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Gender Trauma in Jodi Picoult's *Change of Heart*

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By

Niraj Khadka

Roll. No. 52

T.U Regd. No.: 6-2-727-173-2015

Central Department of English

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Tribhuvan University
Central Department of English
Kritipur, Kathmandu

Letter of Recommendation

Niraj Khadka has completed his thesis entitled “Exploring Gender Trauma in Jodi Picoult's *Change of Heart*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from February 2024 to June 2024. I hereby recommended her thesis to Submitted for Viva.

Prof. Mahesh Paudel

Supervisor

Date:_____

Approval Letter

This research “Exploring Gender Trauma in Jodi Picoult's *Change of Heart*” submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Niraj Khadka has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of Research Committee

Internal Examiner

Mahesh Paudel

Keshab Sigdel

External Examiner

Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota

Head of Central Department of English

Date-

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Niraj Khadka

Gender Trauma in Jodi Picoult's *Change of Heart*

Abstract

This research explores gender trauma in Jodi Picoult's novel Change of Heart. Applying the concept of gender trauma discussed by Kali Tal in her book Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma, this research examines how the novelist, Picoult, narrates the serious problems of women spurred by sexual violence that eventually causes trauma in the victims. Revolving round two female characters June and Claire, this novel makes a case of women who get traumatized by the unpleasant and violent treatment of men. Sexual violence and murder on the one hand and the heart donation by the same perpetrator on the other create shock to these female characters. June and Claire feel some relief after sending Shay to the prison, but their trauma resurfaces when the murderer intends to donate his heart to the girl who is oscillating between life and death.

Keywords: gender, trauma, abuse, violence, hurt, literature

This research explores how female body becomes a site of gender violence, exploitation and torture in Picoult's *Change of Heart*. It also explores how gender roles position subject as victim of trauma, how gender norms and values have been internalized, and how gender identity is produced through the traumatic experiences. Gender inequality is a serious problem. Similarly, both men and women, because of gender difference, suffer from trauma. Picoult, in the novel, critically illustrates gender problems and sexual violence which leads the protagonist June Nealon to the traumatic experience. It fosters controversy due to the capital punishment to Shay Broune who has been convicted of murdering June's daughter and husband. June's remaining daughter, who needs a new heart to if she is to survive and the convicted murderer of the girl's father and sister, Shay, wants to donate his heart. The most shocking is the incident in which June feels awkward if her sick child learns where

her potential new heart is coming from the man that murdered her daughter. June is desperately trying to save her child's life, but the question is should she accept the heart of a murderer who is being given death penalty?

Picoult, known for raising the controversial issues like abortion, assisted suicide, race and LGBT rights, raises the issue of violence against women in *Change of Heart*. Firstly, June is a happy wife and loving mother. Now, her life is like waiting game for justice, freedom and equality. Simply being a female, she has to bear torture and domination mentally. Her mental health issue occurs due to the torture inflicted on to her by the male members of the society.

In this research on *Change of Heart*, the concern is how a female gets trapped and is made victim simply by virtue of being a female. In the novel, women are treated with hostility. "The girl was found without her panties" and "Seven- years don't go running around without their panties" narrates Picoult, "Plus, Bourne had the underwear in his pocket" and "What else would he be doing with that?" (13). This incident indicates that women have no secret, no respect, and even they have to be ready to behave as per their male counterparts 'desires and interests. This research thus explores gender trouble, women's condition in men's company and how that trouble leads to trauma in Picoult's *Change of Heart*.

The United States of America, the setting of the novel, is one of most powerful and developed countries in the world. Yet, there is a much discrimination and gender bias. Picoult, in her novel, raises her eyebrows at the gender differences through her writing. It is a tragic novel in which female characters fall victim in the hands of male members. As Picoult seems to be saying men do not really realize women's internal problems; they mostly think about how to involve in sexual activities; and they mostly harass women in multiple ways. Despite strong rules against gender violence, women are subject to harassment.

