

- Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Journal
- Indexed in NepJOL; Star-Ranked in JPPS
- Permanently Archived in Portico



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Research Article/ DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/sjah.v8i1.90848>

## Trauma, Triumph, and Terrain in Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* and Róisín's *Like a Bird*

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**Article History:** Submitted: 23 June 2025; Reviewed: 29 Dec. 2025; Revised: 14 Jan. 2026

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### Abstract

The traumatic experiences of sexual abuse affect the lives of the victims in every possible way. Yet, within these experiences, the victims also emerge with a natural and sometimes a geographically shaped phenomenon to reconcile and reconstruct their lives, showcasing a framework of resilience. Both South Asian novels, Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* (2015) and Fariha Róisín's *Like a Bird* (2020), narrativize the traumatic events in the cases of female protagonists Nomita and Taylia, mainly in the forms of repetitive dreams, gnawing guilt, depression, and self-fragmentation, due to being sexually abused by their trusted people at a very young age. While the narrativizations of the characters' catastrophic tribulations are at the center of these novels, they also underscore the impacts of spatial locations around the characters, facilitating their survival, thus interweaving the dynamics of psychotraumatology and what is theorized as psychogeography. Hence, this study attempts to explore twofold approaches: examining the protagonists' traumatic experiences primarily through Cathy Caruth's formations of 'trauma' and 'survival,' supplemented with a psychogeographical reading of the novels to identify the effects of the places and walking in the protagonists' psyches, determining their resilience henceforth. Nomita and Taylia's experiences of sexual trauma are not merely an experience of destruction; rather, their journeys offer trauma testimony that also showcases levels of post-traumatic development through the means of psychogeographical wanderings. This article is expected to introduce a new approach to interlinking psychology and geography, mainly in the case of sexual trauma studies within South Asian settings.

**Keywords:** Psychogeography, resilience, sexual trauma, South Asian narratives

### Introduction

The concept of psychological trauma refers to the psychic or emotional responses of a person arising from any particular or several intensely distressing or life-threatening events. Sigmund Freud has explained the term trauma as when something "stressful, disturbing, or tragic events" happens to us, our body accumulates extra energy, but we, unable to release it, naturally feel traumatized (137).

Roger Kurtz interprets trauma as a “pathological mental and emotional condition” that disturbs an individual’s day-to-day “response mechanism” (2). A person can be traumatized by experiencing a plethora of disturbing issues, like the massacre of wars, domestic or gender-based violence, partition, and political, religious, cultural, and climatic turmoil. Whatever the problems are, the traumatic experiences caused by sexual or physical exploitation, mainly in the hands of a near or trusted one, are the most widespread and “devastating” traumatic experiences in human life (Kurtz 13). The traumatized subject, triggered by sexual abuse, goes through numerous circumstances and aftermaths, such as the fear of getting intimate, pregnancy, trust issues, inferior complexities, relationship issues, depression, isolation, and abandonment by family and society. Furthermore, in South Asian communities where patriarchal, religious, cultural, and social values govern over anything else, the sufferings of the victims are intractable. Recently published ethnographic studies include Jennifer L. Green, Subrata Banerjee, and Berik et al., all of whom reason that these sociocultural norms are a provocative force behind sexual violence against children and women in South Asia. Nevertheless, if catastrophic experiences generate a traumatized self, they also generate the questions of survival and healing, accentuating the paradoxical relationship between trauma and survival. In their writings, several modern theorists and writers interrogate the rhetorical connection between trauma and survival. Cathy Caruth, in her seminal work *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, generalizes the “enigmatic” relationship between these two psychological states, one defining the other (58). Besides, Judith Herman, Dori Laub, and Shoshana Felman also contribute to the literary lineage of trauma and survival as they respectively recommend different criteria or mediums, such as a triadic model for finding pathways to trauma, the significance of traumatic testimony and literature as a witnessing force for dealing with trauma extremity in their *magnum opuses*. Since traumatic or painful memories are at the heart of the human psyche after a dreadful event, searching for and finding ways to overcome, or sometimes accepting those memories and scares, is a prominent human instinct.

