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Memory and Power: Unreliable Narrator in Ma Jian's *Beijing Coma* and Mo Yan's *The Republic of Wine*

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Abstract

Emerging scholarly work has indicated that we live in times of the 'surveillance state'. Such states control all aspects of life: from the food one eats to the ideas they express in everyday life. The chief concern regarding such surveillance is its attacks on individual bodies and ideas. Ma Jian's Beijing Coma and Mo Yan's The Republic of Wine explore the impact of state imposition on individual psyche. As responses to the Tiananmen Square Massacre (1989), the texts explore how the body remembers the violent incursions committed against it. Individual memory is upheld against the collective. This paper explores how the narrators in the novels present their point of view through their unreliability. As rationality has been singularly claimed as a tool of the powerful, the only imaginable solution is to articulate individual memories through the tool of unreliability.

By highlighting the collectiveness of any crime, the narrators articulate their trauma through their unreliability. The individual body is trampled upon by the combined forces of cultural norms and state control as the entire population is mobilised for slaughter under the guise of ensuring survival (Foucault 137). The unreliable narrators in the novels allegorise the consumption of memory and individuality by the body-politic due to internalisation of existing power structures. They highlight how establishing bodily control paired with sweeping claims to popular memory legitimises the state as the provider of all 'good things.' Playing of the themes of literal bodily hunger through food and bodily waste metaphors, the novels exhibit the yearning for a metaphorical hunger for knowledge and an open society.

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Bellek ve Güç: Ma Jian'ın *Beijing Coma*'sı ile Mo Yan'ın *The Republic of Wine*'ında Güvenilmez Anlatıcı

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Özet

Devam eden bilimsel çalışmalar, son dönemlerde "gözetim altında" yaşadığımızı göstermiştir. Bu gözetim durumu, kişinin yediği yemekten günlük yaşamda ifade ettiği fikirlere kadar yaşamın tüm yönlerini kontrol eder. Bu tür gözetimle ilgili temel endişe, bireysel bedenlere ve fikirlere yönelik saldırılarla ilgilidir. Ma Jian'ın *Beijing Coma* ve Mo Yan'ın *The Republic of Wine* devlet dayatmasının bireysel psikoloji üzerindeki etkisini araştırır. Tiananmen Meydanı Katliamı'na (1989) verilen yanıtlar olarak, metinler vücudun kendisine karşı yapılan şiddetli saldırıları nasıl hatırladığını araştırır. Bireysel hafıza kollektife karşı desteklenir. Bu makale, romanlardaki anlatıcıların bakış açılarını güvenilmezlikleri üzerinden nasıl sunduklarını araştırmaktadır. Akılcılığın tekil olarak güçlülerin bir aracı olduğu iddia edildiğinden, akla gelebilecek tek çözüm, bireysel anıları güvenilmezlik aracıyla dile getirmektir.

Anlatıcılar, herhangi bir suçun kolektifliğini vurgulayarak, travmalarını güvenilmezlikleri üzerinden dile getirirler. Tüm nüfus hayatta kalma kisvesi altında katliam için seferber edilirken, bireysel beden kültürel normların ve devlet kontrolünün birleşik güçleri tarafından çiğnenir (Foucault 137). Romanlardaki güvenilmez anlatıcılar, mevcut iktidar yapılarının içselleştirilmesi nedeniyle beden-politikasının bellek ve bireysellik tüketimini alegorize eder. Popüler hafızaya yönelik kapsamlı iddialarla birlikte bedensel kontrolün kurulmasının, devleti tüm "iyi şeylerin" sağlayıcısı olarak nasıl meşrulaştırdığını vurgularlar. Gerçek bedensel açlık temalarını yemek ve bedensel atık metaforları aracılığıyla ortaya koyan romanlar, bilgi ve açık bir toplum için metaforik bir açlığa duyulan özlemi sergilerler

Introduction:

The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and its suppression mark a watershed moment in contemporary history namely due to the efficiency of the state-enforced silencing that followed. *Beijing Coma* and *The Republic of Wine* were conceived in response to such official erasures and control. The two novels differ in their subject matter; however, they place the unreliable narrator at the center in order to critique the larger political structure.