Change of Heart explores the trauma experienced by the protagonist June who, after already losing her husband Jack in a murder by an impaired driver, loses her child, Elizabeth Nealon, to a horrific murder. Out from frying pan into the fire, she also loses her second husband Kurt Nealon, a police officer, in the deadly murder. In this research, the researcher analyzes the novel *Change of Heart* as a very traumatic memory and history. Shay Bourne is the main murderer of Kurt and has been transferred to I-tier jail. Later, the incident takes a sharp turn that the murderer himself is willing to donate his heart for June and Kurt's daughter Claire. Shay after hearing it on the television desires to donate his heart possibly expecting to cleanse his sin. June is utterly confused: to accept or not to accept the heart of the murderer. She however chooses life of her child and accepts it.

The novel *Change of Heart* is divided into the several parts. The story starts with the car accident and sexual exploitation, June's husband is dead. June could hear Elizabeth's little girls crying. In each chapter, Picoult tries to show extreme pain and suffering of June Nealon. She commonly explores her living styles, family member violence, culture and religion. The novel shows June's traumatic experiences and how she conceals her painful experience in the society. Picoult depicts her character in all traumatic situations. Her agony begins right from the car accident and continues till Shay heart donation to save her own child.

The novel raises women's issues and their victimization. American society is conscious about violence and thus deems any oppressive moves as illegal. Yet, Picoult's *Change of Heart* narrates women's experience sexual violence and tries to say that American society is not safe for women. June, for example, has to be free and live happily with family. This research on *Change of Heart* revolves round the gender issue that is intersected with sexuality religion and culture. It then explores how sexual violence leads victims like June to trauma. Three week after Claire surgery,

she is able to go home. Where taking care at home, Shay's sister, visits her. Claire is daughter of June. She is also victim by Shay.

Change of Heart is one of the famous and well known texts about America society. Ever since its publication many scholars have put the view in different ways. It has received praise and criticism both since its publication in 2008. This novel has themes of loss, redemption, religion, spirituality, and punishment. Before entering into the intended analysis of the text, it is important and necessary to talk about reviews on Picoult's *Change of Heart*. Boston Globe comments;

The disturbing, through- provoking question posed about the capital punishment, the ethics of organ donation and moral dilemma of telling the truth at all costs go well beyond the issue of whether shay will be allowed to die in a way that preserves his heart and whether Claire will accept it as her own (1).

There were very rigid males who always suppressed women sexually, physically and mentally.

The prisoner Shay Bourne wanted to donate organ whose father had died by the Broun and transfer into jail. Even if they think about religious believe and desire to donate the organ. Later, he is able to save the life of the Claire. This activities shown the condition of female get trapped by male for fulfillment of desire and satisfy by herself. Trauma sense can cope with the rigid nature by superiority people of male made society in which every single female obliged to unwillingly.

Publisher's Weekly comments on the novel as,

Picoult moves story along with lively debates about the prisoner rights and religious while plumbing the deaths of mother daughter relationship and examining the literal and metaphorical meaning of having heart. . . An impressive book" (2)

.Similarly, another reviewer claims, “The undisputed and almost uncontested queen of 'dilemma drama' Picoult's built this book on, as ever, a pretty wild core concept, on this occasion a young girl with a heart condition is in desperate need of a heart transplant but the only strongly matching heart donor is the man on Death Row who was convicted of killing her father and step sister! Can I hear a "Dilemma Drama" (Baba’s Review).

Likewise, on *Change of Heart*, Michelle Cronauer, a notable reviewer, puts her valuable review as,

I knew what it was like to lose someone you loved, you didn't get past something like that, you got through it (1).

June’s loving husband dies. She becomes helpless. While the murderer intends to donate the new heart, there is the question of moral dilemma, whether to accept or reject. However, Shay Bourne, because of his religious faith, seeks atonement through the donation of his heart.

