

Echoes of Chaos in Jerry Pinto's *Em and the Big Hoom*

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Abstract

Chaos narratives depict the absence of a narrative order in the text and an adherence to all the features of an 'anti-narrative'. The study brings to focus the ways through which the author imparts the chaos in the narrative, both by using words and non-verbal methods. The paper explores the world of a family, marred by the trauma and chaos of an illness, in the novel, *Em and the Big Hoom* (2012) written by Jerry Pinto with cross references to the concept of chaos narratives described by Arthur W Frank in his work, *The Wounded Storyteller* (1995). Frank's description of the chaos narrative ascertains its feature of non-communicability of the constant conflict raging inside the patient's head. *Em and the Big Hoom* re-counts the happenings in a family, taking a sudden turn, after the mother (Em) gets diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. The incidence of silences along with the elisions of communication is a pathway to the expression and recognition of chaos, both interior and exterior. The narrative articulates the chaos of life through the gaps in communication. The narrator becomes the observer of the story from a 'distance' that helps him gain a reflective grasp over the 'lived chaos' of his life. As illustrated by Frank, the trauma and chaos in the narrative unfurl through the daily events of the household when mediation through speech is barely possible. The story weaves around the four lives, stringing the plot by silences and voices of madness, as it attempts to put together a tale of love, trauma, illness and chaos. The paper studies the concept of chaos and its aid in analyzing an illness narrative as narratives depicting a clear picture of illness-induced trauma and its interventions in the daily life of people.

Keywords: Chaos narratives; restoration narratives; lived chaos; mute illness; chaotic body

Introduction

Let chaos storm!

Let cloud shapes swarm!

I wait for form.

(Frost, 1936)

Robert Frost's lines about constantly waiting for an order or a sequence in life resonates all human voices in general. The search for a stable ground and the need for an assurance of a unidirectional occurrence of happenings is a constant desire present in all phases of the human life. However, sometimes with an unexpected twist, like the onset of a disease, the events take an upturn. The unrest grows into chaos both internally and externally in the ill people as well as families. The chaos reigns

thereafter, with no hopes of recovery and no ways to climb out of it. Hence, a chaos narrative always flows through the bumps and borders of bedlam and carries with it, no promise of a 'happily ever after.'

The paper explores in detail Jerry Pinto's *Em and the Big Hoom* as a chaos narrative with cross references to the concept of chaos narratives dealt by Arthur Frank in his work, *The Wounded Storyteller*. The novel, *Em and the Big Hoom*, narrates the story of a family, consisting of the father, Big Hoom, the mother Em, their daughter Susan, and the brother, the unnamed narrator of the story. The plot navigates through the sudden turn of life for the members of the family once their mother gets diagnosed with the bi-polar disorder. The family tries to battle it out by staying together and devising solutions each time their mother drowns into the shocks of the

illness, with no results. The narrator of the story, Em's son, is the observer of the mother and her trauma as she battles with the deadly effects of depression and a violent bipolar.

Theoretical Framework

Frank's Typology of Illness Narratives

Arthur Frank in his work, *The Wounded Storyteller*, describes the narrative experience of an illness right from the time of diagnosis to the process of recovery enclosed in three types. The first is a restitution narrative which views the illness as a curable experience and a challenging phase and ends happily. The quest narrative, the second one, lifts up the storyteller to a powerful stance wherein, he is seen to conquer the illness and its physiological characteristics and transform them to his own strengths. The third one is the chaos narrative which he defines, thus,

'An anti-narrative of time without sequence, telling without mediation and speaking about oneself without being fully able to reflect one oneself.' (Frank, 1995, p. 98)

Arthur Frank, in his work, *The Wounded Storyteller* defines chaos narratives, thus. Chaos narratives talk about the absence of narrative order which is one of the reasons it does not get classified as a proper story. The narrative follows a non-linear pattern, transpiring from the narration as well as through the references to events in dialogues along with a non-parallel rendering through Em's diary entries. The diary entries serve as details to certain already known events. This occupies a huge significance in the story as the details provide the code to crack the reason behind the intense commotion ensuing each time Em had her emotional outbreaks. One of the major features of chaos narratives is the focus on the progress and professionalism of life alongside the remedy for the different challenges faced, undergoes a sudden shift due to the advent of a crisis, in this case, a health crisis. The shift then explicates through the various events in the story, the vulnerability, futility and impotence of existence as a whole.