Beijing Coma is narrated by a singular first-person narrator, marked by temporal and casual disruptions, contradictions in speech, and foreshadowing. The narrative takes place inside the mind of Dai Wei where the readers are aware of his compromised consciousness given his comatose condition indicated by memory lapses and lack of bodily control. His position as a victim paired with non-linear narration infers his view where every event is presented as leading up to the massacre. On the other hand, *The Republic of Wine* has two narrators: "Mo Yan" and Li Yidou; the events unfold in a distorted logical sequence bifurcated into three strands where the narrators are heterodiegetic as well as homodiegetic. The triple narrative structure with its sequential and linguistic disruptions highlights the ambiguity between narrators as well narrative events.

Literature Review:

In the absence of official historiography, a spectator's perception of events are paramount testimonies of violent events. Previous researches have explored the texts as culminating points of earlier political upheavals rather than the implications it had on the postsocialist market economy that followed (Kong; Inge; Yang). Studies on narration have delineated the socio-cultural implications of the use of alimentary metaphors (Yue; Tsai). Others have applied various spatial theories on the texts (Kong). Neither of these researches has focused on the role of the traumatised disjointed narrator in the genre of political fiction. Drawing from James Phelan's concept of bonding unreliability, the paper illustrates how unreliable narration plays a role in characterising political amnesia, instability of political

discourse and the implications and possibilities of subjectivity in the postsocialist nation.

Methodology:

As public discourse is central to all political regimes, the genre of historical fiction has implications on various fields beyond literature. In order to gain a better insight into the relationship between discourse and historical memory, the sources referred to include history books, political theories, psychological theories, literary theories along with previous researches in the area. A special emphasis has been placed on the narrative structure. Given that the sole focus of the study has been the translated versions of the texts, the sources have been limited to English excluding the body of untranslated work written in Mandarin Chinese.

Lack of Historical and Political Awareness:

Historical memory shapes how one perceives current political scenarios. Control over the historical narrative in dominant discourse often aligns with the regime's interests rather than unbiased historiography expected in free societies. While in *Beijing Coma*, the narrative draws a lengthy connection of how historical memory influences the change in behaviours among characters, *The Republic of Wine* explores how such thought control leads to public silencing. As political activist Ai Weiwei argues, memory forms the basis of an individual's humanity: the state denies the citizens their identities by forcing them to conform to their version of history. Against the larger political apparatus that employs violent intimidation and political education campaigns to obliterate mentions of their crimes in public memory, the authors employ the disjointed unreliable narrators as a means of resisting amnesia.

In *Beijing Coma,* the narrator Dai Wei's comatose condition automatically places him outside public discourse. As he lies immobile on his bed, he has the freedom to travel through his memories that those around him do not have (644). Moreover, the narrator himself recognises that his condition has rendered him immune to the brainwashing that others succumb to as he concludes that his condition is a "protective cloak" that allows him the freedom to remember (586). Public silencing manifests in the narrative as Dai Wei's neighbours who had

initially supported the protests turn against him after the crackdown along with his friend's complaint about being treated as a "leper" by his colleagues on admitting that he was a part of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests (98). As Perry Link argues, self-censorship can only be induced through the threat of violence: it is not that the people have forgotten the Tiananmen Square Massacre; instead, their sense of self-preservation has led to a nationwide amnesia (6-8). Parallelising it with Jiang Zemin's insistence that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is "the firmest, the most thoroughgoing patriot" in his speech at the 6th Plenary Session (Wang 169) places the complete control of public narratives within the hands of the Party. Dai Wei argues the history of such continuing brutality has forced the Chinese people to adapt to such silencing as a "survival skill developed over the millennia" (557). The unreliable narrator acts as the medium to highlight public silencing as his compromised consciousness enables him to realise that emerging materialism has replaced the demand for political reform.

The Republic of Wine exhibits the two-fold relationship between consumption and social structures: exotic foods provided by the lower classes are consumed by the elite while in turn the political narrative set by the elite is consumed by the lower classes. Two events in the course of the narrative highlight this: Ding Gou'er's comment about "the plump, fair-skinned toddler" for consumption results in "a look of dejection" on the lowly gate-keeper's face in the omniscient third-person narration (11) while Li Yidou's question to a woman asking if she plans on selling her babies to the Gourmet Section leads her to mutter her disdain for "cannibalistic beasts" in Li Yidou's intradiegetic narrative (219). As Gang Yue argues, the "unwritten rules" of consumption delineate the society's relation to its institutions. The discourse on food has larger political implications rooted in social and historical discourses; he traces the use of alimentary metaphors in Daoist literature, namely in order to normalise pacifism as a socially acceptable response to political turmoil (30-46). This manifests in the present narrative as the characters from lower classes offer no alternate possibilities of resistance against the cannibalistic power structures. The narrative tone is eerily matter-of-fact and the readers are conscious of the unreliability of both narrators; the unreliable narrators