My concern, unlike the issues expressed by the reviewers here, is the issues of women like June who sacrifice everything in their life. Female becomes the secondary sex. Likewise, in the novel, Shay is involved in many sexual harassments and other criminal works. He is imprisoned. He has a will to be free from any sin. He feels if he donates the heart, he will be free from any sin. The modern American society is open to relationship. Picoult also talks about such relationship like that of June who has had relationship with more than one man. She then gets victimized by Shay and gets trapped due to her daughter’s severe illness as she is forced to accept the heart of her husband’s murderer to save her daughter’s life. She has a serious concern about the Shay who is being given death penalty but intends to donate his heart to June’s ill daughter.

This novel is about love, deception, victimhood and trauma where mother June truly loves one man after another, but new her husband harasses June's daughter Elizabeth Nealon. The horrific novel reveals to indication of the past trauma and later the future will be also trauma. In the space between yes and no, there's a lifetime. It's the difference between the path you walk and one you leave behind; It's the gap between who you thought you could be and who you really are (16). It represents the life is in between the new life and death. Having no option left to save her daughter, she is compelled to accept the heart of Shay, her husband's murderer.

Change of Heart is the story of a young girl who was slowly dying and desire of new heart, the disruptive experience that profoundly impacts self-emotional organization and perception of external world. This novel deals with the American death penalty and transplant with new heart and sexual impulses. Elizabeth is daughter of Jack. She is one of Shay Broune victims. She is sexually abused by kurt steps father, before she died. The novel poises various questions like capital punishment, ethics of organ donation and the moral dilemma of telling truth. Similarly, we are exploring the female dominations in American society.

The novel begins with a horrible scene after the protagonist June loses her husband Jack "the love of my life" (1). At the scene of the accident, June meets Kurt Nealon, a police officer, who becomes her good friend and later her husband.

He'd held my hand when I was taken to identify my husband Jack's body. He came to the funeral. He showed up at my door to personally inform me when the drunk driver who ran us off the road was arrested. The policeman's name was Kurt Nealon. Long after the trial and the conviction, he kept coming around just to make sure that Elizabeth and I were all right. He brought toys for her birthday and Christmas. He fixed the clogged drain in the upstairs bathroom. He came over after he was off duty to mow the savannah that had once been our lawn. (1)

Later, June gets pregnant and Kurt plans to create an addition onto their home. A young man named Shay offers to help with the addition, to which June explains as "the beginning of the end".

Kurt is found murdered and Shay is one of suspects of this incident. The police man transferred Shay at I tier jail due to the death of Kurt. At very tragic circumstances, family becomes more worry due to the near death of little daughter. Coincidentally, convicted man wanted to donate heart to rid of the sin. "She was better off the dead" mother has feeling like that and accept the Shay heart. Dr. Christian Gallagher agrees on this statement. During Shay's trial, it is revealed that Kurt was sexually abusing his step daughter Elizabeth. At the time of the murders, Shay walked in on Kurt assaulting Elizabeth. Shay killed Kurt, who accidentally shot Elizabeth instead of Shay.

This text representation of Claire save of life and get rid of the any kind of the sin. Because Shay, a murder and imprisoned in I tier jail because he tries to rape the seven year old girl and in course of his crime kills her and her father. After sometimes, June daughter Claire becomes an ill and needed to new heart. That's news broadcasted in the television and heard by Shay as well interested to donate her. After long discussion of her mother and victimizes agree to accept the heart of the Shay. It is the case of amazing and seems religion belief.

When you're different, sometimes you don't see the millions of people who accept you for what you are. All you notice is the one person who doesn't(39). It indicates the reality of society where women are weak, submissive and subsidiary sex. Likewise, June is one of the most victimized persons in the novel that indicates the reality of the American culture and social reality.

Picoult posits a view regarding life. She says, in the space between yes and no there is life. Its presents how a female member of the society gets trapped and is made

victim simply by virtue of being a woman, that is, belonging to one particular gender.