Moreover, an individual’s traumatic struggles, the longevity of their sufferings, and, significantly, the pathways to their survival are shaped by their surroundings. Although the association between the human psyche and places has long existed in human civilization, this relationship was first theoretically introduced as ‘psychogeography’ by the Situationist Internationals, to whom the ideologies of arts and artifacts should not serve any functional interests inherent to Capitalist or Marxist principles; instead, they need to be intuitive or reflexive. The forerunner of this revolutionary group, Guy Debord, in “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography,” outlines psychogeography as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (8). Merlin Coverly describes the collision of two fields, psychology and geography, that resulted in a new systematic ideology for “exploring the behavior of individuals” (10). It serves the grandiose endeavor of helping humans avoid overlooking nature as a “drab monotony” (Coverly 13) and again “introducing fresh perspectives and values to our existence” by showcasing the “hidden depth” of our locations (Seach 91). Overall, psychogeographical experiences, at a micro level, allow one to view inclusive and complete aspects of her landscape more vigorously, whereas, at an utmost level, they guide one to reconstruct her subjective sense of body, mind, and individuality.

Acknowledging Caruth’s synergistic view of trauma and survival as intrinsically connected phenomena, this article, therefore, deals with two contemporary South Asian novels, Anuradha Roy’s *Sleeping on Jupiter* and Fariha Róisín’s *Like a Bird*, and their engagement with reflecting characters’ traumatic memories resulting from childhood sexual abuse. In addition to describing the female protagonists’ traumatic ordeals in the novels, this article also explores the therapeutic potentials of places and walking, broadly conceived psychogeographical dimensions, and their role in fostering characters’ resilience. I argue that these novels provide nuanced accounts of the female protagonists’ sexual traumatic experiences and their actions that serve as an agency of adaptability with their psychological distress. In her novel *Sleeping on Jupiter*, the Indian author Roy describes the life of a character identified differently as Nomita, Nomi, or Nomita Fredrickson, who was sexually abused at

the age of nine by her fatherly figure, *Guruji*, who was in charge of protecting and sheltering her. Roy sheds light on the hypocritical nature of the character *Guruji*, who, to satisfy his carnal desire, exploits the physical and psychic innocence of children like Nomita in the orphanage, locally known as an ashram, which has been considered the safest place in South Asian communities. Nomita, even though rescued and adopted by a Norwegian couple, still has the dreadful experience of childhood sexual abuse, which lingers after her like a shadow. Likewise, Australian-Bangladeshi writer Fariha Róisín's recently published novel *Like a Bird* grapples with substantial issues like sexual trauma, identity crisis, discrimination, racism, victim blaming, and redemption through the portrayal of the character Taylia Chatterjee, who, in her late teen years, is brutally gang-raped by the son of one of her family friends and his accomplices. The narrativizations of Nomita and Taylia's transformation from sexually traumatized figures to embodying resilient selves further stress the necessity of an intersectional approach to converging literary trauma and psychogeography.

### **Deconstructing Literary Trauma and Psychogeography**

Prior to seeking the twofold aims of this study by scrutinizing the novels *Sleeping on Jupiter* and *Like a Bird*, it is noteworthy to direct our attention to the published literature on psychological trauma and literary psychogeography and comprehend the contemporary urgency of deconstructing these two areas of thought and reconfiguring them in line with South Asian needs. At present, literature, like many forms of artistic expression, places a great emphasis on representing humans' inner psychic trauma. The interconnection between trauma and literature further rationalizes literature to address the real-life issues of the world, which include an individual's traumatic memories as well. Laurie Vickroy reflects trauma as a multi-contextual social issue that is frequently and significantly experienced, impacted by "wars, sexual and physical assaults, poverty, and colonization" (1). On the other hand, Deborah M. Horvitz observes the literary articulation of the characters' psychic trauma provoked particularly by sexual abuse. Either way, both of the authors take only a Western look while dealing with the literary sources: the former focuses on the works of Western writers, while the latter scrutinizes the fiction written by North American female writers during the late twentieth century, which, clearly, stress the need to establish a de-westernized method of analyzing traumatic especially sexual traumatic experiences within South Asian milieu. The way a particular traumatized subject experiences traumatic memories and build their resilience is more or less dependent upon the traumatized subject's sociocultural aspects. Goutam Karmakar and Zeenat Khan emphasize the decolonization of trauma theory and the very tendency to look at trauma from a Western point of view, which consequently gives rise to a gap in considering South Asian historical or individual traumatic experiences as narrated in fictional texts. The studies of "unrecognized and unaddressed" South Asian traumatic narratives can enhance trauma theories and models by highlighting global similarities and differences in human psychic experiences and responses (Karmakar and Khan 9). Following that, thousands of scholars from the region and abroad generously offer an exploration of literary trauma within the schema of South Asia. Regardless, the focus on narratives of sexual trauma is still an afterthought.

