame great life crises it is also inevitable for others to face existential questions that alter their view of life completely and may even trap them in a loop of scepticism and, questions that could remain unresolved. This phenomenon contradicts with the traditional perception of PTG as a positive outcome of traumatic events (12-13).

1. 2. 3. 2. Survivor's Guilt

The aftermath of trauma comes in different forms, one of the most troubling effects is survivor's guilt; a feeling that emerges after surviving an event -death usually- when others did not and is observed by individuals indirectly through behaviour, textual tension or identity crisis instead of explicit statements of guilt. The concept was first introduced in psychiatric literature by Niederland whose main focus was the suffering of holocaust survivors in consequence of their guilt about surviving their loved ones of family and friends, these survivors carried their survival as an injustice; a universal inequity and continuously questioned their inequitable survival (Fimiani et al. 3).

Alongside this, in the article by O'Connor et al. (2000), the concept of survivor guilt is understood from multiple perspectives. It is described as the "downside to winning in social

competition” due to social comparison that comes from the humans’ sense of fairness, guilt is the result, feeling better off is a bitter emotion rather than a relief (520). Furthermore, evolutionary theory in this context explains the balance achieved by survivor’s guilt which pushes the “winner” or the “survivor” to help others in need or individuals experiencing similar hardships since the person with survivor’s guilt struggle to feel worthy, they strive to excel chasing the feeling of deservingness. Thus, society can benefit from that despite the tragic motivation that drives this person’s success and empathy (521-522). The article also elucidates the reason behind possible submissive behaviour observed in survivors; belittling themselves and minimizing their own loss and trauma mirrors their guilt and their sensitivity towards hurting others by surviving (523-526).

1. 2. 4. Liminality: Belonging in the Nowhere

Liminality is broadly described as a state of being on a threshold where a person or a group of people no longer belong in the pervious state or space but don’t belong in a new one either. In his book *Rites of Passage*, the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep places liminality as an essential life ritual to maintain social stability and ensure personal development. However, this ritual is viewed outside the anthropology lens in later literature. Victor turner conceptualises liminality as any transformative phase “betwixt and between” in which a person experiences life differently and without previous conventions, this transition to a new social role has a lasting effect after the liminality period ends (Turner 106-108).

Completing this theoretical overview is the work of Bjorn Thomassen whose research on liminality extends to the permanentisation of the transformative phase that a person undergoes, taking the concept from being temporary to being a lifelong condition; always in displacement (13-14). To better explore liminality in literary works, narrative theory must be employed to literary works.

1. 2. 5. Narrative Theory

Most theorists concur that narrative is a structured representation of a set of events through a discourse that adds meaning to the story whether it is fiction or non-fiction compelled by the narrator. Seymour Chatman's *Towards a Theory of Narrative* suggests that narrative theory divides any kind of narrative into four essential parts; events and existents which make the content of the plot and, structure and techniques which make the expression (Chatman 298-299). This is followed by his understanding of content and discourse being interdependent where he argues that they can both on their own be meaning bearing if they coexist in the same context; the structure of a story can add a layer of meaning without crediting the plot of the story alongside it as much as the events themselves carry meaning before being told. However, a structure can only weigh in that sense if it is tied to a given content (298). Other theorists such as Gerard Genette and Roland Barthes believe that in fact the structure and codes of storytelling are what makes the narrative meaningful. This background paves the way for the significance of storytelling and its various forms in conveying meaning.

1. 2. 5. 1. Storytelling and Memoirs as Meaningful Tools of Expression

Storytelling has been since forever the human's way of making sense of the world surrounding them which is a process of digesting knowledge by perceiving it as a story and transferring it through generations, thus, myths and folklore exist as traditional tales that try to find explanation to why and how something happens (Bruner 4). That being said, autobiographies are a very vast and rich niche of storytelling since life writing holds an overwhelming load of information and details of a single person. Roy pascal dedicates a section for defining autobiography in his book *Design and Truth in Autobiographies*. He describes autobiographies as an offered insight by the author on his or her personal private and social life and great people with great accomplishments offer an intimate glimpse of what the audience cannot hope to know (1-3).

Memoirs differ from autobiographies in one main point; when autobiographies tell the story of a life, memoirs only focus on one particular part of that life with a scope circling around a given time period. The boom of memoirs occurred in the 1990s with multiple writers taking turn in narrating a remarkable phase of their lives and what these books had in common was that they were written with love, what is more fascinating in memoir writing is the amount of rage the reader expects and the generous forgiveness they are met with (Smith and Watson 3-5).

Vivian Grinock eloquently expresses the core of a memoir while highlighting the difference between an essayist and a memoirist, the latter she says, crafts a tale from the raw material of his own life to shed light on personal matters that offer wisdom to the reader. Furthermore, she argues that memoirs are a response to modernism but also to realism. Ironically, both realism and memoir carry the same purpose at first glance; speaking about the truth and reality yet, they do not serve the same cause nor do they deliver the same message; for realism was a movement of rebellion against the harsh realities of life by exposing the social, political and global ignorance and unfairness whereas memoir is written not to rebel but to claim the self and in doing so, to create meaning and teach lessons of growth (Rohrbach 1-4). One of the themes that storytelling uncovers, especially for trauma survivors, is the continual urge to fit and adapt in order to survive.

1. 2. 6. Survival of The Fittest: Beyond Biology

Survival is instinctively engraved in human nature, it is a call for overcoming extreme environmental conditions depending not only on innate capacity or biological advantage but also the cognitive flexibility that allows behavioural, emotional and cultural change following shifting terms. Existing concepts and theories address the process of adaptation and identity transformation in the context of the struggle for survival, some of the key theorists in this scope are Clifford Geertz, Bronislaw Malinowski and Ann Masten. More importantly, the rationale

for the constantly changing behaviour or the effort made by people who undergo series of hardships or dangerous situations to learn new skills such as language, customs, dishes or even develop physical strength are tackled by Herbert Spencer who first coined the concept “Survival of the Fittest” in his book *Principles of Biology*. Moreover, current approaches are insufficient to account for the aftermath of survival and the long-term cost of the transformation that occurs under pressure in unfamiliar territories.

The concept of Survival of the Fittest: Beyond Biology tackles the motives behind the urge to adapt and learn new things to blend in strange environments and how the shift -on a physical, emotional or intellectual level- in rapidly changing realities affects the surviving individuals beyond return, in other words; the concept is dedicated to investigate the intertwined relationship of survival to the human identity rupture. This framework relates to the experiences of Clemantine Wamariya and Cheryl Strayed who both found themselves struggling for survival by adapting to the circumstances that surrounded them in different phases of their lives.

1. 3. Literature Review

For travellers, the journey is not defined by the destination or the places inhabited in the process of movement, but by the meaningful memories it carries as a reminder of a valuable past, the new memories it adds to their heavy packings or empty pockets and essentially by the hardships endured for the sake of survival. Wamariya narrates a journey of suffering marked by the constant need to move, escape, and change refuge. Thus, hers is a story of actively racing against what threatens her survival, while Cheryl thoroughly recounts the details of a journey she chose to undertake, implying agency and optimism throughout her memoir. Although extensive research has examined travel memoirs, little attention has been paid to involuntary movement compared with voluntary travel and to how they carry different symbolic meanings of travel.

Such journeys have been continuously depicted in both involuntary and voluntary travel memoirs. Among the most influential works dealing with the heavy emotions of involuntary displacement is *Wave* by Sonali Deraniyagala; a memoir that highlights the burden of survival and its psychological cost for travellers who are forced to be on the move because they have no place to call home. *What Is the What* by Dave Eggers is also considered a cornerstone in the framework of travel as a driving force for survival and constant moulding of identity and ability, due to repeated shifts in context. The preceding examples illustrate a broader trend that is further explored through the poignant memoir *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* by Clementine Wamariya that deals with the experience of travel in contexts of war, loss and long-lasting trauma.

More life-affirming memoirs occupy a significant place in travel writing. Notably, *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert explores the captivating influence of travel on individuals who lost their sense of self and in reclaiming a newfound identity. Raynor Winn also delves into themes of adaptation to loss through voluntary movement in her memoir *The Salt Path*, capturing the necessity of travel for positive change by portraying the journey as a personal challenge rather than a breather from life. At the heart of this discussion lies the thematic significance of Cheryl Strayed's memoir, *Wild*, in which she recounts the story of her long hike on the PCT, demonstrating the profound weight of travel for individuals undergoing post-traumatic adjustment.

Scholars and writers have explored travel writing as an evolving genre and always regarded it as “a genre that exists among other genres” and is constantly reshaped. This argument is highlighted in *The Cambridge Companion To Travel Writing* in addition to noting that the genre itself is a hybrid of real-life observation and literary storytelling hence, it can hardly be perceived as purely objective. Mary Louise Pratt in her seminal work *Imperial Eyes* concurs that travel writing in European literature has mainly served as a lens through which

travellers from a western background place themselves as superior to the places and peoples; “others” they encounter in their journeys (*Eighteenth Century Studies* 481).

A related dimension emerges when considering the intertwined relationship of travel writing and memoir giving birth to a subgenre: travel memoir. In his article *Writing, Remembering, Travelling: Exploring Tensions of Selfhood in Travel Memoirs*, Stefan Jatschka presents travel memoir as a space where remembering, writing and exploration intersect citing trending memoirs that capture the travel experience as a means of self-reconstruction. It is scholarly valid that travel memoirs usually are considered and studied as such because they depict voluntary movement or adventure as a decision taken after experiencing loss, trauma or trajectory life events leading to healing or restoring a lost spark. However, scholarly inquiry has yet to recognise involuntary travel narratives as travel memoirs despite the less optimistic image they portray of travel and its aftermath.