The heart exchange between a condemned killer and a young girl who was slowly dying and the compulsion of a mother who is desperate to save her daughter's life, accepting the heart of the murderer of her husband and daughter is really heartrending. The mother's tragic loss on the one hand and the criminal's will to attain salvation by donating heart are sharply contrasted in the novel.

Based on the description mentioned here, the problems to be discussed in the novel are concerned with the following questions:

- 1) What is the condition that pushes Elizabeth Nealon to be a patient?
- 2) Why does the step father enjoy the privileges of being a male?
- 3) Why does Elizabeth Nealon have to be oppressed by her step Father?
- 4) How gender roles and position make women subject to the victim of trauma?
- 5) How is gender identity embedded with traumatic experience?

Female becomes a site of gender exploitation and gender violence. "They say you get over your grief, but you don't really, not ever. It's been eleven years, and it hurts just as much as it did that first day"(199). This line is representing the female grief and continuous violence. When the girl becomes eleven years old, she gets tortured by Shay. This is not only the story of June's family, but almost every woman's in the society. Equality-based legal provision in case of gender has just been a paper work and not a real practice. Gender is just the difference but it has been cause of subjugation of females in the hands of males in the society.

June's loss is the loss of family and identity of a woman as she loses her child and husband. "When a child is killed, two people die, I think. The only difference is that his mother still had to suffer a heartbeat" (136). It is very personal experience of June life who bears the painful life due to first husband died and second one is killed by Shay. Later, her little baby needed to new heart. June meet Kurt in car accident

later becomes the husband. Elizabeth, June's eldest daughter and Kurt are found murdered. Shay is a suspect and later June's daughter Claire needs a new heart for transplant and none other than the suspected murderer of her husband and daughter intends to donate his heart. She says:

I didn't know what it felt like to carry a child underneath my heart for nine months, to feel my body give way to make room for hers. I didn't know what it felt like to hold an infant and rock her to sleep, to find a lullaby in her breathing. But I knew what it was like to be the daughter. My mother and I hadn't always argued. I could still remember wishing that I was as glamorous as she was—trying on her high heeled shoes, pulling her sheer satin slips up to my armpits as if they were strapless dresses, diving into the wondrous mystery of her makeup bag. She had, at one point, been the person I wanted to grow up to be. (140)

This scene depicts the actual nearness of her husband who is killed by Shay. The unconditional passion, affection and appreciation for her life partner come to an end. Later, child was unable to survive without the heart because of the critical situation. June is ready to meet Shay for a restorative meeting. There she asks him, "Why did you do it?" to which Shay answers cryptically, "She was better off dead." Out of spite, June agrees to take Shay's donated heart once he is executed. Maggie, an attorney, begins the legal process to petition the commissioner of corrections to allow Shay to be hanged than by lethal injection so he will be ready to donate his heart to Claire. Claire's doctor is able to determine that Shay is a perfect heart transplant match.

Maggie, Shay's lawyer, arranges a dinner meeting with Dr. Christian Gallagher, a doctor she's consulting to discuss organ donation for Shay. June sneaks Dudley, the family's spaniel, into the hospital to make Claire feel better, and a nurse

reveals the upcoming transparent to Claire, which June hadn't discussed with her daughter yet.

Shay's trial begins, and Father Michael testifies to Shay's religious belief that he needs to donate his heart to Claire to be redeemed. Father Michael uses Shay's quotations from the Gnostic Gospel as his religious foundation. Ian Fletcher testifies as an expert on the Gnostic Gospels. Father Michael, privately, admits to Shay that he was on the jury that convicted him to death. Father Michael is able to locate Shay's sister, Grace, and tries to convince her to forgive Shay for setting the fire that ultimately disfigured her face. However, Grace actually started the fire in an attempt to kill their abusive father. Shay took the blame to protect his sister. While Shay testifies, all of his chains fall away from him for no apparent reason. "The words won't come out right, I just know it. He looked up at me. I am going to fuck this up. Just say what you need to shay. Words are hard for everyone" (133). Even a country like America is unfriendly to women and other oppressed groups. It is a kind of the violence that words are missed used for female.