Meanwhile, the interconnection between psychogeography and literature could initially be found in Merlin Coverly's *Psychogeography*, where he accentuates the contributions of a few of the literary authors, Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), William Blake (1757-1827), Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859), and others, and declares them as a precursor to the psychogeographical framework (13). The literary representation of the interaction between fictional characters with real or imaginary places, in public or private areas, of individual or collective experiences, and male or female accounts provides readers with a detailed picture of different cultural, social, political, and geographical enlightenment. However, at the initial stage, the practices of psychogeography were definite within the Western boundaries; traversing across the urban environment, finding out and critiquing the architectural and artistic grandiloquence of archetypal Western cities like Paris and London only highlighted one side of the story (urban environment and masculinity), while keeping another side (the rural, the feminists, the South Asian, and what is indigenous to my study, the affairs of the sexually traumatized victims)

into concealment. Tina Richardson, in the editorial introduction of the book *Walking Inside Out*, broadened and decoded the domain of psychogeography by pointing out that it is all about “crossing boundaries, whether metaphorically, physically, locally or globally” and even criticizes the traditional beliefs of narrowing psychogeographical terrain, as the Situationists, themselves did not constrain them solely on exploring their own location, but, they also stepped their feet into other cities like Venice, New York, and Amsterdam (2). This justifies the versatility of psychogeographical praxis in literary studies, resulting in a neo-psychogeographical practice, especially within non-Western contexts. Several scholars showcase distinctive yet exclusive methods of conducting psychogeographical studies within the non-Western literary world. Avijit Pramanik, to illustrate, deals with Kamal Basu's novel *Kalkata* and highlights the dynamic relationship between the city of Calcutta and the character Jami. The novel's psychogeographical perspective highlights the characters' experiences, criticizing unsystematic urbanization, the power structure, and the capitalist social structure.

Upon following the broad literature, psychogeographical writings, similar to literary representations of sexual trauma, can be seen as engulfed by Western imprints and are pretty indifferent to fulfilling South Asian needs. Richardson, too, identifies the “bricolage” essence of psychogeography and signifies its distinctive nature of influence on an individual or any specific group (3). Considering this, I argue that the intersection between literary representation of sexual trauma and the psychogeographical idea of walking as a driving force of characters' survival challenges the traditional and cyclical patterns of studying psychoanalytic and psychogeographical praxis in literature.

### **Walking for Women: A Myth or a Cure?**

This article critically examines the literary articulation of the sexual trauma of two female characters, Nomita and Taylia. It also reasons that the characters can redefine and reshape their lives psychogeographically, though it is worthwhile to mention that neither the writers intended nor the female characters in these novels comprehend their places and walk in response to their sexual trauma. Rather, their strolling around the city, which yields their psychic desolation upon the active forces of the spaces, challenges the contemporary spheres of literary trauma and psychogeographical importance of dealing with female traumatized subjects specifically in South Asia. That said, the question of women being wanderers, explorers, and adventurers is inconclusive in both Western and non-Western contexts because walking, in usual and theoretical practices, is a socio-cultural and gendered construction, and placing females as equal to males in every aspect of society, especially in South Asian societies, is still a recognized threat to its prolonged patriarchal, religious, and cultural systems. Psychogeographical praxis or the tradition of walking has been argued to be “a male-centered ideology” (Amran et al. 62), “masculine tradition” (Richardson 15), or even to retain “masculine bias” (Bridger 286). This anti-feminist treatment of walking has been highlighted and criticized through the columns of several thinkers, artists, writers, and activists. Janet Wolf, for example, contests Baudelaire's treatment of women in the streets or in public spheres as inferior, as “subjects of his gaze” and “objects of his botanizing” (42). Sarah Deutsch glorifies the contribution of Boston's women of all groups for challenging “the dominant and idealized sexual division of urban space” and creating “a new set of relations and places” through competing and combining each other's needs (4).