while critiquing the larger power structure also underhandedly (through their elite positions) reflect their biases as they ultimately argue in favour of maintaining the larger power structure. In other words, by blaming others for not standing up to power, the narrators extricate themselves from their political responsibilities. To a degree, the readers fail to realise that the biases reflected in the text are also the narrator's own: the narrator is not a mere spectator but situated at the top of the power structure. Here, the satire rises from the voluntary relinquishment of the opportunity to catalyse change.

The manipulation of memory in the two novels is also a result of the political education campaigns of the past. At the beginning of the narrative, Dai Wei resents his father as he longs to free himself of his label of 'son of a capitalist dog'. It is only much later when he reads his father's journal that he learns about the violent history of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution along with his skirmishes with the police in his youth. This enables him to recognise the gaps in public memory: the protestors holding pictures of Mao and hailing the revolution as the State closes upon them or their ignorance about the past of Deng Xiaoping's repressive tendencies. At another point, Dai Wei declares that his generation "had little understanding of Chinese history" (307). As Fang Lizhi argues, the CCP rules through the "Technique of Forgetting History." Until the very end, the protestors ridicule the idea that the regime may order a violent crackdown. The unreliable narrator presents the bewilderment and indignation of the people in the moment of the massacre despite himself being conscious of the possibility of a violent crackdown throughout the protests.

On the other hand, Mo Yan speaks through his silences: his position as a mainland Chinese writer forces him to carefully navigate through state censorship. In his Nobel Lecture, Mo Yan claims that his politics makes itself known in his works: in *The Republic of Wine,* gourmet history (from the invention of liquor to the butchering of donkeys) is traced back to prehistoric dynasties, but it carefully leaves out the events of the past half-century of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Gourmandism is employed as an allegory for political commentary by the narrators. The lack of political history combined with the gap of the PRC

years in the other histories emerges as a stealthy commentary on the lack of historical awareness about the present regime. Moreover, Diamond Jin, the chief cannibal in Liquorland weaponises stories of his deprivation during the Great Leap Forward (although he does not explicitly name the famine) through the sympathetic narration of Li Yidou; this event is an allegory for the elite's monopolisation of historical narratives in order to serve their own ends. Diamond Jin's journey from that of a starving child to a cannibal also symbolises the insignificance of morality: it implies that the poor do not overindulge because they cannot afford to do so instead of their inherent moral beliefs hinting at the breakdown of binaries. Li Yidou's admiration of Diamond Jin hinders "Mo Yan" (the other narrator to whom Li Yidou's stories are addressed) from typecasting him as a corrupt cannibal; this ignorance ultimately leads to "Mo Yan's" death. Through these gaps, the narrator influences the perception of history and leaders; by claiming their insignificance in the larger political framework, the novel critiques the lack of historical and political awareness among state subjects.

Instability of accepted political discourse:

The novels are set against the changing political landscape of the PRC in the last decade of the twentieth century. With the advent of economic reforms, the political narrative changed from Mao's "Never Forget Class Struggle" (Dikotter 18) to Deng Xiaoping's famous remark "To get rich is glorious" (Wang 234). To assert their political legitimacy in the post socialist nation, the state must ensure that the larger narrative is in accordance with their policies; as it does so, it invokes the same violent language of the earlier Mao era. Within the novels, this manifests in the general anxiety of being accused as 'counterrevolutionary'. Through the shifts in structures and temporal and spatial disruptions, the unreliable narrator critiques the instability of accepted ideas in political discourse.

Complete control over public discourse enables the state to erase any mention of their crimes. In *Beijing Coma*, this results in disillusionment regarding the state's repressive capabilities. The unreliable narrator is equipped to highlight this split given the use of narrative