Kurt gave a statement, found the carpenter sexually abusing Elizabeth. Standoff, shots were fired, Elizabeth got in the way. This part proves how females like June and Elizabeth are oppressed and made victims by male members of the society. The general issues was set by threaten of male of capitalist and consumer society because they think women are second sex and thus submissive being. The societies was by guided by the male made concept and male superiorities in which male is rule the system, capture the decision power and to suffered women as sexually, physically and mentally. June is searching the freedom and relief in the life but she is obliged to many heartfelt issue where sometime suffered from the sexual violence and sometime suffered by the daughter issue. "Someone once told me that when you give birth to a daughter, you've just met the person whose hand you'll be

holding the day you die" (200). In this statement, since her birth, a female is subject to abuse. The novel is to be suffered from various activities Shay and other male members to her mother and her daughter Elizabeth.

This novel indicates the theme of loss, fragment intertextuality, repetition and punishment. There are major characters: June, Shay Broune, Elizabeth, Kurt and Claire. June explains the beginning to ends. Elizabeth June eldest daughter and Kurt are found unconscious condition. Shay is one of the suspicious in that case. Likewise, there was become accident where June meets Kurt Nealon becomes the June husband. After few year later, June is pregnant and Kurt plans to create an addition onto their home. And jury convicts for capital punishment. The Jury deliberates on the death penalty and Shay transferred I tier jail at concord state prison. He knows Luscious is seeking a new heart from television. There is extreme dilemma between get new Heart of murder Shay Broun give death of Claire. Similarly, Jury also talk for agreement between them. Shay thinks about she was better off dead if give new heart I will be get rid from sin and safe of life of man. Doing heart donate is free from sin that's have a religious conscious. The theme of this novel also seems to faith and religious, forgiveness and acceptance, mercy and revenge with June life and Shay's double characters. They sometimes involve in fulfillment of sexual pleasure and sometimes seem kind-hearted.

This research uses a qualitative research. This text has central focuses on gender bias trauma. June Nealon, Elizabeth and Claire are major female characters who fall victims by male members of their society. In every condition female character becomes helpless and weak, whereas male members become strong and decisive power in the society. Therefore, this research derives impetus from Kali Tal's work on gender trauma *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1995). She is one of gender theorists who focuses on the gender trauma and explores how

women and children are hurt due to sexual assault, abuse and rape. In her seminal work, she explains with the emotionally disturbing but very poignant natures of narratives by rape and incest survivors. And relationship between the individual and cultural trauma interpretation using as it focuses on the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and phenomena of sexual violence against women. In the war time, more than in normal living conditions, women suffer more, sometimes by sexual activities and sometimes by the destruction of war. Everywhere, female rights and equality were lost, suppressed and dominated just by virtue of being female. Kali Tal presents personal narratives about traumatic experience be they holocaust survivors of troubled Vietnam veterans or victim of incest and other form of sexual assault. Their narratives threaten the larger society because they reveal power relationships and social contradiction. *Worlds of Hurt* makes important contributions to our understanding of cultural politics.

In the book, Tal raises the issue of war, genocide and incest. She cogently argues "Literature of trauma is written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it real both to victim to the community such writing serves a both as validity and cathartic vehicle for the traumatized writers"(25). The concept of gender trauma has come into practice for few decades through history, psychology, anthropology and literature. Another writers also have a same issue, Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History*, argues about the idea of 'latency'. In other words, trauma as it first occurs is uncertain, but that the survivors' uncertainty is not a simple amnesia; for the event returns as trend points of insistenty and against their will"(6). It means that the trauma can hardly be forgotten. As repression because trauma by its very nature displays with vengeance over that time "as successive moments from an event to its repression to its return"(Breuer and Freud).