Colleen Donnelly, in the article, '*Refusing to be Silenced: Claiming Chaos Narrative*' (2021), examines how Frank has described chaos as something that remains erased in a narrative as it is mainly communicated through silences and

'mute' gaps in conversations. The unspoken words and the unwritten expressions of emotions give the narrative a disorderly progress. It is due this that it had been initially rejected as the elisions were viewed as ambiguities. The chaos fuming up from the entire illness circumstance allows only an external agent to observe the events with clarity and transmit the effect through the ebb and flow of the narrative.

Chaos narratives requires to be read and analyzed in order to fill the gaps in the story. With greater emphasis put on the concept of mental health and the exploration of the studies of trauma and its effects, the medical field is introducing a lot of new disciplines like, narrative medicine, narrative therapy, medical humanities and others with the objective of focusing on the patient's mental health along with the physical and biological. Hence, these narratives help in depicting a clear picture of illness-induced trauma and its interventions in the daily life of people. Em and her family wade through an immensely chaotic atmosphere after their entire course of life has been changed by an illness.

The reference to Augustine and Imelda as the Big Hoom and Em simply conveys their attachment and affection to their parents in between the turbulence of the distressful disease infecting the whole family. These names try to fill the fissures made between the members of the house by the disruptions of the bouts of illness. Em is diagnosed with the depression combined with bi-polar, quite early during the childhood of the narrator. Em's life bears no clear cues on the cause of the disease. Once the symptoms and the petrifying effects of the disorder emerges in full swing, it becomes hard to ignore. Pinto vividly outlines the vicissitudes of the situation and the crisis that breaks out every time Em explodes. Each time it is a different circumstance and hence the ways adopted are also never repetitive. A research article written by Brenden McCormack, Anna Illman, John Culling, Alison Ryan, Suzanne O'Neil, uses the theory developed by Frank 'to shape the interpretations of the processes or outcomes of the combined narrative journey of the facilitators and the participants.' The paper titled, 'Removing the chaos from the narrative: Preparing clinical leaders for practice development' relates the comprehension of

chaos, in different narratives to the methods in which it can be done, thereby giving it a theoretical base.

The impact of restoration narratives includes the persistence of hope and positivity even if the happenings instill a temporary dread. These tales account for promise of happiness at the end of the description and the general poetic justice of finding a light at the end of the tunnel. However, the chaos narratives set an example to the overtly opposite side of this with its 'never getting better' situations and the movement of the story in a circle with no ends to it. It serves to emphasize on the problem and the intensity of it more than the solution. Every sensitive outburst that Em goes through, appears to deepen the chaos that the father and the children are already plunged into. Nothing seems to offer more than a temporary relief to the persisting problem which sees no end to it. There is an excerpt in the novel, where the narrator lists down his major fears. The possibility of being happy at his mother's death scares him. This reflects on the mental trauma the narrator and his sister go through with the occurrence of the disease and the painful reminders projecting the chaotic side of illness.

Literature Review

While examining the existing readings and analysis of the Pinto's work, Srikanth Mallavarapu (2018), in his chapter *Resistance, Suffering and Psychiatric Disability in Jerry Pinto's Em and the Big Hoom and Amandeep Sandhu's Sepia Leaves*, in the book, *Literatures of Madness*, explores the concept of mental disability in the Indian context along with the issues revolving around the lives of the caregivers, families and the close associates of the patients. This has been examined with close reference of the model of resistance and suffering by Arthur Kleinman. Mallavarapu writes about the evident transitions that can be visualized by listening and acknowledging the humanity of people, suffering from a disability or mental illness and the like.