Furthermore, as shown in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and *Wild*, Clementine views travel very differently from Cheryl; while movement is bad news and a necessity that shadows the survivor’s guilt haunting her, it is a refuge for the latter whose self-sense has been shattered. Survivors of natural and human made disasters often bear their survival as a burden and question their right to live whereas individuals who choose to move in order to find a way to the light undergo a different struggle. In existing research, involuntary displacement portrays the struggle of humans against the environment “external conflict” while processing parallelly their “internal conflict”. Nonetheless, limited research is devoted to comparing the significant difference between voluntary and involuntary travel and the powerful interpretive revelation that emerges from their juxtaposition.

Building upon the established scholarly landscape surrounding the themes and genres relevant to this study, this part of the review now engages with research done on Wamariya’s *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* (2018) and Strayed’s *Wild* (2012) and examines how these works

provide the foundation for the present research. Soumia Ahmed Kadi's thesis "Unresolved Refugee Trauma and Adaptive Mechanisms in Clementine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil's *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*" (2025) studies the manifestation of unresolved trauma of Wamariya as a refugee after repressing all the emotional turmoil that occurs during the events of war, displacement and witnessing violence. She also uses a psychoanalytical lens to analyse the adaptive mechanisms Wamariya develops to cope with the war inside and outside herself and to protect herself while also investigating the long-term effects of these mechanisms and unhealed trauma.

In addition, Lena Englund's research paper entitled "Relational Resilience in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After* and *Call Me American: A Memoir*" (2023) argues that resilience is not the outcome of the narrator's actions alone but of the combined efforts of the people they meet and the people they already have by their side. Resilience thus, becomes relational. Her input on *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* is that Wamariya could endure all the traumatic events she went through thanks not only to her personal strength but also to the help she had from her sister, the people they met along the way and to the American family she lived with and finally to the co-author of her memoir Elizabeth Weil who helped turn the painful memories into a narrative that embodies resilience making trauma narrative accessible.

Within this broader scholarly framework, Malgorzata Rutkowska explores themes of personal transformation and female narrative in her article "Encounters With the Self: Women's Travel Experience in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* and Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*" (2021). Her work features journeys as a means of personal transformation or refashioning of the self while also investigating the function of gendered generic traditions in forming the narrative persona (100). Rutkowska claims that in both memoirs, the narrators portray travel less as a

confrontation with the outer world; nature and different countries and more as “a solipsistic practice” (108).

Moreover, Omar Mohammed Abdullah’s article “Reconstructing the Self Through Nature: Trauma and Female Subjectivity in *Wild*” (2026) further examines how nature contributes to recovering and healing from trauma. He also emphasises on the process of self-reconstitution in female narratives which tackle travel as a sanctuary in the context of familial loss and patriarchal violence. The article also illustrates the possibility of growth and self-reclamation through physical engagement with the natural world. Although the proceeding examples target important themes in the memoir, limited concern is devoted to viewing it purely as a voluntary travel memoir.

To wrap up, it is noteworthy that contemporary research on both *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and *Wild* turn the light on essential themes and concepts relevant to the focus of this study. However, involuntary travel is scarcely studied together and in comparison with voluntary travel. Consequently, survivor’s guilt; the lingering feeling of individuals on the run for their lives has yet to be compared to the relief of explorers whose reward is usually awaiting during or at the end of their journeys. Drawing on that, this study aims to bring together involuntary and voluntary travel to highlight and examine the long-term effects of each one of them through comparing the experiences of Wamariya and Strayed.

This chapter has established the context necessary to understand the Rwandan refugee experience through six countries by tracing the historical events that led to the genocide against the Tutsi and the bloody civil war in 1994 by offering a background on the German rule and the Belgium colonialism that resulted in hatred and discrimination causing thousands of deaths and how these key events shaped the journey of survivors and their shattered selves. Equally, the chapter explores the history of the Pacific Crest Trail that went from a suggested idea to a

path of adventure, self-restoration and a worldwide recognised track that hosts several physical and emotional journeys. Theoretical frameworks, including Cresswell's mobility and Bruner's storytelling, provide a solid foundation to scrutinise the construction of meaning in travel narratives. This chapter lays the groundwork for a better investigation of the key distinctions between the necessity to escape and the choice of mobility that will be met in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Involuntary vs Voluntary Travel in Storytelling and the Lasting Legacy of Change and Choice

Travel is generally looked at or defined as the act of moving from point A to point B, but the word “travel” is not automatically linked to the words “voluntary” and “involuntary”. This leads to an open understanding of what could be labelled ‘travel’ regardless the circumstances and the motives. Thus, it is important to separate the two categories of travel to give each its fair place. This chapter explores the shape travel takes in Wamariya’s *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and Strayed’s *Wild*, and how each memoir offers a unique portrayal of movement and adventure that reveals travel as not inherently positive through storytelling. The chapter illustrates the difference in the sensory perception and emotional experience of travel between Wamariya and Strayed and the legacy of their journeys, “travel becoming a home” that assumes divergent meanings.

2. 1. Involuntary vs Voluntary Travel through Wamariya’s and Strayed’s Narratives

The narration of events in both memoirs plays a key role in highlighting the different perceptions of the travel experience shaped by the contexts and motives of each movement. Involuntary mobility is explicitly portrayed in Wamariya’s accounts of her journey as an unwanted experience with repeated stops. Equally, Strayed’s memoir is rather a testimony of agency and choice as she affirms her decision to go on the hike, coming fully from her. Consequently, their view of their travels mirrors the altering factor, which is agency in shaping divergent lived suffering and growth.

2. 1. 1. Travel without Arrival and the Emotional Oscillation in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*

Bauman clearly divides society into two symbolic figures according to their ability and agency to move: the tourists and the vagabonds in his article “Tourists and Vagabonds: Heroes and Victims of Postmodernity”, he highlights travel and movement as a social privilege that reflects both power for those who can move freely and choose to go on adventures and, an inequality for the ones that move out of necessity (war, survival, exile, displacement and environmental disaster).

The tourist is a person who travels by choice to wander, satisfy their curiosity or develop themselves and most importantly their travel is known to them as a temporary journey that can be ended at whichever point they decide to turn around and go back home. Whereas the vagabond stands for someone who has no control over their destination or the duration of their travel, they move because it is the only choice imposed on them to survive. Travel is a luxury for the tourist who travels toward a purpose known to them before, mid trip or by the end but the vagabond travels away from something in order to live. In this respect, Bauman labels the tourists as heroes and the vagabonds as victims (13-15).

For Clemantine Wamariya, travel started as a temporary visit from her parents’ house to her grandmother’s. During the civil war that broke out when she was six, she found herself on an endless run for her life, accompanied by her older sister Claire. At that point, she had no knowledge of what war, death and killing meant. Consequently, Clemantine Wamariya travelled without context or consent. She had to move or be killed, so she moved unprepared and disappeared from what was familiar to her without farewell.

The Girl Who Smiled Beads illustrates the experience of involuntary travel through the unwillingness of little Clemantine to leave her home first and the refugee camps she would grow fond of only to be stripped away from the taste of belonging they had begun to offer her

while also depicting the necessity of movement for outcasts through the resilient character of her sister Claire who knew better than to linger in one place knowing that war and more killing were lurking close by and running was the only escape. After spending over half a year in Zaire following Claire's marriage to Rob, violence caught up, and Clemantine states that she was told to pack and get ready to be on the move again:

Claire did not want to wait for more trouble. So Rob arranged for us to take a boat to a town close to Kazimia, where some of his extended family lived. Claire gathered her jewellery and clothes, anything she could sell. She told me to stuff my clothes in my backpack. We needed to leave. This was not a joint decision or even a real discussion: I think we should leave. How do you feel about that? It was a command: We're going now. (Wamariya 77)

Relying on Cresswell's mobility and space, the journey is embodied by the surroundings and the circumstances of the person on the move, and those conditions shape the meaning of the journey for individuals. Wamariya lives her constant travel through six different countries in anxiety and fear for her life and the need to escape portrays travel from her perspective as the bearer of bad news. Travel carried a bitter undertone, a reminder of not having a home to run back to and that the political problems that rose from rooted hatred and prejudice resulted in the painful truth of countless scattered families on the move in search of a place that does not reject them. Clemantine Wamariya states time and again that she and Claire had to always be ready to move, that the normal was not belonging anywhere but rather on the run. After leaving Zaire when she was seven, she says "there was no real belonging – not anymore. There was only coming and going and coming and going and dying" (77).

Wamariya's storytelling evokes waves of ups and downs in her six years of continuous displacement. The ups were when they stopped and stayed in the same place long enough for her to learn the language or the vernacular along with the traditions of their stop. The downs

were all the times she had to travel, leave another place behind, leave another fistful of beads by telling people her name so she won't go forgotten. Oscillation occupies a significant place in Clemantine's experience, spanning years of interrupted travel in her narrative. The hope of finding her parents turned into the hope of finding a safe place to finally settle down and start living again, but soon the dreams she harboured would crumble into despair when travel called again, like a bad omen. She was somehow aware that she would unavoidably be moving against her wishes, "no walking, no camps, no murder. Life felt easy for a time" (125).

Following the news of her sister's second pregnancy, the husband, Rob, persuaded Claire to take her daughter and Clemantine and travel back to Rwanda; "Why would we start moving again, by choice, not just to Rwanda but through one wrecked country after another?" (128) was Clemantine's reaction to what seemed to her like the most preposterous idea she had ever heard. However different, the emotional weight of mobility in Strayed's narrative serves as a reminder that travel can shift meaning when undertaken voluntarily.

2. 1. 2. The Intense Emotional Unfolding of a Self-Directed Experience of Travel

Strayed embarks on her journey on the Pacific Crest Trail almost five years after her mother's death; a loss that started a series of losses for her: her marriage, control over her life, her gathered family and her horses. The PCT guidebook appeared in her orbit, and she picked it up and started reading it without any conscious intention of possibly hiking the trail that ran from Mexico through Canada. The decision to be on the trail was Cheryl Strayed's idea of an adventure that might take her mind off of the hole in her heart. Throughout the chapters in which she details every segment of her hike, the agency of movement is always present as a reminder that she willingly chose to be where she was.