analepsis. The insistence by multiple characters that the government will not resort to violence is contrasted with descriptions of various crackdowns: Donsheng's wife being forced to undergo abortion despite the law forbidding "the officers to use force" (61), the claim that "a person's portrait" cannot be regarded as the "symbol of the nation" and would not extract heavy punishment at the incident of ink being thrown on Mao's portrait followed by the mention of the decades of imprisonment the ink-throwers suffered due to that act (419) along with the repeated insistence that the CCP cannot launch a crackdown against the protestors contrasted with the image of Dai Wei realising that protestors singing "the national anthem beneath the national flag" had not hindered the one-party state from murdering them in the past (648). Ma's novel stands as a testimony that global capital has not annihilated the possibility of authoritarian violence (Kong 273-4). This highlights the importance of memory and the role of the archive: had there been an awareness among the citizens about the Party's past actions, they would not have been disillusioned to believe in their own bodily autonomy. State biopower refashions itself to maintain control despite transforming political structures (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 136). In the present novel, the transformation is from socialist to capitalist. The breakdown of historical subjectivity highlights this split as the narrator largely remains outside public discourse.

The Republic of Wine demonstrates how official language is used to rationalise human rights violations. Political language is endowed with "an intrinsic instrumental value" which allows it "to codify" and "convey" the state's ideology (Marinelli 26). State policies are upheld to mask their crimes, viz. "the nationwide craze over getting rich" (139), "the four modernizations and the constant upping of people's living standards" (220) and "the era of reforms and liberalization" are used to justify cannibalism and overindulgence (315). The general obscurity or unsound claims made by the unreliable narrator pits itself against this discourse that boasts of being rational but is truly unreasonable, if not violent. Ultimately, it highlights how power exploits officially sanctioned language to maintain its political legitimacy.

Beijing Coma highlights how state power creates binaries and fully retains the authority to classify an individual as either of the binaries, situating itself as the political phallus. Thinking back to cannibalism during the Guangxi Cultural Revolution Massacre, Dai Wei concludes that the Party had "told" the perpetrators that, "'If you do not eat the enemy, you are the enemy" (290). Relating it with Ma Jian's claim that "there are only two options open to people: either to be a slave, or to be an outcast" (qtd in Tonkin) as well as Jiang Zemin's division of the mainland Chinese population into the "ardent patriots" and the "scum of a nation" in his speech at the 6th Plenary session of the Fourteenth CCP National Congress in October 1996 (Wang 170) is in accordance with Dai Wei's conclusion. The narrator demonstrates how by drawing binaries but keeping the exact rules of such divisions vague the state retains the full authority to classify people as either according to their convenience: when matters come to a head the government denounces the student movement as "a planned conspiracy to overthrow the government" in the state newspaper (236). Paired with the mother's repeated pleas of reading the newspapers to keep up with this changing political climate, the narrative recognises the inherent power vested in the state. The unreliable narrator outlines how such confrontational language forces the citizenry to pick sides crushing any possibilities of resistance.

On the other hand, *The Republic of Wine* explores the internalisation of power structures. Ding Gou'er is forced to perform actions that lead him to his doom while being fully conscious that his actions are self-destructive: the split in his identity makes such contradictions seem natural. He overindulges despite being unsure in order to avoid the label of "traitor" or being accused of being "counter-revolutionary" (245, 304). These events demonstrate the point where "power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself" into their most mundane daily events (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 39). On the surface level, one expects such irrational behaviour from the narrator but through the use of over-exaggeration and ridiculousness, the narrator draws alarming parallels between the unsound narrator and the larger seemingly rational population. In other words, when faced with the

possibility of danger every character chooses to conform either due to conditioning or as a deliberate choice: the target of satire is not the failure of well-organised resistance but the overall lack of resistance.

The novels demonstrate how the all-pervading political discourse in conflict with the individual's political inclinations creates a split within the protagonists; they vacillate between who they are and who are they expected to be. The italicised narration in *Beijing Coma* where the narrator talks about himself in second-person represents this literal split. On the allegorical level, this is demonstrated by Dai Wei's surviving friends ultimately abandoning their democratic aspirations for capitalistic gains. Interestingly, Dai Wei too has realised that public discourse has shifted and expresses that if given a second chance, he too would pursue personal interests and try to lead "a happy life" (375). The joint forces of the market economy and state apparatus unite to dismantle any alternate possibilities, viz. capitalism values simplicity which is achieved through a thorough depoliticisation of the population (Zhang 406-7). Despite existing outside public discourse, this split within the protagonist indicates the extent of the state's reach to the deepest corners of an individual's consciousness.