Mathew John M along with K Balakrishnan, in their article titled, *Jerry Pinto's Em and the Big Hoom; Heteronormativity and The Text of Madness*, dealt with the concept of gender roles, adherence to norms and behavior patterns along with cultural aspects in the novel. The notion of

motherhood and its upturn in the novel has been explored in detail.

Smitha Lamiya Rasquinha succeeds in giving out a comprehensive review about the story highlighting the major instance and their significance from the perspective of a medical professional. The article, *Em and the Big Hoom: A Psychiatrist's Perspective*, describes a take on the narrative's flow through a disease.

Brett Smith and Andrew Sparkes has done a comprehensive analysis on the narrative responses to a chaos narrative by a disabled person. *Their Exploring Multiple Responses to a Chaos Narrative* (2011) specifies on the potentials and limitations of the different narratives and the further possibilities of narrative research.

The studies done by Amy Chandler (2014) puts forth the how illness narratives are used for exploring the experiences of a disease. Frank's types of illness narratives, quest, restitution and chaos and the incidence of self-injury has been dealt with in detail in her article, *Narrating the self-injured body* (2014). The article, *Chaos Narrative and Experientiality in the Graphic Memoir: The Case of Thomas H Nohr's Cirkus* does 'a revisitation of Frank's notion of chaos narrative; supplements it with tell-ability combined with Monica Fludenick and Daniel Herman's post classical narratological approaches. Chaos narrative has been defined as a narrative that foregrounds experientiality. Though Frank argues that chaos to a certain extent cannot be represented, the article attempts to prove that literature can mimic the chaos using the Danish cartoonist Thomas Nohr's graphic memoir entitled Cirkus.

While Katie Ellis speaks about her personal experience with illness and the exploration of the disease along with recovery to bring to focus, the importance of narrative throughout the phase, she too quotes Frank when it comes to the typology of illness narratives. The existing volume of literature on the subject talks about the various characteristics of chaos narratives and how the features of an illness are portrayed in the different works of art. The novel, *Em and the Big Hoom* has been analyzed and read on many levels, as an illness narrative and as a psychological portrayal of the phase of an individual affected by mental illness. However, the interpretation and analysis of the novel, *Em*

and the Big Hoom as a narrative of chaos, using the effects of silence and wordless communications to express the trauma of illness, remains absent. Hence, this study focuses on a comprehensive analysis of Pinto's novel with cross references to the concept of chaos and its mediation through silences and well as gaps in communication. Pinto's narrative lightens up the unexplainable ding holes of a diseased person's life combined with the struggle of those around him or her while they try to comprehend the situation and hold everything together. An understanding of the chaos narratives put forth by Arthur Frank in *The Wounded Storyteller* aids in interpreting the text as a narrative of trauma and chaos.

Discussion

Dismantling the Narrative

A chaos narrative poses the greatest challenge in 'being told.' Arthur Frank states in his work, *The Wounded Storyteller*, that a person who is living in chaos cannot possibly narrate it. The narration of chaos would require the person to move away and locate himself at the safe distance to obtain a reflective grasp over the chaotic narrative. Here the narrator of the story is at a sufficient distance from the affected person to narrate the happenings, while he is close enough to describe the effects subjectively.

'Was this it? Was this the break? She didn't seem to remember much about that crossing except how she used orange sweets to quell her nausea and began menstruating on board the ship. Was this just how people remembered things, in patches and images, or was this the repression of a painful memory?' (Pinto, 2014, p. 25).

This is one of the instances the narrator tries to locate in vain, the beginning of Em's bouts of disorder. However, he never gets a clarity in the matter and he is left going back and forth among the details already known and repeatedly occurring. Even his long association with Em, does not provide him with a particular cause or help to get to the roots of it for any possible solution. The story expresses the soreness of the wound while the words fail to express the insults, agonies and losses that comes with the manifestation of the wound.