Whether on a dangerous hill full of rattlesnakes or in a tent alone at night, enjoying nothing but the company of a book that would turn to ashes once it came to an end. There were moments when Cheryl felt like an idiot who undermined the difficulty of hiking the PCT, but in those same moments, she repeatedly admitted that where she had been, was a result of her choices. “I’d gotten myself into this place on my own two feet” (217), she told herself when she reached a place that was supposed to have water but did not.

As she recounted the funny stories of what she did, saw and heard during her hike, along with the interactions and adventures with the people she encountered -hikers and non-hikers, one of the symbols of autonomy in Strayed’s narrative is the ability to choose a track name for herself that would mark her quirky personality or hint at what made her unique. The same was true for the hikers; you would either be given a name by trail fellows, or you could fashion one for yourself. Travel functioned as a multidimensional form of freedom, a luxury that made Cheryl understand how small her grief could be when she was deprived of the little things she took for granted before being on the trail.

The voluntary nature of travel in *Wild* is embodied in the succession of decision- making throughout the hike, particularly fighting the urge to turn around and go back home or off the trail whenever she sensed that it would be the best and wisest thing to do or the most desperate. Ten days on the trail, she considered that for the first time, she pondered:

I was going to quit. Quit, quit, quit, I chanted to myself as I moaned and hiked and rested (ten, five, ten, five). I was going to get to Kennedy Meadows, retrieve my resupply box, eat every candy bar I’d packed into it, and then hitch a ride to whatever town the driver who picked me up was going to. I would get myself to a bus station and from there go anywhere. (strayed 93)

Beyond this, travel evokes a liminal emotional state in Strayed’s recollection of events in her memoir. She initially decides to go on her long hike to escape the loud noise of her life

collapsing, so she can reflect on what she has experienced and maybe process her pain and anger, which aligns with Blackwell's understanding of escapism as a way to cope with overwhelming circumstances (416). However, as she is on the path she chose, Strayed unconsciously forgets what motivated her to hike one of the world's longest trails; she has not had time to think about her mother or shed tears. She was not fully shattered but not healed as well. Her journey was a window, a break from both grieving and moving on, much like Victor Turner's interpretation of the between-and-between phase (95).

Regardless of its initial impetus, voluntary travel tends to unfold as an ultimately affirmative and enriching experience; a comparable logic is evident in Strayed's self-directed journey. As it is permeated by risk, her hike seems a challenge that is both frightening and engaging, a force that keeps her going forward despite the agonising pain in her toenails or the snow she might be buried under. She keeps going, chasing the satisfaction of accomplishment she feels at every stop on the way after finishing the distance between the mailbox she starts her hike with and the one waiting for her by the time she hits another milestone. When she reached Oregon, she wrote on a note that she had "made it", as if it were an announcement of her victory against the odds of nature and herself (265).

2. 1. 3. Involuntary Mobility and the Loss of Perceptual Experience

Movement in Wamariya's narrative is stripped out of meaningful experience, given that travel is forced on her and undertaken in a context of discomfort, fear and uncertainty. Drawing on Cresswell's theory on the personalised view of mobility and space, Clemantine's view is shaped by the horrors she witnessed during her travels before and after digesting death and the complex idea of killing. Through the chapters that recount her six-years-long journey, the places she inhabited or passed by were marked with bodies. The first time she escaped with her sister she described it saying:

A man told us he knew the way to safety. We followed him to the Burundi border, to the Akanyaru River. There were bodies floating in it. I still didn't understand what killing was. To me, the people in the river were sleeping. That's all I knew. We walked until late afternoon, almost dusk. We didn't know where we were going -just to the next hill and then the hill after that and the hill after that and then across another river. We saw more bodies, sleeping and sleeping. I stopped thinking about my feet and worried about finding a place to rest (27-28)

During her travels, there was no encounter with nature and the beauty of the world that existed despite her ordeals; the rivers she crossed, and the hills she passed by were like traffic signs to her that were empty of meaning. Clemantine recounts only what was engraved in her memory as she ran and escaped and moved from refugee camp to the next; noticeably, the "space" or "environment" was of very little significance to her.

Rooted in this perspective is the classification of Wamariya's memoir more under the refugee memoirs' section than under on that of travel memoirs. Travel in her storytelling is not a romanticised experience of movement that suits the standards of leisure activities often linked to positive encounters or outcomes; hence, it is hardly regarded, even by Clemantine herself, as a narrative of travel. The stories told of what a child who was six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve saw and heard while on the move portrayed mobility as an evil force in its own that set to destroy carefully made plans and rare dreams of stability. There was no room for wonder. Wamariya's narratives illustrate the painful burden of involuntary travel that draws a barrier between her and the physical perception of her journey.

After walking a long distance in a refugee camp she had stayed in, in 1994, her field of vision captured hundreds of sick and dozens of wounded people screaming in pain and asked herself "How did I get here, where I am a nobody? We walked all this way for this" (41)?

Throughout her account, Wamariya was preoccupied with perceiving the violent image of the world, which she formed through her encounters along the way. She recalls seeing anguished, angry eyes staring at her on different occasions. She also speaks about the sights that tortured her of people from different age categories; the two- and three-year-olds that ran naked and filthy, the old women who sang and prayed to God whenever violence chased them out of their hideouts and the men who were powerless yet terrifying. Her vivid storytelling is anchored by Bruner's argument in the narrative theory where he states, "It was perhaps a decade ago that psychologists became alive to the possibility of narrative as a form not only of representing but of constituting reality" (5). This further supports the idea that stories helped and still help people make sense of the world around them.

The apex of physical engagement with travel is reached when the body becomes fully immersed in the materiality of movement generating the sensory experience of travel. Creswell's theory tackles this dynamic as a central catalyst in engaging the mind and body to the environment. Wamariya's experience in this respect is portrayed through discomfort from walking long hours in inconvenient weather and clothes, and eating repeated meals with no flavour, in addition to languages that both threatened and confused her. As she had to leave places she inhabited, she would hear the sounds of shooting and think it was thunder, or so she was told by her brother Pudi. "I didn't know how to name the noises...It was cold and green and wet and then bushes and my legs were shaking and eyes, so many eyes. My thoughts and senses became jumbled. Time felt hot. Silence was dizzying. My fear was bright blue" (27). As opposed to the sensations an average person on the move out of choice would experience, Clemantine's sight was blurred with images of bodies, filthy children and red roofs. Her sense of smell captured smoke, sweat and decay and, her audition overwhelmed with gunshots, screaming and crying. Echoing this trajectory is the perception of travel in Strayed's memoir which offers a radically different understanding of its phenomenology.

2. 1. 4. Travel as Sensory and Existential Experience

Wild is a representation of the physical perception of travel, first because it is a recollection of the events from a journey Strayed took voluntarily, which makes the movement itself a route to appreciating nature and the world as a whole. And second, the circumstances of Strayed allow her to be consumed in the space she inhabited or passed by. More thoroughly, descriptions of the nature and the surroundings along the trail paired with the sensory experiences of Strayed occupy a large space in her narratives. Drawing on this, it can be deducted that the tactile engagement with travel is illustrated as an awakening and overwhelming state of being. In the fourth chapter of Thompson's book *Travel Writing* entitled "Reporting the World" he states:

The scenes and incidents we encounter in a travelogue necessarily come to us in a filtered form, refracted first through the perceiving consciousness of the traveller, and secondarily through the act of writing, the translation of 'travel experience' into 'travel text'. As discussed in Chapter 2, this translation involves at the very least a selective process whereby the writer prioritises some aspects of the travel experience over others. (67)

This approach to travel writing highlights the subjectivity of travel memoirs or travelogues. Hence, Strayed leans more to her positive encounters with nature on the PCT. Cheryl's travel is a chosen movement that implies a state of comfort and receptivity, cultivating an attentive awareness of environment and landscape. As she moves from one anecdote to another, the element of nature is a shaping factor of her recounts. Strayed suffered a great deal physically in her journey, mainly her feet were almost always in very bad shape due to the small size of the boots she had been hiking in since the start causing her nails to fall off her toes but even then, all the pain seemed to be worth enduring because as she kept going she saw beauty everywhere. Being out there on the trail among the trees, she was in awe of the wilderness and

reminded of what the physical world had in store for her, despite the loss and the grief that overwhelmed her.

It is fair to say that Cheryl fully lives the sensory richness during her long hike. Her stories depict the singular qualities of day and night, renewed gratitude for the fruits she could pick along some of the paths she took, and a heightened awareness of the weather, which took turns siding with her or the trail. She would reflect on how a storm was approaching, how the sky would clear, and how the world would calm down again, as if the storm were just a distant nightmare. She remembers in one of the stops where she camped in her tent “The next day was hot and sunny as if the strange storm the night before had been only a dream” (313).

Cheryl’s senses get heightened as she spends more time in the wilderness than in the company of people. She would go days without seeing a single person, so her focus was shifted to sensing danger and savouring nature, relying on her sight, smell, hearing and taste. Her occasional exchanges with wild animals such as the wild bears or the bull she met early in her hike humbled her, confronting her with her own smallness and vulnerability.

Bringing this focus to its final dimension, *Strayed* portrays a perfect example of the spatial awareness that marks voluntary travel: distance, speed and transitions between places. The events in *Wild* follow a series of calculations made in freely chosen environments, accentuating the viewpoint of a traveller making decisions in relevance to the physical force of space and time. Strayed had knowledge about the places and towns she would go to or through, which gave her time to plan and prepare. Although her adventure was not without surprises, the guidebook and maps she held onto made her wait for arrival at each break point easier. Additionally, overcoming obstacles on bumpy roads and in dangerous forests signified the narrowing distance between herself and the resupply box awaiting her at a place where she could bathe, eat, and charge her body so she could return to the trail. All the sites along her journey were consciously chosen, as was the decision to hike the PCT.