In *The Republic of Wine,* the lack of clear demarcations between the omniscient third-person narrator detailing "Mo Yan's" fictional novel and the real events narrated by Mo Yan in first-person interspersed with the use of first-person pronouns rather than third-person ones and vice versa highlight this split on the literary level. Furthermore, within the "fictional" narrative of Ding Gou'er, he is constantly in conflict between his desire to overindulge and his duty as a Party official: this conflict is marked by lack of bodily control where his body and consciousness file for "for divorce" and move in "opposite directions" (49, 52). The split between the real and symbolic self is reduces the so-called hero to a mere "accessory to the crime" where Ding Gou'er "never functions as he should" (Yang 213). It marks the journey from lack of resistance towards participation. Eventually, this split within becomes apparent to the extent that it cannot be concealed as it leads to the narrator's doom. In other words, Ding Gou'er is conscious of the gravity of his role as an official investigator but is easily tempted to

indulge in gourmet temptations.

Subjectivity as a tool against collective power:

By placing itself at the center of public discourse the state asserts its monopoly over rationality. Understanding its inadequacy at countering "truths" the narrative voice employs irrationality. This is heightened through descriptions of its own inadequacies and self-mockery: to distinguish itself from the state which presents the dominant political narrative as historical truth, the narrative voice emphasises that the truth of the narrative is not historical truth (Inge 502). In other words, although it highlights the irrationality of public discourse, it scoffs at the very idea that rational discourse is possible in such tumultuous times. By doing so, it rejects the notion of national unity and objectivity.

The narrative subject in *Beijing Coma* is defined by its sweeping estrangement: not only at the discourse level but Dai Wei also lies outside his consciousness. His trauma, which lies outside conscious perception, is an allegory for the nation in a schizoid condition. In order to cope with traumatic assault on the consciousness, the self repeatedly expresses disbelief at the events unfolding in real time, which later results in a permanent split between the self and the other (Liang 78-93). As a result, trauma is defined by the incomprehensibility of the event as a shield against its wide-ranging onslaught on individual consciousness (Caruth 152-3). At the moment of the massacre, Dai Wei repeatedly articulates his disbelief along with the temporal shifts that articulate the incomprehensibility of trauma. To put it simply, his trauma, even within the safe confines of his mind, due to its deformative impact on his consciousness, never finds full articulation. Such narrative is at once personal and unreliable.

Yun- Chu Tsai argues that the narrative of cannibalism in *The Republic of Wine* represents the deconstruction of Ding Gou'er's individuality as well as his position as the writing subject to the written object. Furthering this argument, the change in pronoun usage from third-person to first-person represents a schizoid state along with highlighting the subject's inadequacies. In other words, although such disentanglement is an obvious effect of

trauma, Mo Yan simplifies it to present it as the subject's inadequacies. Such representation of trauma resists state censorship. The narrators in the novels trivialise themselves in the larger discourse as their traumatic renderings are disregarded as disjointed ramblings. As a result, it exhibits the ability to breach and subvert the master discourse. It presents itself as posing no threats to the status quo but in actuality, it exhibits the ability to breach and subvert official history and discourse or what may be referred to as "the abruptive, evocative intrusion into history" (Yang 53). The subject's disjointedness then, becomes the tool to enable multiplicity of narratives against the master discourse.

The fast-paced economic liberalisation and the rise in living standards are central to the regime's political legitimacy. Furthering Belinda Kong's analysis of the pre-massacre years in *Beijing Coma* as the assertion of the Foucault's biopower, the post-massacre years are a testimony of this continuing regime of biopower. The discourse of life (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 135-43) is Deng's narrative of economic liberalisation in the 1990s in the text. This is demonstrated through two events: Dai Wei's kidney being harvested and the sale of his urine as a magic tonic to meet medical expenses. However, the split in the narration highlights this biopolitical control: the executed prisoner's organs have evolved to Dai Wei's illegal kidney harvestation given the fast-paced capitalism in the 1990s. Dr Huang's utilitarian outlook that it would be a "waste" to not make use of the executed prisoners organs (despite it being against medical ethics) takes a sinister humorous turn with the sale of Dai Wei's literal bodily waste. Here, the obvious repeated bodily invasion of the individual is mollified by biocapitalistic discourse. Moreover, the use of words like "prison" and a "trap...with no escape routes" for Dai Wei's body as well as public spaces and the nation, further highlight this breach into the body (553, 582, 303, 406). Here, the capitalistic narrative of economic freedom becomes both the cause as well as the effect of the state's far-reaching control, highlighting the lack of bodily autonomy within the population.