The Holocaust stories were a group of the earliest chaos narratives considered by Frank in his study. He perceives in them, a hole that cannot be filled. Here, in the narrative, Em's illness leaves a gaping hollow amidst the family with its pronounced and abysmal effects one of its members. This gap is never filled even after Em's death, as the space occupied by a person cannot be replaced or filled in her physical absence.

'Then, as now, I loved a happy ending. And at least this little bit of Em's story had a happy ending.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 27)

Chaos is suggestive of the troubles; narratives dealing with the chaos illustrate the troubles that seep into bottomless depths. Hence, there is no assurance of a happy ending advocated by these narratives. Em and (Pinto, 2014) (Pinto, 2014) the *Big Hoom* too ends in the death of Em, far removed from anything accounts for happiness in their family. It suggests a sluggish progress in the journey of life and also that sometimes all questions of existence receive no definite answer.

We didn't say much. We weren't allowed. We held our peace and tried to work with what we'd been given. We tried to reassure ourselves that honesty was the best policy in the long run and that we would be glad, eventually, that we knew what Em thought. (Pinto, 2014, p. 84)

When the mediation of traumatic events is considered, speech tends to satisfy the listener and the speaker only up to a limited degree. This is due to the fact that mostly, the speaker faces a situation where he is imprisoned by frustration. The sick person becomes an embodiment of lived chaos with only immediacy to hold onto. Every second, the transition in the mother's mood is the indicator of the impending chaos in the house. The immediacy of the situation, prompting them to ring the doctor or their dad remains the only constant in their lives. Em tries to kill herself two times. The two unsuccessful but scary attempts put the narrator and Susan in a whirlpool of trauma, sketched vividly by the narrator in the lines;

Susan went for the nurse, but she, wily lady, had taken one look over our shoulders and vanished into the still-warm afternoon. Susan called the *Big Hoom*. I heard her in some other way, not the normal way you hear things. It was thin and distant but it was also clear. I can still hear it if I

try. But I don't. Em was leaning against the wall next to the bathroom door and shivering. I guided her to the low metal stool and she sat down. Her arms dangled between her knees. I pivked up one of her arms and turned it over to look. The cut was a single line, dark red. It said nothing. (Pinto, 2014, p. 15)

The fragmentation of speech is an outcome of the fragmentation of the family structure and eventually, the psyche of the narrator, Susan and their father, the Big Hoom. The conventional family standards stand broken and seems beyond any fixation. The fissures are present inside the minds of the members more than on the outward behavior. Ironically, in the end it is Em's death that brings them closer and wholesome to each other as a family. They are bonded by the grief shed on them by their mother. It has been manifested in the following lines. 'This was one of my ways of diving up the world. My mother: incapable. My father: capable. My mother's mind belonged to the humanities. My father was an engineer.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 60)

'Or was writing a manifestation of the condition? It often seemed like it was, the letters growing larger and larger until there was barely a word or two on a page. If we had cared to, we could have mapped her mania against her font size.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 33)

The narrator clearly notices the absence of events as well as incapability of expressing her emotions in her writing while reading the diary entries of Em. Mostly, the trauma is carried through silence and repetitions habituating their speech. The first and the foremost challenge existing in the narration of chaos is not only verbal narration but also the hearing of the story. Hearing becomes tough due to different reasons. The signs of trauma must be recognized from the edges of the speech and the interpretation of silence through which speech cannot penetrate. The narration generally encompasses an incomplete description with gaps ending in an ultimate muteness. The narrations of Em and the Big Hoom about the same events reflect the difference in the speech capacities.

Metaphors of Illness

'It's like oil. Like molasses, slow at first. Then one morning I woke up and it was flowing free and fast. I thought I would drown in it. I thought it would drown little you, and Susan. So I got up

and got dressed and went out onto the road and tried to jump in front of a bus. I thought it would be a final thing, quick, like a bang. Only, it wasn't.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 13)

One of the major transitions observed in the life of the ill person is their absolute difficulty in sliding into a phase marked by purposelessness. Their distress and suffocation mingled with panic gets interspersed with the illness outbreaks and trauma resulting in chaos. The excerpt above depicts the first instances of conversations between Em and her son, the narrator, about her initial suicide attempt. She employs different metaphors to try and ease her speech as well as provide a proper mediation to the listener. However, the last lines suggest all that she wished for was a quick end.