2. 2. The Impact of Travel in Wamariya's and Strayed's Memoirs

The impact of travel is portrayed through different layers in Wamariya and Strayed's stories. The burden of constant movement brought with it a sense of belonging to every place Wamariya lived in; places also lived in her and that provoked both a necessity to tell her story and that of others like her while carrying with her a piece of "somewhere" in her identity. Paradoxically, Clementine's search for stability resulted in a state of liminal existence where belonging becomes rooted in the feeling of movement instead of a fixed place or home. The aftermath of Strayed's adventure is different to that of Wamariya. However, it is also marked by hardship and endurance. The struggles and challenges that she faces force her to adapt to circumstances, forever shaping key patterns of functioning in her life after the hike.

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2. 2. 1. Fragmented Identity and Narrative Necessity across Fractured Mobility

Movement in Wamariya’s story is constantly interrupted; being a refugee on the move meant instability and uncertainty. There was always a political, social or external factor that would create the need to escape again. When they first escaped the genocide in Rwanda to Burundi in 1994, their stay was cut short by Claire’s marriage to Rob, which led them to move to Congo, then Zaire in 1995. During Clemantine’s stay with Rob’s family in Zaire, she had to adapt to several aspects of life. The language was different; in Rwanda, she mainly spoke Kinyarwanda, but in Zaire, she was exposed to Swahili and French, which required effort and patience to learn for a seven-year-old.

Her social life also shifted in the presence of other authorial figures than her sister: Mama Nepele and Mama Dina, who cherished and took care of her. The religion and culture were also different; unlike Rwanda, Zaire was not a totally catholic country but also had Muslim and Protestant communities, as well as Middle Eastern, African, Indian, and European populations (Wamariya 72). Clothes and culture were new to little Clemantine and became a part of who she was. She loved Zaire.

After adjusting to the life she started to build there, the urge to move disrupted her dreams of settling due to militia attacks surrounding the area. The version of Clemantine in

Zaire would be added to her versions in Rwanda as the spoiled youngest girl of a well-off family and in Burundi as a refugee with no home or family.

In 1996, Clemetine and Claire left to Tanzania, the living conditions were entirely different from those in Zaire. Refugee camps were heavily guarded, “Police were stationed all around the fence. We felt like cattle” (Wamariya 93). Once more, Clemantine at eight years old, was faced with great adversity, pushing her to develop coping mechanisms in order to survive hunger, lack of sleep and hygiene. In addition to her new role as an aunt, Clemantine fed, carried and looked after Mariette, her niece who was a baby. Despite Clemantine’s efforts to adapt, Tanzania was just another stop along the way. In 1997 they went to Malawi in search of a better camp farther away from war, and then on to Mozambique. Clemantine’s versions started to pile up along with the skills, the things she learned and the lives she mastered. This dynamic conveys the meaning of “Survival of the Fittest” by Herbert Spencer and it motivates individuals to adapt continuously.

Throughout her interrupted journey, Wamariya was all so aware of the dangers and uncertainty that came with mobility, so she started to manifest a new side; weaponising her body to protect herself and loved ones, in Mozambique she was full of rage so at night she imagined how she would fight if she ever needed to “I saw teeth. Teeth as my weapon. My teeth, my nails, my hands, my kick. I saw myself kicking and biting...I had to be impermeable, self-sufficient, and I practiced this in my waking hours too” (109). Later in the same year, Claire and Clementine left Mozambique for South Africa. In Durban Wamariya learned Zulu. In 1999, they arrived in Zambia and Clemantine had to take care of two babies: Mariette who was three and Freddy, who was still a baby. Under the pressure of staying alone with the kids, the hunger and fear, ten-year-old Wamariya learned to be self-conscious and resilient to such an extent that it became part of her persona even years later.

Over years of repeated displacement and readjustment, adaptation becomes a lasting condition rather than a response to threat or a survival instinct. This eventually shapes Wamariya's identity as a mosaic of unfinished versions of herself. She reflects self-awareness as she describes herself: "I was twenty and felt so old and so young. I'd always been alone but I'd never been alone. I was so many people and nobody at all" (149).

In America, during her academic years, especially high school through college, Wamariya developed an irrepressible need to tell her story to the world, to the ones who were asking questions and admiring her strength and the ones who reduced her suffering and everything she went through to a mere word "refugee", "genocide". This dialectic of simplification and the complexity of her lived experience explain the growing compulsion to reclaim her narrative through storytelling. Like trauma survivors around the world, Wamariya needed to voice out and share her experience even at times when she felt helpless. She was inspired by those who shared their stories with the world as Elie Wiesel did; he fascinated her with his view of himself and his storytelling, "I had no language to describe the atrocities of my life -not then" (87). In his book *The Body Keeps the Score*, Van Der Kolk highlights the importance of recounting the story in the healing process:

In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* T.E Lawrence wrote of his war experiences: "We learned that there were pangs too sharp, griefs too deep, ecstasies too high for our finite selves to register. When emotion reached this pitch, the mind choked; and memory went white till the circumstances were humdrum once more." While trauma keeps us dumbfounded, the path out of it is paved with words, carefully assembled, piece by piece, until the whole story can be revealed. (272)

Van Der Kolk emphasises the necessity to speak and share a part of the emotional package if not the whole of it, and that in doing so, individuals find solace and meaning. He argues that

trauma takes the shape of unspoken feelings that need to be let out for victims to finally overcome whatever obstacle it or difficulty it embodies, which can be done through group discussions with others who share a similar pain.

Moreover, like her travel experience, Wamariya's narrative is just as interrupted and unstable, she tells her story in bits and pieces jumping from beginning to middle to new beginnings and from past to present going back and forth while using both her traumatic and narrative memory to do her experience justice. This approach to narration is also highlighted by Van Der Kolk as he states, "it is enormously difficult to organize one's traumatic experiences into a coherent account -a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and an end" (59).

Ultimately, interrupted travel fractures identity through repeated adaptation, thus unsettling any possibility of a fixed self-definition and culminates an urgent need to narrate lived experience. This instability naturally extends to a broader, ambiguous condition shaped by the paradox of belonging within perpetual movement.

2. 2. 2. Liminal Existence and the Paradox of Belonging in Continuous Movement

Due to the temporality of places in Wamariya's journey, the countries in which she spends limited time periods feel less like a home than the act of traveling itself. Although she finds herself in a liminal mode early in her travels where she is not anchored to a fixed origin, the mode goes from being temporary to a way of life. The experience of moving from a country to another creates a paradox expressed by the memoirist; instead of attaching herself to all the places she had hoped to call home she gradually attaches herself to the one thing that kept her from settling: travel. Thomassen explores the possibility of permanent liminality in his book *Liminality and the Modern* "The spatial 'stretching' of liminality and the centralization of

liminality here hinted to is accompanied by a temporal process, whereby liminality -in some cases, under certain circumstances -takes on a more permanent form” (14).

Disappearing from a place to another, sometimes without plan and without choice grew from being a despised feature of her life into a right she felt entitled to. In her six years of travel she had grown accustomed to the possibility that some force out of her control might cause her to escape again so she shielded herself by fleeing before that happened; traveling became her way and she had to make sure that she did not stray away from what had become her path, she articulates that saying “Remaining in place, nesting -it set off fears that somebody would yank me away. To counter it, I had to flee. I had to reassure myself that I still knew how to escape” (197). Consequently, Clemantine continues to travel as a practice to sharpen her escapism skills which foreshadows a significant fact; places lost their innocence, in her experience no place was fully safe. Drawing from that, liminality feels more comfortable than the threat that comes with settling.

Constant travel ultimately cost her the five-year long relationship she had with her boyfriend Ryan. The loss hurt her but the urge to travel came from trying to heal a scar that involuntary travel left, an emptiness. After moving to America, all the movement she had done stemmed from her own choices, it was like saying ‘now I can do it on my own terms’. What seemed like dwelling in the mobility loop was a reclamation for Clemantine. When she finally decided to dedicate some effort to mending her relationship to her mother, once again she chose to do it through a trip.

In a sense, Wamariya was also looking for the daughter she ceased to be because of the unfathomable yet unavoidable necessity to move, she wanted a second chance, to experience travel with her mother, voluntarily and without the pressure of violence and fear. She says on her trip to Rome with her mother “Clearly I wanted to flip the script, be the mother for her she

hadn't been for me. Yet I was old enough to know that when you lose a mother at age six, part of you always remains a child, stays frozen as that girl wanting to jump onto her lap, yearning for her approval and for the false reassurance that she can protect you from the world" (208). Aware of her inability to return to her old self, the Rwandan girl who once felt safe and knew nothing of the horrors of the world, Clemantine stays in the in-betweenness of travel, frozen in movement.

Taken together, the aftermath of all the travel she did since she was six is illustrated by her stagnation in motion, she never reaches psychological arrival. The latter leaves her in constant need and never-ending search for a place to truly call home. In what follows, the analysis will further demonstrate how the long-lasting effects of involuntary travel are distinct from those produced under different conditions of movement.

2. 2. 3. The Irreversible Effects of Travel Experience on Patterns of Functioning

Travel in Strayed's experience is a new challenge, something she had never imagined herself doing. After her mother's death and her divorce she started living alone; however, that offered little solitude. Her mind was constantly crowded with thoughts about who she had been and what she had done and how she did it. After she sets out on her hike, movement offers her an alternative for all the dwelling she had done inward; detachment from everything that held her down, detachment from her previous social roles. In her journey, her life beyond the trail is suspended and the lessons she learns are entirely hers.