This is the case of the characters in *Change of Heart* where June and her daughter share the traumatic experience. Females' torture seems to be an unexpected situation. Claire says:

By now the tears are here; they stream down my face and into my mouth. Loss always tastes like salt. I bend down over my old, sweet dog. "Dudley," I say. "Come on." But when I scoop him up—put my ear against his rib cage—he's cold, stiff, not breathing. "No," I whisper, and then I shout it so loud that my mother comes scrambling up the stairs like a storm. She fills my doorway, wild-eyed. "Claire? What's wrong?" I shake my head; I can't speak. Because, in my arms, the dog twitches. His heart starts beating again, beneath my own two hands. (329).

In this situation of Claire here the loss is very salty, frustration because of the moments. Tear as symbol of loss, frustration, pathetic and hard to keep the love although mother seems to be the love and supporting hand for the situation. Her mother loses the two husbands and daughter in search of happiness. The male members of the society want to play with the feelings of the female members and want to fulfill their sexual gratification. His heart starts beating again, beneath the hands. The way I see it, either the body wins and reject the heart means the failure of female wishes and desire. The victims of crash are never fully conscious during the period of accident itself. The experience trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist of Elizabeth and June' sexual impulse.

Kali Tal's theory of trauma is presenting the fragment activities, pain and suffering. Literature studies the socio-cultural aspects. In same way, this research, an analysis of the novel, is used to describe and show the tragic loss of mother and change of new heart of her child and a situation where she has to accept it from the murderer of

her husband and daughter. This book capitalizes on the controversial subject matter of capital punishment and death penalty in America in the backdrop of the female violence and sexual assault along with murder.

I add one more idea about trauma from LaCapra in his book *Writing History and Writing Trauma* which provides a broad range of political inquiry into the problems of trauma. He raises the issue history as discipline. There are two ways of dealing with trauma victim, working through and acting out. According to Domnick LaCapra:

The processes of working through including mourning and modes of critical thought and practice involve the possibility of making distinctions or developing articulations that are recognized as problematic but still function as limits and as possibly desirable resistance to undesirability, particularly when the later is tantamount to confuse and the obliteration or blurring of all distinction. (56)

Here, LaCapra is trying to figure out about the working through and acting out. Acting out is to live in the past remembering the traumatic event. In the process of working through the patient break from the past and living in the present. A traumatic person is able to distinguish between past and present to recall in memory that something happen then realizing that one is living here. The very tragic moments of the narrator crate the victim of minor character: Elizabeth, June and Claire.

Kali Tal, in *Worlds of Hurt*, argues the writing of trauma survivors comprises a distinct “*literature of trauma.*” The literature of trauma is defined by the identity of its author. The literature of trauma holds at it center the reconstruction and recuperation of the traumatic experience, but it is also actively engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the writing and representation of non-traumatized authors. (17) By referring this line Kali Tal trying to point out that trauma is always defined by the

identity of the author. The trauma writing is written always from the victim's perspective. Trauma of gender is experienced within a particular society. She says, "To identify and explicate literature by a member of the survivor group and to deconstruct the process by which the dominant culture codifies their traumatic experiences" (18). When we go back to this the novel, June wants to be free from stress. Her daughter is raped by her stepfather who also represents the source of trauma.

This research should help to abolish the gender bias and fight for equal right in globally. June is one of prominent characters in the text whose role is female as victim characters and shows the condition of female in developing country like USA. *Picoult* try to trace the level of girls of every society like America. And other hand, she focuses on how a female is traumatized just because of gender. Gender Language, women problem and gender condition have been focused. The traumatic reading of female protagonist, Elizabeth Nealon demonstrates patriarchy as come of trauma for female in the society.