'Nobody knows what I am going through. What I suffer only I know.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 51)

This is one of the hardest truths faced by the patient as well as the people surrounding the patient. How much ever they try, they are unable to transfer all the emotions they experience at the time of each crisis. Words fail to help them in the innumerable instances and they break down. This makes the family or an acquaintance of the person around him or her, feel helpless as they seem to be helpless in handling the situation. Em tries to help herself once it transpires her family is incapable of finding her peace. The unpredictability of the disease adds to the fundamental contingency, in general of life as such. Most of the time, it is the persistent uncertainty in life that weakens the ill. Em firmly tells her family, especially her children, on a lot of occasions to abandon her and take care of themselves. This reveals her inner desire to get the children out of the chaos created by her. The teller situated inside the chaos, mostly the diseased person, due to the exertion involved in communication with no proper results, automatically builds a wall around himself or herself. These are built to prevent someone from assisting or comforting them. Every attempt they make at opening up their mind is their efforts to break down this wall with repetitions and refrains to mark their speech.

One of the most projected tendencies in Em, as the story progresses, is her condemnation of conventional motherhood. The immediate reason for her aversion is not being able to be a 'proper mother' for her kids as much as she

wants to. Her own self being out of control and perceiving their vulnerabilities every time she puts them in a crisis inwardly breaks her down. She willingly pulls herself out of the responsibilities of motherhood under the umbrella of illness. However comfortable she acts under it; the truth remains, this makes her feel inept and unqualified as a mother. In one of the instances of the story, the narrator argues with his own self about the possibilities of Em faking her depression just to get away from the parental responsibilities and challenges. He immediately, regrets having thought so as he realizes that there is no way by which a person like Em, could fake mental illness or the chaos that resulted from it.

But now, terror and embarrassment of the night's chaos still fresh in my mind, I told myself, Yes, she's faking it, no way she's not faking it. This spared me the phenomenal expense of empathy. Unfortunately, it was not very convincing and it did not last long. I could not convince myself that Em really wanted to laze around. She was always willing to make tea, to clean up in a desultory fashion if you insisted on cleanliness, to type out a play script so that it could be photocopied. She would help out with anything you wanted. And what could be the advantage that accrued to her in faking an attack of paranoia? While she did think of Ward 33 as a kind of second home, it was still second best. (Pinto, 2014, p. 124)

The voluntary side-lining of her pleasures as a mother becomes a huge representation of the traits of illness during the stages of its progress. More than the immense effect of the disease upon the diseased, there is a persistent seeping of precarity and uneasiness constantly into the minds of the people surrounding them.

As the days progress, the narrator finds himself facing irresistible fears and suspicions regarding himself and the sanity he professes. He is faced with endless questions and qualms at every stage of growth corresponding to the stages of the development of disease in his mother.

But of all these, I feared most the possibility that I might go mad too. If that happened my only asset would be taken from me. Growing up, I knew I did not have many advantages. I had no social skills. I had no friends. I had no home-no home that was a refuge. I seemed to have no control over my body; my clumsiness was

legendary. All I had was my mind and that was at peril from my genes. (Pinto, 2014, p. 41)

Chaos Embodied

Chaos as an embodiment of the disorder is divided into two phases while considering the whole chapters of life, namely, the first one being the recognition phase where one gets thrust into the world of illness and the second one consists of the healing and stepping back to normal phase. In the novel, the second phase occurs at erratic intervals and has no consistency as it passes on. No signs of persistent hope and no end to the chaos reigning is seen all throughout the narrative.