Moreover, psychogeographical perceptions of place and walking, in an overall intent, are aligned with gaining or regaining individuals' insight into control, power, and self. To simplify, traumatized individuals find their perspicuity of freedom by walking through the streets, discovering their distinctive connotations of objects, buildings, and parks, and articulating their traumatic ordeals in their own ways. As a result, they feel heard and empowered in their own reconstructed life. In support of the proactive effects of walking in people's lives, Rebecca Solnit, in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, claims that “it has a chosen mode of being, because within a walk [one] is able to live in thought and reverie, to be self-sufficient” (21). Amran et al. implement Bridger's feminist

psychogeographical and Harlow's interpretative phenomenological analysis and discuss the movement of the female protagonist in Chan Ling Yap's historical fiction, *Sweet Offerings*. They discover a contradictory yet apparent attribute of psychogeography, offering emancipation to the female protagonist to look at her life differently in public and private spheres amidst political and historical revival in Malaysia, and later empowering other women like her.

Finally, the in-depth synopsis of the published literature so far demonstrates the vitality of this article's approaches to addressing current shortcomings and contingencies. First of all, the literature suggests that the current body of literary trauma and psychogeographical studies mainly highlight Western discourses, and even if there hardly exist any traumatic narratives within South Asian societies, these are aloof from portraying the hardship of sexually traumatized victims. Then, a considerable portion of literature showcases the impacts of psychogeographical walking, re-mapping individuals' perceptions of their places and, in turn, acting as a catalyst for traumatic triumph.

### Methodology

As outlined earlier, this article adopts Cathy Caruth's take on trauma and survival to illuminate the female characters Nomita and Taylia's experiences of sexual trauma and how these traumatic experiences, employing multiple agencies (in this case, the psychogeographical importance of places and walking, addressed in the ensuing discussion), could lead them to survival. In recent times, the trauma theory or the discipline of Psychotraumatology has undergone a pronounced transformation brought out by numerous neo-psychoanalysts, including Caruth, who revisits the classical yet revised discussion of trauma and defines it as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations of other intrusive phenomena" (11). As a Neo-Freudian critic, she subscribes to Freud's assertions on traumatic forms such as hallucinations, flashbacks, uncontrolled memories, and a shattered or fragmented self. By adopting Freud's formulation of the trauma theory as "the peculiar incomprehensibility of human survival," Caruth, in her book, delineates "What does it mean to survive?" especially after the turmoil of something distressing happened to one's life (58). Caruth observes, "For consciousness, then, the act of survival, as the experience of trauma, is the repeated confrontation with necessity and the impossibility of grasping the threat to one's own life" (62). What is central to Caruth's conceptualization of trauma and survival is the "paradoxical relation" between them and signifying trauma as "an enigma of survival" (58). She clarifies that it is through the "determined repetition of the event of destruction" that an individual learns to live and, therefore, "shape" their lives (63).

On an important note, psychogeography as a theoretical body allows geographical, traditionally urban spaces to guide human thoughts and feelings, consequently allowing them to be a part of a city's revolution. Hence, the ideas of place and space require much attention when dealing with psychogeography. Though synonymously used in most cases, for psychogeographical praxis, spaces apply to an abstract form of specific locations. In contrast, places are shaped by individuals' emotions, memories, and their implemented meanings. Yi-Fu Tuan differentiates spaces and places by categorizing spaces as embodying "freedom", whereas places as a medium of "security" (3). Tim Cresswell also reinforces place as both a complicated and straightforward pattern, and centralizes space as an "abstract" concept with "areas and volumes," whereas "places have space between them" (16). Moreover, what lies at the core of psychogeography is its dealing with walking, celebrated through the forms of *flâneur* and *dérive*. The notion of *flâneur*, for example, is an aesthetic, autonomous, apolitical, and detached wanderer of the city, according to Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, whose ideas later worked as an impulse for the Situationists to come up with a more political and experimental sense of walking and coined it as *dérive*. Guy Debord, in his essay "Theory of the Dérive," connotes *dérive* as "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" and asserts that it often "involves playful constructive behavior and awareness of psychological effects, and is thus quite different from the classic notions of journeys or strolls" (62). To add, the psychogeographical method of walking has been designed as a "socio-political practice to express