As we have already discussed working through is seen as the process of repeating, elaborating and interesting discussion. Likewise, trauma theorist LaCapra says:

All that essential and interesting in the writing of history is not to be found at the level of the individual statements but at that of the politics adopted by historians when they select the statements that individuate their "picture of the past." . . . Saying true things about the past is easy- anybody can do that – but saying right things about the past is difficult. That truly requires historical insight and originality. . . . I have elsewhere called these "pictures of the past" narrative substances". (44)

Just like the description above, the author Picoult in *Change of Heart* narrates the suffering and creates a scene of violence. Bringing a reality based on truth in front of the world is not easy. The past of main characters June Nealon was more difficult in the novel. Every moment of her life has been spent in tragedy and her hope rests on small daughter Claire who is dying. Later on, time brings the next tragedy as her daughter is seriously ill and June and wants to escape from the agony. Past, present and future all times are hard for her and quite unbearable. The society too is hardly supportive to the women like June Claire.

June looks for a last resort to be free from her suffering and pain and just wants anew life of her daughter with a new heart. June is quoted as saying in the novel as:

My daughter is dying," I said tightly. "I'm sorry you had such a traumatic past. But right now, I have other things to focus on. "Undaunted, Grace kept speaking. "It would happen when my foster mom went to visit her sister. Her husband would come to my bedroom. I used to beg to leave my lights on at night. At first, it was because I was afraid of the dark; then later it was because I so badly wanted someone to see what was happening. (196)

Tal echoes Caruth as trauma is also linked with the idea that known only in the way it returns to haunt the individual often many years after the original event. Women and female body have been traditionally presented as passive, submissive. The modern social-political discourse continues to stigmatize women that reestablished the role of women as second sex and just for sexual pleasure. Historically, women reveals sexually, morally, culturally or socially trained have been received being and devalued. Such kind of society is reveal the intercourse, domination and devalued to women. In the *Change Of Heart*, Picoult has raised the issue of American women where the modern American man also gives various tortures to June's family. Picoult narrates:

Kurt gave us a statements...found the carpenter sexually abusing Elizabeth ... standoff... shots were fired ... Elizabeth got in the way. Elizabeth, I used to say, when she was following me around the tiny kitchen as I cooked dinner, I'm tripping over you. Elizabeth, your father and I are trying to have a conversation. Elizabeth, not now. Never (164)

After this incident, June feels her legs were numb as Irv leads her into a second ambulance. She feels paralyzed. She says, "I reached out, shaking, and pulled the cloth down. As soon as I saw Elizabeth, my knees gave out; if not for Irv, I would have fallen" (165). It was right after the long car travel June and Elizabeth fall victim of sexual assault and afterwards June inculcates a deep suffering of family trauma and social hindering.

June suffers from the various ways just because she is a female. Gender trauma is thus most effective in analyzing the novel. This text has been divided into several parts. Firstly, the text has organized June's extreme suffering and trauma. She reveals family loss and redemption that sprouts from Shay's torturous activities to her. Fake accident has been staged to get sexual romanticized. The second part of text has included religious belief and redemption where Shay has murdered June's husband and later he hears about June and Kurt's daughter Claire and intends to donate his heart, hoping to redeem his sinful soul. The final part of the novel narrates the scene of death penalty to Shay, but not the penalty of other perpetrators of sexual harassment. June seems helpless since her first husband's death. She feels deceived by every man she meets after that incident. Even when her daughter to Kurt, her second husband, the only survivor of the family besides June herself, is sick and needs a heart if she is to survive, no one is willing to do that. Her anxiety grows and Claire approaches death. Eventually, there is a guy who is willing to donate his heart, and he is none other than Shay himself.

The novel makes use of suggestive, derogatory and vulgar words such as fuck, panties, pregnant, drunk driver, murder, and underwear so as to show the explicit sexual activities. It is a deliberate strategy to show the readers the sexual abuse against female characters. Moreover, language (words) is a means to men use to dominate women. Men use them as a strategy to abuse women and female characters June, Elizabeth and Claire are the ones who suffer the most in the novel.