On the other hand, the narrative voice of Ding Gou'er is easily swayed by political language. As established earlier, Ding Gou'er is forced to overindulge in order to prove his

patriotism. In all instances, his drunkenness proves destructive as he loses bodily control: it turns him from an upstanding Party official to just another participant in the crimes around him. He is conscious of this predicament as he thinks to himself that drinking might hinder him from carrying out his investigation. He has internalised the obvious self-destructive discourse; this represents the point where power exercises itself from within the social body rather than from above it (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 39). Ding Gou'er is equally the victim and the victimiser: his lack of bodily control which ultimately results in his doom is at once voluntary yet forced.

Suspended in the changing political landscape, the narrators in the present texts are themselves confused; this leads to moral ambiguity within where the narrator is both the self-deceived and self-deceiving (Booth 342-4). The unreliable narrators are both at once hyper-aware yet detached from their surroundings due to their trauma. Ironically, while Dai Wei returns to his father's experiences in the reform-through-labour camps, he is unable to identify how his economic obsessions allow the government to shirk responsibility. Similarly, he is too preoccupied with his grievances against the government that the much larger massacre in Lhasa is merely skimmed over. Here, he fails to realise how his position as a young adult in the era of economic reforms as well as his Han Chinese identity contribute to the oppression around him. As a defense mechanism, the narrator purposely ignores the possibility of barbarity within himself.

On the other hand, the lack of self-awareness manifests in Ding Gou'er narrative as he associates children with gourmand consumption: his morally superior air breaks down when a close reading of his ramblings prove that Ding Gou'er desires their flesh. The omniscient narrator "Mo Yan" insists Ding Gou'er was tricked into consuming braised babies. However, Ding Gou'er is a participant in the same cannibalistic society where flesh has been normalised to meat (Yue 266-74). Just as the unreliable narrator highlights how negation evolves into participation on the individual level, it marks how on the national level, the desire for change has degraded to consumerist desires.

The characters in the novels are complicit in the events that unfold. As Gang Yue argues through the Bakhtinian notion of carnivalesque, in the postsocialist nation, the people have become a tool in the service of cultural nationalism where exaggeration has reduced the individual to a piece of meat (282-7). Unreliable narration represents the window through which Bakhtin's "grotesque realism" has evolved into Mo Yan's "demonic realism" and Ma Jian's "comatose crowds." While discussing cannibalism during the Guangxi Cultural Revolution Massacre, Dai Wei asks who the cannibals were to which Dr Song replies,

> "You could argue that the only real murderer was Chairman Mao, But the fact is, everyone was involved…You ask me who the murderers were. The answer is everyone! Our neighbours, our friends across the street." (63)

This is an image Dai Wei will return to after the massacre as he elaborates how his friends and family had turned against him. Analepsis allows the narrator to shift through two separate events and connect them. The connection he is not able to draw at the moment is made possible in his hyper-aware mental state later. Similarly, having tricked Ding Gou'er into consuming the braised baby, Diamond Jin asserts, "[i]f we are cannibalistic beasts, then you are too" (172). At another point, although he has never consumed human meat, Li Yidou wonders if he is a "cannibalistic beast" too (219). The binary has been merged and there is a sense of half awareness of their complicity within the citizenry. The narrators represent the futility of the individual's fight against such state-sponsored objectification. The unreliable narration functions to highlight their abjection to the point that their ultimate merger into the collective is the only foreseeable end: it demarcates the merging of the binaries of the state and the people.

Conclusion:

Placing novels set in a contemporary rising Asian economy at the center, the paper explores the possibilities of democratisation processes in Third World nations and the hindrances it faces, namely in the form of political discourses enabled by the political elite.

Mainstream neoliberal voices grounded in developed western countries emphasise the

importance of reason and patience to counter state-sponsored narratives. By using unreliable narration, the authors raise issues about the feasibility of so-called "rationality" against the postsocialist cannibalistic state. Such narration also carefully mingles the social, cultural and political to further highlight the misplaced idea of the political and personal as separate entities. The body remembers even when all the forces around it have turned into amnesiac subjects serving the elite. In popular discourses, the glitz of industrial cities has camouflaged the structural violence that underlies it. As against this, unreliable narration explores how the political elite has ravished individual mentality and lead to the breakdown of the psyche. Such disjointed subjectivity emerges as the tool to critique public amnesia, political discourses and the relationship between the individual and the state.

Further researches can be conducted in areas of physicality and public spaces and disabilities as seen in the novels.

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