Strayed illustrates in her recounts how being in the wilderness taught her to depend on herself emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Moreover, the mental state on the PCT was the driving force for going forward. Cheryl says, "So much of being able to hike the PCT depended on mind control; the stout decision to move forward, regardless" (213). That said,

travel produced a survival archive and a stored resilience in her. She was alone on an eleven-hundred-mile-long track, and her path required her to acquire several adaptive mechanisms for survival. Early on, the dangers she faced were repeatedly perceived as a surprise; however terrifying, it gradually helped her practice improvisation to enhance her counterattacks.

Strayed recalls a happy memory in the middle of her ordeal of when she met two young men of the army, they admitted to her that she was tougher than them after seeing her feet condition and realising how heavy monster was, she describes her feeling at their comment “flattered and lifted” (312). Additionally, Cheryl learns how to read maps and assesses dangerous situations of the environment and she adapts to the unpredictability of the trail by slowing down and back tracking. Spencer’s theory on survival serves as an anchor for understanding and analysing the behavioural changes and psychology of Cheryl Strayed on the trail.

Notably, Cheryl develops necessary life skills during her hike, cooking and economising food in addition to dismissing the things that made her backpack ‘Monster’ overloaded. The latter foreshadows the importance of disposing of unnecessary things in life, such as feelings of guilt and blame that are only a burden. She also cultivates remarkable pain tolerance and corporeal awareness due to the physical damage she suffers, dehydration, blisters, lost toenails, extreme foot pain and exhaustion. Her body becomes a testimony of what it survived; parts of her would never fully go back to their previous state, even after recovery. In that regard, Cheryl’s suffering on the PCT shifts her relationship to pain from an exceptional to a repeatable fact of life, so endurance becomes part of her functioning self.

More significantly, the trail provides both time and space for Cheryl to stay utterly alone, sitting with her grief, guilt and fear. She then harvests her most significant survival and coping mechanism: psychological resilience. Throughout her narrative, she recounts talking to herself, regularly writing in her journal, and reading the books that accompanied her in the wild.

This experience instilled in her a sense of confidence in the face of challenges, taught her to endure rather than quit, and to visualise victory rather than defeat in moments of crisis. Beyond this, her direct exposure to her inner self also signified the irreversible loss of emotional avoidance as a strategy to suppress pain. Alongside this, meeting strangers along the trail positioned her to practice cautious trust and set boundaries. Relying on her instinct to read people and consider whether she should accept the help of others when in need later becomes a social survival skill.

The last dimension to consider is Strayed's growing awareness of her physical and emotional abilities forever losing her prior self-knowledge and innocence, as well as her permanent memory activation that results from a series of emotional flashbacks that seldom even stem from physical failure. In her narrative, Cheryl recalls feeling that the flowers were saying their names to her in her mother's voice and also how she thought the lake near which her mother died had died too. Strayed self-directed journey thus exposes the inalterable effects of travel on both the body and the psyche.

This chapter compared the experience of travel in Clemantine Wamariya's *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* to Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*, relying on narrative theory, Cresswell's theory on mobility and space, Thompson's *Travel Writing*, and Thomassen's theory on liminality, together with Spencer's survival of the fittest. Through this discussion, both memoirs create a paradoxical reflection on voluntary and involuntary travel, portraying movement in memoirs and the lasting legacy of travel through the lenses of a refugee and a grieving hiker. This way, the last chapter will tackle how travel often follows a cost-reward dynamic by examining how survivor's guilt may constitute the cost of fleeing for survival, while relief and self-reconfiguration can function as the reward for being brave enough to embark on a journey.

Chapter Three: The Paradoxical Interplay of Mobility: Survivor's Guilt in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* and Personal Rebirth in *Wild*

Human experiences, even when shaped by the same phenomenon, resist uniformity, and travel is no exception. Due to the different contexts, what follows mobility is not predetermined; it may manifest in devastating forms or unfold as resolution and renewal. This duality unravels in personal accounts portraying opposing realities, that offers a lens through which the costs and rewards of travel may be simultaneously apprehended. In continuity with the previous chapter that established contrasting facets of the travel experience and its impacts, this chapter focuses on exploring the residual presence of survivor's guilt in Clemantine Wamariya's post-survival lived reality in contrast with Cheryl Strayed's personal rebirth, which was fostered by her pilgrimage across the PCT. This is going to be done through Niederland's Survivor' guilt and O'Connor's downside of winning in social competitions.

3. 1. Survivor's Guilt in The Girl Who Smiled Beads

Wamariya's childhood being marked by the trauma of her family loss and estrangement from her country, led to several damages in her post-traumatic identity and left her with the burden of survival. Survivor's guilt is manifested in different forms in Clemantine's life. Through her narrative, a series of survivor's guilt episodes and presence dominate her life experiences as a refugee, a genocide survivor, a daughter, an aunt, a sister and a student. This literary analysis contributes to the dissection of Wamariya's behavioural, existential, and moral changes and philosophies resulting from guilt and shame.

3. 1. 1. Behavioural Manifestations of Survivor's Guilt

Clemantine Wamariya survives the genocide of the Tutsi in her country by fleeing from a place to another, chasing a good, peaceful setting. She and her sister Claire succeed in

escaping war and violence through movement over seven years and six different countries. However, leaving her family behind, *Mukamana*, and her people signified for a very long time that she had won a chance at life that all who did not survive were denied. Clemantine carries a sense of guilt despite her knowing that she had no control over the situation nor authority to change the fate of the victims.

Throughout her travels, she strives to be the best version of herself she can be for those around her. In the absence of her parents, she sought the approval of the elders she met that took care of her by dressing well and speaking politely and saying the right thing at the right time and place in addition to the approval of her older sister to whom she refused to be a burden. Over the years, Wamariya achieves remarkable academic success, she studies hard, works as a nanny and joins Yale university. Her overachievement is driven by the need to justify her survival.

Adding to that, after years of adjustment and adaptation to the diversities she encountered in her travels, Wamariya develops strong self-regulation; to her, emotions of weakness, vulnerability, and inconvenience are not to be broadcast. She even feels guilty for having those emotions due to two facts established by her through her memoir: first, she had survived a genocide with a sister and met many kind people who helped throughout the journey so to feel bad was to be ungrateful and to be ungrateful was to feel shame so she often felt shame (147). Second, broadcasting her pain and suffering would not do anyone any good. Clemantine controls her sitting and standing posture, suppresses her vulnerability and shows the world her most disciplined self-presentation. She describes herself in front of audiences saying, “In public, I played the part of myself. I wore the right makeup, the right jewellery, the right dress. I was nobody, and I was everybody” (192).

Moreover, Wamariya’s survivor’s guilt can be depicted in the way she undermines herself, her social status, value and academic success. Her hard work is visible to her yet,

Clemantine often envisions bigger problems, bigger pains and bigger disappointments to make herself small and unimportant. After years of being told that she was a powerless victim and an incredible force of a human, her guilt stems both from the chances she had that thousands of others did not and her endless pursuit of happiness. This collection of heavy emotions of guilt and need for justification is backed by Niederland's explanation of survivor's guilt as a driving force to exploit the life that was given to and taken from another individual.

In the same discussion, after an American family offered Wamariya shelter and care, she engages in self-sabotage, punishing herself into feeling more gratitude than a sense of belonging. Throughout her narrative, she consistently highlights the gratitude she felt toward the Thomas family. Nonetheless, her appreciation takes over the space for feeling home and comfortable; this suggests that Wamariya's guilt urges her to feel indebted rather than entitled.

Overall, Clemantine rarely allowed herself a normal, stable, comfortable adolescence. She buries herself in academic accomplishments and overworks herself by babysitting her nieces and nephews and working as a nanny to earn money. Most importantly, she distances herself socially and emotionally by denying intimacy and belonging. This argument is further explored in the article "Survivor Guilt: Theoretical, empirical and clinical features" where the idea of social comparison can lead to self-destructive patterns due to the discomfort superiority creates for survivors out of fear of causing a rift in their relationship with others who do not enjoy the same luxuries (Fimiani et al. 4). Wamariya experiences those internal struggles while she navigates her life as a survivor of a genocide.

3. 1. 2. Survival as Moral Debt: Ethical Memory, Hyper Responsibility and Ambivalence of Healing

Wamariya's memoir is a testimony of her suffering and that of others who experienced the same amount of loss and grief. After surviving physical pain, life dangers and emotional breakdowns,

which were each shortly lived because of the necessity to move forward, Clemantine feels compelled by a sense of obligation and duty to tell her story and testify for those incapable of doing it for themselves. Repeatedly within her memoir, she expresses the imperative to speak, to correct those who assume false realities about refugees and to elaborate on the pain beyond the general belittling word of ‘genocide’. During her classes at university, Wamariya recalls being called emotional or perceiving things too personally even at times when the discussion was not relevant to her experience. She says:

[E]ven if the material had nothing to do with war, family, ethnicity, racism, poverty, I had to bring up my family, my childhood, my pain, and all my classmates would roll their eyes. Every paper I bent around my personal narrative. Every comment I made, every conclusion I drew, demanded that the teacher consider not my intellectual command of the material but my experience, me (150-151)

This urge to be heard and need for her pain to be recognised is what eventually drove Wamariya to write her memoir even after years having passed since the events of war.

Clemantine shares in her narratives the amazement and sympathy of strangers to whom she would tell her story, and she confesses that she was not special, that she was not the one deserving of their tears, but the thousands and millions of others who had no voice or fame and had likely suffered more. It is also worth noting that Wamariya follows an ethical compass in testifying to her own and others’ stories and is often reprimanded for being too real and honest in her storytelling, but she was only telling the truth. Beyond this, survivor’s guilt is further seen in Clemantine’s fear of forgetting. As she thrives socially, to an extent, and academically, she regards the legacy of her painful journey as an entrusted message that has to be spread and broadcast as a scar that should never go unwitnessed and a life lesson for generations to come (90).