resistance inbuilt locations and to redefine the setting" (Poole et al. 4). The effect of walking, whether in the modes of *dérive* or *flâneur*, or its feminine form *flâneuse*, as brought into highlight as a feminist psychogeographical discourse by Laura Elkin, can be a phenomenon of multiple processes, harmony and experiences. Her discussion solidifies the freedom and assertiveness a woman could achieve by walking psychogeographically, as it "confers—or restores—a feeling of placeness" to women (Elkin 21). To extend this discussion, both forms of walking, political or unpolitical, systematic or unsystematic, conscious or unconscious, create "a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord" (Solnit 5).

In this article, I intend to hinge on sexual trauma, survival or resilience, and psychogeographical walking—rhetorically presented as a trinitarian notion of trauma, triumph, and terrain—to fulfill and enrich the existing arena of literary trauma and its psychogeographical construction of survival in South Asian literature.

### **"The Past . . . is a Circle": Fictionalizing Sexual Trauma**

Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* revolves around the protagonist Nomita and the three other elderly female trios, who share diverse life trajectories. Through the character traits of Nomita, Roy manifests what one calls the classical signs or symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Roy aptly presents the intricacies of trauma and its influences on the characters' self-construction (Sinha and Ali 3492). Nomita went through several terrible and violent events, including the massacre that took the lives of her family members and childhood sexual abuse. The psychological arc and intrusive memories invaded her repeatedly and in an endless manner. During Nomita's stay at the ashram, a monastery governed by *Guruji*, a godlike hypocrite figure who was in charge of protecting and sheltering the orphanage, Nomita faced the most horrific and tremendous event of her life by being sexually abused by him, which wrecked most of her life. Equivalently, in the novel *Like a Bird*, Fariha Róisín explores the saga and predicament of young adults through the character of Taylia Chatterjee. By fictionalizing a character like Taylia, Róisín takes us on a roller coaster of violence, discrimination, sexual abuse, abandonment, and the loss of loved ones. Nonetheless, it is her being gang-raped by a group of familiar people and consequently being abandoned by her parents, which is one of the most prevalent socio-cultural diseases in South Asian countries to blame the victims, that is highlighted in the novel. Furthermore, it is her sister Alyssa's unexpected and furtive suicide, which Taylia later explores as a reason for being gang raped by the similar group, by which Taylia herself is raped almost two years later, intensifying Taylia's already distressed state. Roy and Róisín's back-and-forth narrative technique in the novels aligns with Anne Whitehead's suggestion: trauma stories demand a narrative form that does not follow a "conventional linear sequence"; rather, they adhere to a disruptive narrative structure and story progression (6). The characters and the narrators oscillate between past and present, between their affective instabilities and balances, and between one event and another, all suggesting the non-chronological structure as well as the characters' fractured psychological states.

Sexual trauma occurs in the form of unusual psychological and sexual behavior, dreams, hallucinations, flashbacks, and similar experiences, and most of the time, there is a gap between the occurrence of the traumatizing event and the realization of what has happened to the victims. That is why Caruth refers to "belatedness and incomprehensibility" as the features of trauma (92). Nomita, as a child, was unable to realize the noxious effects of *Guruji*'s actions. However, while growing up, she had recurring dreams of being cradled as a newborn by a guy who sat in bed, rocking her close to his face. Nomita recalls: "There is a dream I often have; I am a baby in it, held aloft by a man. He is on his back on a bed, his legs are bent at the knee, he is holding me high above him, my face is above his face, his hands are under my arms, and he is rocking on his back. He takes me each time to the brink. I want to beg him to stop, but my voice has died" (Roy 34). This repetitive dream emerges as "the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (Caruth 2). Nomita's subservient state in this dream of being held by a man, metaphorically *Guruji*, who is in much greater

power than her, and her not being able to speak as a mode of protest, represent the traumatic event of being sexually abused by *Guruji* and her unstable psychological state.