She went up. She came down. She went up again. We snatched at her during the intervals. There was no way to say when she would be up or when she would be down. Susan had tried to plot her moods against the cycles of the moon and had come up with no conclusive data even after five years. (Pinto, 2014, p. 43)

This is the nature of Em's actions and their appearance to the world around her. Susan and the narrator since they share the same space tries to find a solution to her mood issues, an effect of the illness using all scientific and other methods, in vain. However, this is an answerless question that finds no definite ground whatsoever.

When life is marked by the chaos, internally and externally, especially on diagnosing a disease, the body and mind of the person enter a phase characterized by the gradual incapacity to receive comfort. They refuse to be pacified or in a level understood as they deny everything akin to a mental support when provided with. Every desire in them seems pointless as it brings with them no hope of a happy future. The only mode of survival poses in the dissociation from the body, as body is the seat and source of chaos. It bears with it the pain and discomfitures of the self, both mental and physical from which the person seeks an escape. Em tries to escape from her mind and the chaos embodied in it, with no results.

No one could offer any explanation for the suffering I watched my mother go through. Nothing I read or heard fitted with the notion of a compassionate God and God's compassion, one uncomplicated, unequivocal miracle of kindness, was the only thing that could have helped. The sophisticated arguments of all wise

men of faith-their talk about the sins of past life, the attachment to desire, the lack of perfect submission-only convinced me that there was something capricious about God. (Pinto, 2014, p. 47)

The chaos of illness slowly starts penetrating the person's thinking capacities giving way to the chaos of emotions. One of the major challenges faced when it comes to a chaotic emotional quotient is the deep rootedness of the purposelessness of life. The ill are incapable of finding a worthwhile purpose of life, an aim to get going, and wishing for future days to descend. All that they are left with, is the repetitive occurrence of chaotic incidents along with no offering of a combination that would work to dismantle it. The narrator loses his faith in almost every religious truth with nothing to set a strong foot on. They are left with only a certainty of uncertainty in their mother, life and death.

Em poses the question once, whether she is a standing red pen. The singular fact that she is talking her mind puts her sanity as well as the people surrounding her, to question. The absurdity of the question is never acknowledged, nor in many cases, recognized. It gets reflected through the shadow of her illness only to pass on as a normal occurrence in the different facets of an abnormal reality.

It would be funny many years later. It would become a family symbol for the cross-connections and misunderstandings that happened when our words went bizarre, bearing only a surface resemblance to our meanings. But at that moment, the question came out of the pit. It was coated with the animal intensity you see in the eyes of a dog hit by a car and dying on the road. (Pinto, 2014, p. 50)

Elaine Searry refers to chaos narratives as the 'unmaking of the world' (Frank, 1995, p. 103). This goes well with the characteristic of chaos narratives to dismantle the narrative structure and form of every living narrative and in turn, every human belief system. The most difficult test the family goes through is to have a reassuring hold any aspect of the trauma and chaos they had to go through or watch their mother go through. Every time their mother hammers herself out of self-recognition, chaos reigns her life and the narrative refuses to get thrown out in the open. Only interruptions and

un-advocated noises make their way out into the world, making no or little sense to those unaffected ones.

'It is only now that I think of this- of him. Em filled our lives, there was no space in our minds for the Big Hoom. He was our constant, he was perfect, he just was. We were never really curious about his past, or his present outside our flat.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 64)

The narrator's reflections throw light on the involuntary over shadowing of a parent by another due to the effect of illness. It seemed a mystery then, to the children that the father was able to endure the illness in a composed way even after so many years. Her mood shifts, emotional outbreaks, repeated suicide attempts and the rest were sustained and he managed to move forward parallelly with his life, taking her along. The foremost cause for a disorder in the narrative when chaos is embodied in it, is because there is no prescribed order for suffering.

Chaos, with its capacities of crushing the human brain into dust, reigns the household for so long that the narrator finds himself doubting the loss of, not only his mother but also the others in the family. The sense of precarity constantly fills him with dread and persistent hopelessness. It pervades his psyche and marks its presence in every phase of his life. The common and irresistible tendency of humans to think worsens the situation.