Conversely, guilt and shame were obstacles for Wamariya as much as they were pillars for her ethical awareness and moral actions. The growing fear of letting go of the past also translated into lingering sadness and self-reproach, later resulting in pushing people away and dissociating from the opportunities presented to Wamariya, even when she said yes to them. Although the only way to move forward is to put down the burden of the past, it felt precisely like a betrayal of the suffering endured, the lives lived, and the ones not lived. “There’s no label to peel and stick that absolves you, shows you’ve done your duty, you’ve completed the moral project of remembering (82)”.

At the same time, Wamariya provides a thorough expression of the burden of survival through Claire’s hyper-responsibility. Although the family’s financial situation was not stable and evidently not comfortable enough to share with others yet, Claire made sure to share her orange with those she knew were in need, just as she had been as a refugee. The unapologetic need to help people was imprinted on both sisters. Clemantine recalls the meals that her older sister shared with strangers and the food she brought to orphans in Rwanda every year. Moreover, this ethical responsibility towards others is illustrated in the moral burden of success. Clemantine acknowledges her privileges but is also haunted by her inability to effect change for individuals who share her experience, for refugees, survivors, and upcoming generations of thinkers. According to O’Connor, the feeling of guilt has an upside, as illustrated by the moral and responsible actions of survivors that benefit society; the latter ensures a partial return to balance. She explicitly phrases her helplessness and guilt: “I had everything and I did nothing” (148). Wamariya’s post-traumatic moral onus is also accompanied by a heavy existential indebtedness and a constant search for meaning.

3. 1. 3. The Burden of Remaining: Existential Consequences of Survivor Consciousness

In the wake of the tragic war in Rwanda and the series of violence that followed in the neighbouring countries, including Congo and Burundi, Wamariya starts perceiving existence broadly as post-innocent and her own existence as a continual task for justification of survival. Due to witnessing countless deaths, Clemantine looks for answers to her arbitrary existence in a violent world where she could have ceased to exist as easily as she survived, despite being aware of the difficulty of her own survival. The unfairness sensed in the simplest details of ordinary life drove Wamariya to wonder about the uneven allocation of opportunities and privileges, down to having a refrigerator at home.

She asked herself one night, “How could one place have such excess, while in another, just a plane ride away, people starved” (37)? The awareness of the unequal geography of human possibility that somehow led to her survival and the demise of others urged Wamariya to justify her existence: “This is my life but this is not my life. I deserve this now because I suffered” (37). Thus, existence felt borrowed; what she was granted could have belonged to another, so instead of being present in her own life. Wamariya carried ghosts of the past and lingered in their absence, often comparing her condition to that of the dead who were deprived of their chance to live.

One of the consistent consequences of survivor’s guilt in Wamariya’s life is her cruelly formed ontological existence. Due to her encounter with death, she gradually becomes detached from her reality. From Clemantine’s perspective, happiness had to be earned, yet even after reaching her goals, her success and joy felt illegitimate, so she unconsciously tends to estrange herself from them. The concept of ‘being’ shifts from a basic neutral human condition to an entrusted responsibility. For instance, when Clemantine went shopping with her American mother and her friends, she was aware of the kindness given to her and the generosity

surrounding her, but she was just as detached from the moments of ease and joy; she would say, “This is nice, but why should I care” (54).

Survivor’s guilt manifests itself inside Wamariya not only as existential consciousness or overwhelming gratitude but also as rumination. The quest to find logical explanations for her survival occupies a large part of her mind. This argument is present in the article “Survivor guilt: a cognitive approach” based on Pethania et al. study, where in some cases survivor’s guilt drives survivors to seek a resolution for their negative emotions through rumination (Murray et al. 7). The memoirist also experiences persistent grief even after everything had happened was classified in the past.

3. 1. 4. Continual Grief in Wamariya’s Survivor Experience

Traditional definitions of grief mostly present it as a process that ultimately reaches an end. Nonetheless, Wamariya experiences ongoing mourning even after having her life upgraded financially and socially. The attempt to place the pieces together appears to be Clemantine’s greatest test. After arriving in America, she ends up with the best position among her family members, who were Claire and her kids, thanks to the foster family that took her in and the education system in which she was immediately enrolled. Nonetheless, the guilt of having a good life or a second chance at stability and comfort kept loss emotionally present. Clemantine remains aware of what was lost alongside what was saved or granted. As a teenager, she had already established an unnegotiable fact: her childhood was lost, and she had become much older than a teenager over the course of her journey.

In *The Body Keeps the Score*, repeating situations of high pressure and violence seems addictive in some cases. Van Der Kolk argues that “Most of us know from sad personal experience that terrible grief is typically accompanied by the sense that this wretched state will last forever, and that we will never get over our loss” (87). Strangely, the latter concept is part

of Wamariya's life system, not moving forward, drowning in grief and sorrow; reassure her of her loyalty to the pain and suffering she and others felt, others who likely did not survive to have the life she was having.

Part of Clemantine's persistent grief is her inability to grasp the possibility of forgiveness or forgetting the horrors that she underwent in Rwanda. She phrased it "There's no forget. The damage is done. It will come back" (116). Furthermore, survival forms a huge part of Wamariya's identity. Consequently, her parents' loss shaped her perception of herself within the world. A second chance with her parents was seen by the world as a rewarding reunion but Clemantine could not fathom the audacity of assuming that the years she spent as an orphan were to be erased the moment she had her parents back.

In her memoir, Wamariya explicitly states that in her understanding of the world, a lot of shame comes with being privileged (146). This internal conflict between enjoying the ease of life and carrying the scars of the past is rooted in her. Coupled with this is her observation of people's assumptions regarding her circumstances after survival and trauma as a 'happy ending'. Wamariya interprets her life as forever unravelled and beyond repair. By doing so, she stagnates in the circle of grief and remains loyal to human suffering and refugees around the world but, also blocks hope for a future where positivity and optimism are pillars of perception and worldview. In contrast, Strayed's travel contributes largely to piecing her life back together, showing the long-term rewards of voluntary movement. This will be discovered in the coming part.

3. 2. Rebirth on the Trail: Processes of Self-Reconstruction in Wild

Cheryl Strayed's hike gradually becomes a catalyst for her changed self and newly constructed identity. Her lived experience contributes to building a stronger self and is described by the memoir's characters as a pilgrimage. Temporal reconfiguration is restored through direct confrontation with the past wounds and the emergency of the present. The Pacific

Crest Trail also serves as a fostering environment for hope, renewal, and trust in the sacredness of human connections, as well as a testament to her resilience and strength, further nourishing her view of herself as a hero rather than a victim of loss and pain.

3. 2. 1. The Pilgrim Way: Reconstructing the Self through Embodied Journey

Strayed's traversal of the Pacific Crest Trail follows the structure of a secular pilgrimage; she initially decides to go on her hike after experiencing multiple losses: losing her mother to cancer, losing her family to the death of her mother, losing her marriage, and eventually losing herself. Cheryl voluntarily embarks on the path despite her awareness of its consequences, embracing pain, suffering and exhaustion and choosing to carry on. Also, drawing on Turner's argument, her journey symbolises liminality and simplicity of lifestyle which strips Strayed out of her previous and current social roles. Lastly, the main purpose of the whole adventure on the PCT is not arriving but transforming a broken life into a promising one.

Engulfed in grief following her mother's death, Cheryl adopts self-destructive coping. She engages herself in repeated fleeting connections as a form of escapism and emotional detachment, uses heroin extensively to flee her reality, neglects her body and risks her health. On the trail, she gradually abandons her old patterns. Confronted with the value of her physical capacity, Cheryl begins to navigate ways to preserve and protect her body from the harshness of the wild. Unlike in the past, she now regards intimacy as sacred and special thanks to the discipline she patiently nurtured while finding strategies to survive on scarce amounts of water, food and money.

Adding to that, Strayed struggles with guilt and shame over the years that followed her mother's passing, hence, she regards all the mistakes she made as a dark past that should be forgotten rather than acknowledged as an undeniably altering phase of her life. The hike on the

PCT offers Cheryl a chance to reconsider the past and recognise it as a necessary component of her life-narrative, integral to the formation of her present self. There is a moment during her travel where she admits to herself: “I realized that what I’d started when I’d spoken those words hadn’t led only to my divorce but to this: to me sitting alone in old station, California, on a picnic table beneath the magnificent sky. I didn’t feel sad or happy. I didn’t feel proud or ashamed. I only felt that in spite of all the things I’d done wrong, in getting myself here, I’d done right” (210-211). This realisation reveals the crucial importance of viewing the past as a bridge to the present rather than escaping it when reconstructing identity. A new beginning should not require the erasure of earlier phases, as all experiences are equally foundational to reality.

Cheryl not only reconstructs her identity, figures out who she really is and learns how to move forward on her journey, but more importantly, she changes how she judges herself and her past mistakes. Instead of drowning in self-blame and condemnation, she shifts to compassion and endeavours to understand the reason behind the actions that shaped her downward spiral. Beyond building an improved version of her identity and reaching ethical acceptance of herself, Strayed reconciles with the past, ultimately renewing her capacity to imagine a better future.

3. 2. 2. Temporal Reconfiguration: Relearning Time after Loss

In some cases, temporal stasis becomes a protective condition through which individuals avoid further wounding. In response to her mother’s death, Cheryl’s life feels suspended; she gets stuck in grief as though every day is a repetition, every day her mother died, and every day Cheryl was broken again. This suspension drawing on Caruth’s argument in the first chapter of her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* 1996, served as a destructive trauma response that kept time frozen and grief consistent. On the trail,

days regain rhythm due to continual movement and unpredictable turns, dangers and plans. Consequently, each day is inevitably unique despite the struggle that might be undergone, constant surprise helped pull Cheryl out of her frozen state. Additionally, progress on the trail was measurable, the distance she walked was calculated at the end of the day along with the distance she would walk the next day, which provided Cheryl with daily affirmations of her engagement and temporal flow.