The traumatic event of childhood sexual abuse disturbs Nomita's psychological, communicational, and social growth. Even after Nomita is adopted by a Norwegian couple and is taken to a safe and secure place, she is distressed and has issues communicating with her foster mother. For instance, when Nomita's foster mother asks her about her school, her friends, and her life back in the ashram, Nomita stands perplexed, struggling to find "what to say and where to start" (Roy 38). However, even if within time, she was able to share most of her childhood spent in the ashram, she could not share her dark, painful past with her foster mother, and consequently, continue with her inner trepidations. In addition, Taylia, like the rest of the traumatic victims, is preoccupied with the repetitive dreams of the traumatic moments. She battles with anxiety, feels insecure, and goes through emotional turmoil after that event. Judith Herman argues that "a secure sense of connection with caring people is the foundation of personality development, and when this connection is shattered, the traumatized person loses her basic sense of self" (52). It is persistent in the experiences of Róisín's protagonist, Taylia. She expresses her desolated self by exclaiming that she is unaware of knowing if she had "the capacity to fully love" or "the ability to let go" as her "heart felt gutted out and concave," but was also tired of the "grief" she possessed (102). She even established a feeling of hatred and low self-esteem toward herself. She elucidates: "Even when I went to the bathroom, I avoided touching, brushing past the padding of my hair, grateful for its existence. Mirrors became things I avoided, and car windows, too—or windows in general: reflective buildings, big, huge revolving doors. I didn't want to see myself. I couldn't bear to look at what I had become" (90). In this passage, Taylia's avoidance of self-care through the act of brushing her hair, touching her own body, and seeing herself in mirrors, is a clear sign of her self-fragmentation and alienated self after the traumatic event. Traumatic experiences prevent victims from developing self-worth. They are afraid of being judged, harmed, and even getting attached to their surroundings; therefore, they struggle with shame, isolation, and identity crisis.

In the novel *Sleeping on Jupiter*, Nomita, as a victim of child sexual abuse, possesses a threat, fear, and fragmented self within her in the long run. For instance, when Nomita's foster mother checks out her art book, she finds all abstract forms of art, such as "dead birds," "broken weathervanes," and "barbed wire," instead of happy or assertive pictures like "flowers, the sun, green meadows" (44). Her projective artistic expression in the form of fragile or dark objects reflects her inner psychic or emotional state. Nomita showcases a prominent symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, which Herman termed "hyperarousal" in her book *Trauma and Recovery*. According to Herman, in a "hyperarousal" state, the traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, meaning that following the traumatic occurrence, the survivors are constantly on edge and agitated, feeling as though danger could strike them again at any time (18). The survivor of child sexual abuse is just a "prisoner of her childhood" who "left with fundamental problems in basic trust, autonomy, and initiative" (Herman 56). For example, while arguing, Suraj accidentally hurts Nomita while drunk. She takes this as a sexual threat, becomes enraged and violent, and in response, sprays anti-mosquito spray into his eyes before stabbing him on his forearm. Nomita's hypervigilant state is visible when Roy points out, "she was still looking past him as if her eyes were seeing something else. ...He was trapped with a psycho" (Roy 230). Bearing resemblance, Taylia, after the tragic event, also goes through several difficulties while trusting or connecting to other persons. Róisín narrates the inner turmoil that Taylia was suffering from: "Each night at the hostel, I was afraid of the noises that'd wake me, afraid of men banging on the door, of touching me in my sleep" (Róisín 91). She also faces many challenges and disconcerting experiences when emotionally and physically connecting with other males; her relationship with Kynan (Ky), a writer she meets at her friend Kat's café, later developed into a romantic relationship. However, their relationship is problematic due to Ky's infidelity; his long-term relationship with Jade when he is dating Taylia, and Taylia's physical repulsion following her sexual abuse by Simon and his friends. While Taylia's relationship with Ky builds on mutual respect and affection, she, like the other survivor, seems "driven by the hunger for

protection and care and is haunted by the fear of abandonment or exploitation" (Herman 56), which disturbs healthy relational development.

### Reshaping Places, Reshaping Lives

In *Sleeping on Jupiter* and *Like a Bird*, the authors craft several underlying forces that are visible in the characters' resilience in their life journeys, overwhelmed by sexual assault against them. Consider Nomita's sharing testimonies through writing, and Taylia's finding comfort in Kat, Tahsin, and Ky, for example, assist them regain control over themselves and their environment. Then again, on the less-explored side, characters' paths to survival could be traced in these novels through two significant psychogeographical aspects: the influence of places and walking on the characters' psyche.