My defenses were flimsy. The enemy might already be inside my head and if that were the case, everything else was a straw in the whirlwind. Somewhere, with every meal I ate and every breath I took, I was nurturing the enemy. I thought of clamping down on the errant thought and recognized this as an errant thought born out of despair. I thought of counselling and all the faces of the counsellors I knew floated in front of me. They seemed kindly and distant. They were from that other place, the far side, the normal side. I could not afford therapy, and in any case, I had only the faintest notion of what it could do. It was depressing. There seemed to be nothing I could do: no preventive medicine, no mental health vitamins, no-mind exercises in the cool of the morning. (Pinto, 2014, p. 128)

Another characteristic of chaos was the constant flux of the people inside it in circles. The circle bears no end or escape to the trauma that it holds.

They continuously move round, event after event with no developments or any turn of events whatsoever. Em's transformations during illness are just marked by the new forms of chaos that she drowns into pulling down her family with her.

'Her mind was like that; a sponge for troubles. Events turned into omens; carelessly uttered phrases into mantras.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 135)

As the novel progresses, a prolonged muteness descends on Em, silencing her troubles and mind probably due to the inability to articulate her emotions, even slightly, anymore. As this muteness sets up home inside Em, consecutively there is the role of mute witnesses that gets passed on to the Big Hoom, Susan and the narrator. Finally, it culminates in her silent death.

Conclusion

Chaos narrative, a type of illness narrative, articulates the mental, emotional and psychological trauma and effects of a patient and also the toll it takes on nearest ones of the patient, friends, family, health workers or caregivers. The paper is a reading of Pinto's *Em and the Big Hoom* as a chaos narrative, exhibiting all the effects of trauma on the person who is infected as well as the people who are taking care of her. The emptiness and internal conflict in their lives manifests itself to a great extent since they are a family. This manifestation of chaos has been expressed mainly through the gaps in communication, the silences that follow intense arguments and the author's description, filling in the holes that were left empty. The tell-ability chaos rests on these techniques alone without which many fissures cannot be sealed. Arthur Frank, in his work, *The Wounded Storyteller*, portrays the significance of chaos narratives and the need to analyze and read them. It lays bare trauma and leave behind a silence which needs to be filled in order to provide proper treatment to illness. He advocates that there is difference between the medical help provided to patients which considers them as the recipients of treatments of commercial services and patients who become participants of empathetic relations of care.

A body infested with a disease, attunes itself to chaos, and hereby they find themselves disabled

to enter relationships of care. Sometimes, the person finds himself in a position where they cannot verbally articulate what they want or even formulate their own needs and desires. This brings them to a state where they deny help. In *Em and the Big Hoom*, Em repeatedly sought the assistance of her family in the first phase of the disease but found herself unwilling to accept the help they offered, once given. The first move of relief proposed in this circumstance is the want to witness one's own story which helps indirectly to distance oneself from the person and the chaos embodied in the person. The second is through the acceptance of the fact that chaos can never be transcended, it can only be accepted.

Any sort of a solution stating to move away or move on to further steps in life is perceived to have zero effect on the victim and insinuates them to the 'unacceptance of help' phase. Chaos stories should never be considered as something 'documenting depression'. Chaos stories are to be honored in the light of all that they portray as that remains the only way to help and care and comprehend all those who are in need of aid. The struggle is narrated only after a distance is sought and received.

Em and the Big Hoom is a beautifully crafted painful narrative of the journey of a family intertwined with each other through love and chaos and decides to stick together through the darker side of life. All throughout their life, even when they were 'living in' chaos, even when an end could not be seen, they managed to hold onto their mother and her tantrums scooping her with all that they knew and cared for. Some of the gloomiest sides of the bi-polar disorder and depression have been portrayed in the novel in intricate detail. Her death leaves her loved ones to savor all the memories with her excluding none.

'Survivors, I though. Ship-wreck survivors.' (Pinto, 2014, p. 142)

Thus, departing, Em left the Big Hoom, Susan and the narrator, survivors of the tempest of life.

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