Another key aspect is the reconciliation with memories, throughout the years following her mother's death, memories of the past -including memories of childhood and moments shared with her mother long before cancer happened- take a disruptive form. Remembrance interrupts the present of Strayed and acts as a barrier that forces healing away rather than an integrated part of her being. Fortunately, the PCT imposes order and organisation that extends to her memories eventually reordering them as integral and significant parts of her life that represent a legacy rather than intrusive wounds that maintain present rupture.

Furthermore, as stated previously, the PCT was fraught with unpredictable and pervasive peril which forced and necessitated Cheryl's sustained attention to the present. For instance, keeping a close watch on the people, animals or wild things she could encounter required uninterrupted attention to immediate survival. The time and focus needed in assessing dangerous situations, reading the body language of strangers she met for the first time on the track or at one of her stops, and taking decisions about whether to step off the trail temporarily, continue walking or wait until the next stop, all resulted in the negation of obsessive retrospection and the dominance of the past over time experience as stated in the theory of time and space in Cresswell's *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern World* where he explicitly discusses how mobility is shaped by space and time.

Lastly, Cheryl's journey marks the beginning of a new chapter in her life and the open path that awaits her with countless possibilities. The loss of her mother, signified for a very

long time the loss of a future. Her mother occupied the largest and most important part of Strayed's life socially and emotionally serving as the gluing force that keeps all the pieces together. Without her, a whole and meaningful life was far out of reach and nearly impossible to envision. Her time on the PCT alters her perspective and leads to a revelation of faith and a renewed belief in building a bright future due to her self-realisation which is a concrete example of possibility. By the end of her journey, Cheryl already considers seeking stability in a place that suits her preferences and reminds herself of her dream of writing a book one day, the dream embodied in *Wild* years after the hike (209). In the book, Cheryl's rediscovery of life beyond pain paves the way for relational repair and social reconnection.

3. 2. 3. Relational Repair and Communal Reconnection in Cheryl's Journey

Before the PCT hike, Cheryl struggles to navigate her relationships with the important people in her life. Initially, she perceives her mother's death as a representation and reminder of her failed role as a daughter and the unpredictable end to their relationship -it ended in death. The fallout of her marriage and the unravelling of her family become the norm. Due to that, Cheryl emotionally distances herself from others, connection signified the possibility of or inevitable abandonment, and the latter led to pain and suffering beyond her tolerance. Solitude and isolation were the safest choices for her. For a large part of the trail, Strayed made sure of being alone in her hike, not only because of her need for quiet to process her overdue feelings and grief but also to protect herself from attachment and dependence. She tells one of her fellow hikers "the point of my trip is that I'm out here to do it alone" (134). Strayed knew that for her to overcome her fears, she needed to be on her own (134).

On the trail, Cheryl encounters her mother in her dreams during her sleep and in her memories that were coming back and forth during her waking hours. Gradually, she started to

distinguish the good, bad and defining moments of her relationship to her mother. In one of her remembering episodes, she recounts all the mistakes her mother made, from smoking to spending more time working and less time raising Cheryl and her siblings. In another episode, she affirms the love her mother gave her, how she planted hope, life, and annoying optimism in her kids, and how much effort she poured into the family to keep them safe, fed, and content. Eventually, Strayed's bond to her mother is renewed, the repair is marked by a moment in the night of her mother's fiftieth birthday when she sat and recalled:

I said my mother's name out loud as if it were a ceremony for her. Her name was Barbara but shed gone by Bobbi, so that was the name I spoke. Saying *Bobbi* instead of *Mom* felt like a revelation, like it was the first time that I truly understood that she was my mother, but also more. When she'd died I'd lost that too -the Bobbi shed been, the woman who was separate from who she was to me. She seemed to come at me now, the full perfect and imperfect force of her humanity, as if her life was an intricately painted mural and I could finally see the whole thing. Who she'd been to me and who she hadn't. how it was she belonged to me profoundly and also how she didn't. (299)

Episodic encounters with fellow hikers on the trail, strangers and "trail angels" contributed to the restoration of her faith in human kindness and exchanged trust. Most importantly, the impermanence of the trail offers Cheryl a safe relational space; she becomes part of a community without the weight of obligation and long-term commitment leaving no room for abandonment anxiety. In the process of reestablishing connection with others, she simultaneously relearns the dynamics of reciprocity. She shares her food and water occasionally with other hikers, exchanges information and updates of the weather on different spots on the track and receives help several times and engages in interactive conversations where she opens up about her past, personal experiences and vulnerabilities.

Finally, interactions and time spent with the hikers illustrate the social belonging of Cheryl and the collective experience of surviving the wild, the weather and the limited supplies which pulled her out of solitary grief to communal suffering; in mourning her mother she felt utterly alone, it was an individual journey in contrast to the physical suffering and emotional struggle invoked by the hardships of the trail that she shared with all the hikers she encountered, the ones before her and the ones to come after her. Strayed's relational renewal is also a result of her renewed self-image and the push for her narrative authority and reflective tone

3. 2. 4. Narrative Reauthoring and Becoming Hero Rather than Victim

Dominant narratives on situations similar to that of Cheryl's usually label her as "ruined", "failed daughter", or a "self-destructive woman". Strayed's narrative refuses this unfair and stereotypical labelling and advocates and commands understanding and sympathy from the society and from women themselves who have undergone traumatic events that led to the unravelling of their lives. The memoir was written around 2012 while the hike was experienced in 1995. The time gap between the hike and the narration of the book is nearly seventeen years in which Cheryl gains notable reflective distance and learns to weave her experiences, interpretation and observation into an authentic and rich story.

The memoir is catalysed and set in motion by the loss of her mother, starting as a tragedy. But the narrative of Strayed positions the moments of rupture with raw and striking immediacy. After years of the events that the memoir tackles, the author narrates falling points and revelation moments as equally essential to the overall plot; she turns the latter from a sorrowful narrative to a story of a life-changing quest for meaning and purpose. This idea further supports Strayed's embodied agency and authority in her own life and memoir.

Moreover, storytelling and narrative are recognised as a projection of who someone is and how society is going to judge and perceive them, this image includes vulnerability, intimacy

and the ability to tell one's story. Roy Pascal emphasises the importance of autobiographies in adding a layer of understanding of individual experience through the main character's dominance: the author. Adding to that, many individuals that were exposed to traumatic events tend to tell their stories in an empowering form often called "counter narrative". The technique serves as route to position the narrator as a hero, or a protagonist in their narrative rather than a side or marginal character that acts as the victim. That is how Cheryl treats her own story and claims her central role in constructing a life and persona worthy of admiration. She also challenges the norms of trauma narrative that traditionally hint at the trauma itself as the creator of closed stories, which ultimately lead to everything ending in loss by the unpredictability of human lived experience and alternative interpretations of crisis and destabilising occurrences.

Drawing on the concept of counter narrative, Cheryl Strayed represents, in her memoir, the shift in her ethical positioning toward herself and her circumstances. On the trail, she moves from searching for answers to why all those terrible things happened to her to what she is responsible for now that she has lost so much. Her focus shifts from cause -an explanation to her pain and suffering- to response. The wild opens Cheryl's eyes to the gift of existence; as a result, she nurtures a new goal to pursue during and after her hike on the PCT: what she is going to do with her life and how she will honour and cherish it. This change illustrates her newfound identity as responsible rather than damaged, and ethical rather than wounded. Her maturity in realising that acting upon what is given without full closure or satisfying explanation was a starting point in rewriting her life story.

This chapter tackled the aftermath of travel in contrasting contexts: the detrimental outcomes of survival through forced movement of Clemantine Wamariya's narrative, *The Girl Who Smiled Beads*, and the rewarding aspects of Cheryl Strayed's voluntary travel in building herself through her memoir, *Wild*. The two heartfelt memoirs explore themes of identity, loss and lingering traces of trauma. The former dedicates her narrative to telling the story of a girl

who smiled beads so she does not disappear from a world that threatened her existence and diminished her significance; however, the girl is burdened by survivor's guilt. Through this lens, survival is shown not as a clear path to a happy ending but as a further test of resilience and an emotional journey for survivors. Conversely, the latter's experience on the PCT yields invaluable rewards for her personality; it helps her build a resilient self and ultimately reshapes her view of the world and of her life. *Wild* thus embodies self-affirmative travel narratives that open a pathway to the horizon of possibilities.

General Conclusion

Travel in the world of Clemantine Wamariya is experienced through a series of episodic, unanticipated displacements and continuous struggle for survival; this dynamic forms the narrative tone of her memoir. Cheryl Strayed's journey is filled with challenges and overcoming internal and external ordeals. The contrasting circumstances of the two memoirists shape the divergent themes of adventure and suffering, as their vivid descriptions deliver relatable and honest accounts.

This dissertation offers one of the first comparative studies that link travel writing and travel memoir to narratives of war and displacement in contemporary literature by examining the differences in *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* by Clemantine Wamariya where events take place during and after the genocide of Rwanda in 1994 and *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed, a seminal work in travel narratives which tells the story of a long hike on the Pacific Crest Trail taking place in 1995. This dissertation maps how both works uniquely express themes of loss, suffering and endurance in the context of displacement and chosen movement alongside the aftermath of these journeys. Building on Cresswell's theory on mobility and space, Thompson's travel writing, Caruth's trauma theory, Turner's liminality, Spencer's developed concept of survival of the fittest, Bruner's storytelling and O'Connors survivor's guilt. This research has highlighted the significant role of both narratives in exemplifying the controversial meanings of travel and the lasting impacts of survival.