First of all, Nomita's journey from a seven-year-old child to a twenty-five-year-old Nomita Fredrickson, living with her parents in a small hut, to an orphanage or ashram in Jarmuli, to Norway, and again returning to Jarmuli, emphasizes the intervention of these places in her psyche and personality. At the beginning of the novel, Nomita describes her surroundings: a small hut, a happy family of four, a jungle with tall, green trees, and plenty of fruit for them to eat. This picturesque and happy landscape with ample resources reflects Nomita's playful nature as a child and her emotional stability linked with this place before being devastated by the war that took all of her family members from her and destined her to stay at an orphanage in a small temple town called Jarmuli. Jarmuli is a fictional city that Roy fabricates in an Indian coastal region, symbolically implying the religious hypocrisies and misdeeds that are served underneath humanitarian aid and philanthropy in South Asian societies. While staying at the ashram as a child, Nomita, along with other children, falls victim to *Guruji's* unhealthy sexual thirst, and these bitter memories make Nomita reasonably detached from Jarmuli. When she returns to this town at the age of twenty-five to film a research documentary on religious tourism, she feels quite abstract in this city. Nomita's placelessness in Jarmuli, however, is not due to her emotional detachment or disconnection from this place; somewhat, it justifies her physical distance and the abusive pasts she holds within this place. While staying at the ashram, Nomita and her other mates are not allowed to go outside; therefore, what she memorizes about the ashram is just its enormous size, dark trees, *Guruji's* cottage, the dormitory building, the dining room, the puja hall, and their school (38).

Traumatic sufferers often avoid engaging in any discussion that could bring their traumatic events, places, and memories into focus. In Nomita's case, too, she avoids referring to anything about the ashram to her foster mother, and even if she does, she "made it sound like yet another orphanage" (39) because the emotions and memories she holds with *Guruji's* ashram are terrific and intense. However, Nomita's return to her traumatic site, exploring the city with a fresh perspective, facing and recognizing the dreadful attachments she has within this city itself, showcases her traumatic regrowth and her willingness to establish new relationships with places and with people, and, lastly, to accept the perpetual memories that haunt her from childhood. Herman narrates that a victim's "recovery can take place only within the context of relationships, it cannot occur in isolation" (133). Referring to Nomita's catastrophe, her re-established relationship with the city rather than with any human being centralized places as forms of "struggle and resistance too" (Cresswell 3). She does not fight in isolation; she comes out and faces her fears of any similar figure, like *Guruji*, in the city that bears the sign of her profound distress. Nomita's description of Jarmuli with "white beaches" yet with "treacherous" waters and savage riptides that could suck people into the ocean (52), illustrates the duality of this place. This ambivalent nature of Jarmuli reflects what Caruth reads as the interplay between "the crisis of life" and "the crisis of death" (7). Also, after her return, she finds comfort, hope, and safety at Johnny Toppo's tea stall, where she spends much time observing the customers and people walking along the seashore, creating a sense of homeliness. Roy narrates, "she came back to the tea stall as if it were her new home, following the scent of cloves and ginger and kerosene, and the sound of the old man's gravelly voice" (77). Nomita does everything, from writing her testimony and carrying it to a newspaper office for publishing to revealing *Guruji's* true face; she retains resilience. Returning to Jarmuli, reconnecting with this place again, guides her understanding of her

distress. At the very end of the novel, Roy captures Nomita's continuity in her life journey, exploring her inner self in places that revive her identity and her sense of existence, something like: "She digs into her backpack again and takes out a rusted metal object that is no more than two narrow bands on a rudimentary spindle. She tests several spots with her feet, plants it into the sodden mulch on the bank. She looks up to orient herself: One side of the opal sky is turning pink. She swivels the spindle until its arrow points north" (250). The portrayal of Nomita's interaction with nature, the bank, sodden mulch, and an opal sky all serve as active agents in shaping her direction, illustrating places not merely as neutral objects but as forces that transform her actions, emotions, and psychological state. The transaction of opal sky into pink symbolizes Nomita's hope and renewal in nature.