The research began by framing Wamariya's displacement, tracing the roots of violence that caused the civil war and genocide in Rwanda in 1994, from the German Colonial rule's start in 1897 to the Belgian rule in 1916. Tracking key events in constructing gradual hatred

and grudge that resulted from the discrimination between the categories of Rwanda's population (Hutu, Tutsi, Twa). Following the events with the independence in 1962 and the civil war that lasted four years from 1990 to 1994, leading to the refugee crisis and thousands of exiles during the period between 1994 and 1996. The first part also offers a look at the history of recreational wilderness on the Pacific Crest Trail from the birth of the idea of creating a connected trail extending from Mexico to Canada in the 1920s, the National Trails System Act in 1968, to the construction that was not completed until 1993. Theories of travel and mobility, narrative and storytelling, liminality, and survivor's guilt serve as critical tools for exploring the divergent lived experiences and consequences of voluntary and involuntary travel.

The involuntary nature of Clemantine Wamariya's travel largely affects her conception of the journey in both physical and emotional terms. Travel carries the haunting image of violence and fight for survival, which alienates Wamariya from the present. Conversely, Strayed's agency results in an affirmative tone and a regenerative aspect of her narrative. She engages with travel in its full sensory range. Notably, Wamariya's interrupted movement results in an identity rupture and an inability to belong to a single place, leaving her forever stuck in a liminal existence. While Strayed's journey affects her functioning system through the immediacy of danger and change. The memoirs use experiential and reflective narration to render their accounts authentic and relatable while conveying lived reality.

From another standpoint, the memoirs showcase the aftermath of travel by detailing the costs and rewards it can entail. On the one side, Wamariya's accounts tackle the devastating scars of trauma and the lingering grip of survivors' guilt on her, affecting both her social, ethical and emotional experience of life. On the other side, Cheryl Strayed's *Wild* represents the power of physical journeys in reconstructing identity and restoring a leap of faith and hope through a series of encounters with nature and people.

From a historical point of view, this study pieces together a more layered understanding of travel by placing voluntary and involuntary journeys in conversation rather than opposition. Although both can be categorised as forms of adventure, they function in fundamentally different, even paradoxical, experiential contexts. Moving beyond validating its guiding premise, this research examines Clemantine Wamariya's memoir, a narrative of war and forced displacement, and Cheryl Strayed's memoir, which is a detailed recollection of her hike on the PCT to illuminate the profound hardship and endurance by those for whom travel emerges from necessity, displacement or survival, and to inspire greater empathy, ethical awareness and critical engagement within literary discourse. At the same time, this dissertation calls for an appreciation of freedom and voluntary travel as a privileged act frequently taken for granted. By reading these contrasting trajectories together, the research presents travel as a spectrum of human experience, linking compelled movement to chosen journey.

Relying on the findings of this dissertation, future research can further examine the role of war and displacement in shaping the travel narratives of both victims and explorers by drawing on additional accounts relevant to the themes of mobility and witnessing. Additionally, the exploration of memoirs can help draw a more authentic and credible map of refugees' global suffering across different countries. Comparative studies of several war survivors' narratives could provide a better understanding of 'survivor identity' and how it is viewed by the average person. Exploring the memoirists' stories at the heart of this dissertation, beyond their memoirs by including interviews and talks available on YouTube and Instagram, could offer a different angle to interpreting their experiences years after the events in their narratives. Beyond strengthening their scholarly legitimacy, interdisciplinary research would expand the impact of these narratives by shaping how global audiences interpret and engage with lived mobility.

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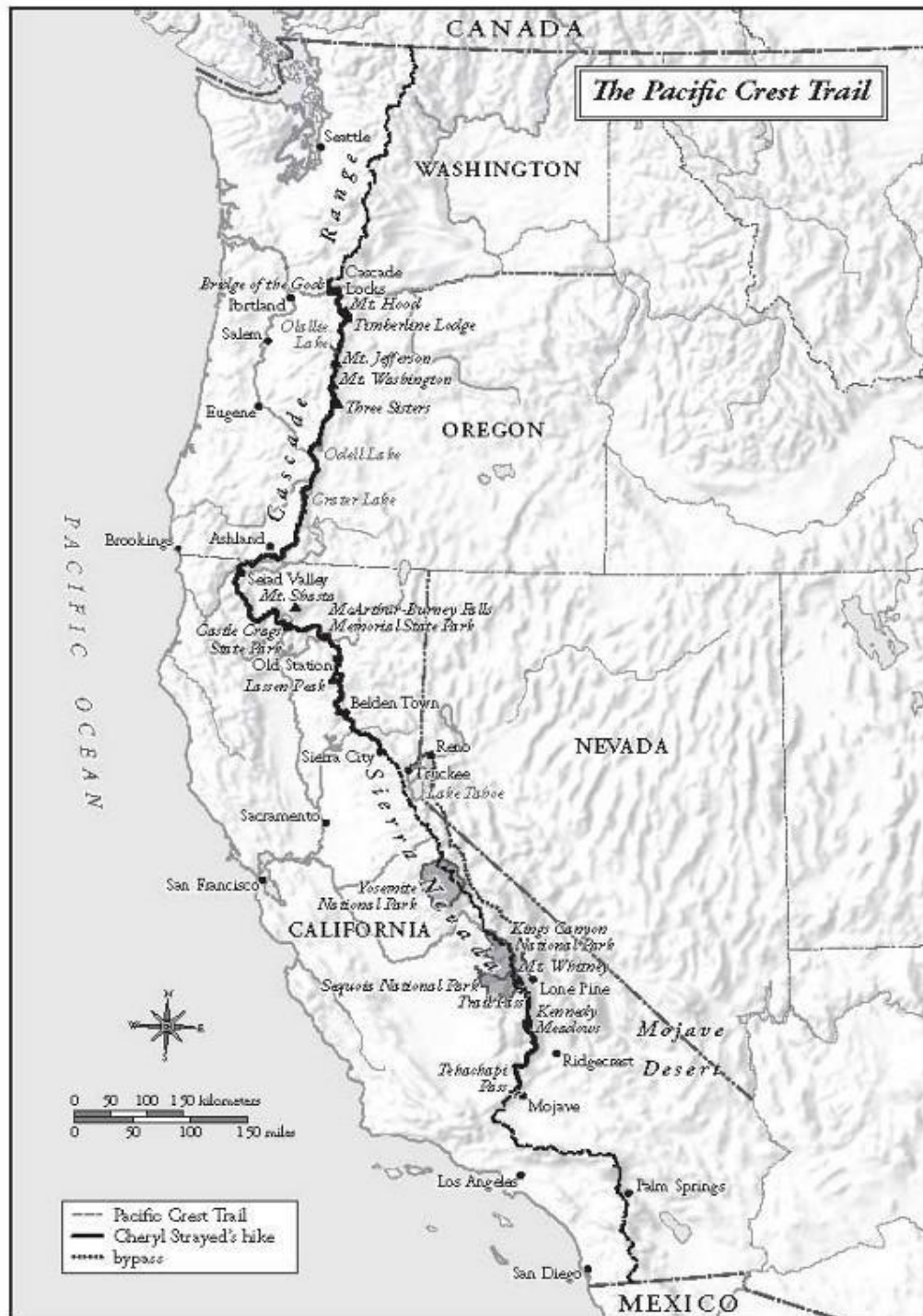
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Appendices

Appendix 1: The map of Clemantine and Claire's travels in Africa (Wamariya 7)



Appendix 2: Cheryl Strayed's hike tracks on the map of the Pacific Crest Trail (Strayed 6)





الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية
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وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعة عين تموشنت بلحاج بوشعيب
كلية الآداب واللغات والعلوم الاجتماعية

التصريح الشرفي

الخاص بالالتزام بقواعد النزاهة العلمية لانجاز بحث علمي
(القرار رقم 1082 المؤرخ في 27 ديسمبر 2020 الذي يحدد القواعد المتعلقة بالوقاية من السرقة العلمية ومكافحتها)

أنا الممضي أسفله،

الطالب (ة): د. رفوف سارة

الحامل (ة) لبطاقة التعريف الوطنية رقم: 405989474 الصادرة في تاريخ: 29.05.2023

كاتبة: بلدية نسيم الداحي ولاية عين تموشنت

والمسجل بكلية الآداب و اللغات و العلوم الاجتماعية

قسم: اللغات

شعبة: لغة إنجليزية تخصص: آداب و حضارة

والمكلف بإنجاز مذكرة تخرج لنيل شهادة ماستر أكاديمي، الموسومة بعنوان:

Travellers' Stories: Lived Mobility, Surrender's Guilt,
and Explorer's Relief in Wamand's The Girl Who Smiled
Beads and Travel's Wild.

أصح بشرفي أن ألتزم بمراعاة المعايير العلمية والمنهجية ومعايير الأخلاقية المهنية والنزاهة الأكاديمية المطلوبة في انجاز مذكرة

الماستر المذكورة أعلاه.

الممضاء على امضاء السيد

د. رفوف سارة

405989474

10/12/2023

شعبة اللغات

عين تموشنت في: 13 جويلية 2026

امضاء المعني



رئيس الجامعة

بلدية شعبية النجم

و بتفويض منه

امضاء: بن دحو مسهرودة
ض، بالحالة امدنية



الترخيص بإيداع مذكرة الماستر

أنا الأستاذ(ة) المشرف(ة):

حسان بن بوشعيب

على مذكرة التخرج في الماستر والموسومة بـ:

Travellers' Stories: Lived Mobility, Survivor's Guilt, and Explorer's
Relief in Kemariya's, the Girl Who Smiles, and Strayed's Kid.

من انجاز الطالب (ين):

DERFOUF Sarah

1

2

ميدان: لغات أجنبية

شعبة: لغة إنجليزية

تخصص: أدب وحضارة

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وبإمكانه(ما) إيداع النسخة الالكترونية المصححة على مستوى المستودع الرقمي لجامعة عين تموشنت.

امضاء رئيس اللجنة

الاسم واللقب

KERMANI ARESMA

امضاء المشرف

الاسم واللقب

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عين تموشنت في: 28 JUIN 2026

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اللغة الإنجليزية