On a psychogeographical note, Taylia embraces walking after her sexual assault and being disowned from her house. New York City becomes a cognitive map for her. She walks everywhere, from the High Line to the Hudson to Washington Square Park to many places, and these wanderings assist her in discovering the "catharsis" form of New York City (79). As a *dérivée*, she perceives every detail of the city emotionally and intricately without any "objective or destination," and stepping into the city's parks, observing people, seeing kids playing, admiring the Arc de Triomphe, and napping in the sun invites her to feel the city sensuously (79). Róisín's focalization of Taylia's drifting trenchantly illustrates what Coverley asserts as "the new ways of experiencing familiar surroundings" (3). While walking, the city's spaces remind her of her late grandmother, sister, and her mother, who abandoned her from the house after Simon allegedly made her responsible for his heinous assault on her. These emotional attachments and memories of the city spaces fortify her awakening about the city and seeking comfort and resolution within these places. Taylia shares: "I would go to the High-line, returning each day between moving from diner to diner. The memory of Alyssa attached me to this place, and it put things into perspective. As I sat on those postmodern benches overlooking the Hudson, or on the lawn facing the West Side skyline, I'd be reminded of her. Napping in the sun, I'd lose myself. In the rogue flowers and sultriness of the earth and grass I'd see Mama" (79). Taylia's attachments to the city spaces are entirely associated with memories she holds with her mother, sister, and her grandmother. Her monologue exemplifies a prominent psychogeographic feature: the connection between emotion and places and its ability to drive the human psyche. Rebecca Solnit, in *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, asserts how places can be a "tangible landscape of memory" that can take one to "the scenes of a love, of a crime, of happiness, and of a fatal decision" (117). Here, the urban spaces become a memoryscape for Taylia, taking her back in time to the happy moments she spent with her family. At the same time, these cityscapes, through their dynamic traits, influence Taylia's resilience.

Taylia's deriving around the city offers her authority to discern between the city's exotic and mundane elements, challenging its ethos and values while also instilling a sense of belonging to the city. Unlike her parents' friends, Taylia critically comments that New York's reshaping of Lower Manhattan is welcoming because it offers New York "diverging characters" (80). Moreover, *flânerie* or *dérivée* in usual aspects allows individuals to attach with the urban or rural milieus, but what is distinctive to Taylia's *flâneuse* experiences is that, as a victim of sexual trauma, she embellishes how cityscapes could be a medium of recovery and re-established identity for the traumatized victim. The city unveils the possibilities she could achieve if she survives; it teaches her to view the world, her pain, and even her relationships with people differently. She says, "when I hurt, I let it hurt, but I tried. . . . I didn't know why, but the city was making me feel things were possible; it was reviving me" (4). Similar to most of the traumatic victims, Taylia also faces problems while sexually as well as emotionally attaching to people. Yet, in her relationship with Ky, she comes up with the most beautiful gift of her life, which is her daughter, whom she named according to her sister Alyssa, and who gives a new meaning and means of resilience to her life, showing she, too, can come out of her traumatic memories and live her life.

## Conclusion

Summing up, this study has explored the literary correlation between psychology and psychogeography in two contemporary South Asian fictions, Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter* and Fariha Róisín's *Like a Bird*, to contemplate the protagonists' sexual traumatic ordeals and their subsequent therapeutic measures. Along with its primary focus, this article also sheds light on the South Asian literary urgency to explore female characters as authoritative figures in their own trauma and survival.

An in-depth examination of the texts by following Caruth's established idea of trauma and survival, the findings suggest that Nomita and Taylia, the victims of early-age sexual assaults, struggle with their fragmented selves, loss of self-esteem, feelings of fear and anxiety, and being unlikely to open up for any emotional relationship. Nomita's return to Jarmuli, where she had been sexually abused as a child by *Guruji* in the ashram, and her ceaseless inner battle of accepting the psychic flaws that have been lingering after her for years, help one to accumulate sexual trauma as an endless process of destruction and revival. On the other hand, Taylia's being gang raped by a group of family friends and being disowned by her own family leave her traumatized. Moreover, while examining the characters' survival tactics, the article is engaged in psychogeographical readings of the novels, drawing on multidimensional domains ranging from non-Westernized or South Asian to feminist, spatial, intentional, or unintentional walking, and brought the characters' therapeutic measures into discussion. This article introduces a new approach to interlinking psychology and geography, mainly in the case of sexual trauma studies within South Asian settings. Either way, it marks a new phenomenon within the South Asian literary legacy.

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