Tal, a pioneering scholar in the field of trauma studies, argues, “Our end goal is a community based on the full and informed participation of all its members—a community where difference is not only accepted but cherished because it provides us with new frames of reference and new ways of understanding ourselves” (150). However, she believes, “Within a society, there may be several targeted groups, whose members are subject to traumatization in greater or lesser degrees” and such “targeted groups can and should be examined both in relation to the dominant group and to each other” (151). She further argues:

In a situation of ongoing oppression or where there is risk of traumatic violence, many members of a targeted group will be victimized (some repeatedly), while other members will escape physical harm. In such circumstances, the category of trauma “survivor” is problematic, since every traumatized member of an oppressed community is aware of the potential for repeated victimization. During a period in which there is no safe refuge, the designation of “survivor” is always temporary and conditional. (155)

In *Change of Heart*, there is a complex and daring issue of female characters who are traumatized. Shay Broune has had terrible life no surprises there. As Tal has stressed, the female characters like June are always vulnerable to repeated crimes and are thus subject to trauma. Since the car accident June is not only in a state of shock because

she loses her husband, but also repeated sexual harassment. It's unbearable situation to June after seeing her daughter lying motionless.

I leaned over the stretcher, touching her face. Her skin was still warm. Elizabeth," I whispered, the way I did on school days to wake her. "Elizabeth, time to get up. "But she didn't stir; she didn't hear me. I broke down over her body, pulling her against me. The blood on her chest was garish. I tried to draw her closer, but I couldn't—this baby inside me was in the way. "Don't go, I whispered. "Please don't go." (165)

June is unquestionably shocked to hear about her daughter's death, "On the interminable ride to the hospital, I looked down at my shirt, "she reveals, "It was stained with blood, a Rorschach of loss" (165). This bloodstain is the cause of trauma that haunts her throughout.

It is even tougher for June when her daughter Claire desperately need a heart if she is to survive. Her father, who reluctantly sides with Shay over the issue of donating his heart, inquires:

A lot of Jews think you can't donate organs, because it violates Jewish law—you're not supposed to mutilate the body after death; you're supposed to bury it as soon as possible. But *pikkuah nefesh* takes precedence over that. It says that the duty to save life trumps everything. Or in other words—a Jew is required to break the law, if it means saving a life.(167)

Even in such a tragic situation, June's father sticks to traditional beliefs, further intensifying her agony. June, a victim herself and a mother of a dying child has so many questions in her mind. "At what cost, Daddy? Is it okay to kill someone who's a criminal, someone society really doesn't want around anymore, so that a little girl can live?" She asks, "What if it wasn't a little girl who needed that heart? What if it was some other criminal? Or what if it wasn't Shay who had to die in order to donate his

organs? What if it was me?"(167)June is in a state of dilemma as she has no option other than accepting the heart of the murderer of her husband and daughter to save the life of her child.

Traumatized June gradually loses hope despite trying to cope with the adverse situations one after another. She feels:

I suppose there was a point in my life when I wanted the package deal the chuppah, the husband, the kids, the carpools—but somewhere along ethaline, I'd just stopped hoping. I had gotten used to living alone, to saving the other half of the can of soup for the next night's dinner, to only changing the pillowcases on my side of the bed. I had become overly comfortable with myself, so much so that anyone else would have felt like an intrusion. (168)

June feels tired of fighting against the adversities. “One of the reasons I loved my parents—and hated them—“, she reveals, “is that they still thought I had a chance at all that. They only wanted me to be happy; they didn't see how on earth I could be happy by myself” (168).Hinting at the ironical situation, after not being understood even by her parents, she cries. “I'm tired," she says. "You should go now"” (168).

The situation worsens because “If Claire received Shay Bourne's heart, it would be bad enough if she were to harbor thoughts of murder” June believes, “But what would absolutely wreck me was if, with that heart in her, she had to feel her own father and sister being killed” (183). Just as she is thinking about heart transplant of her daughter Claire she learns that Shay has been seriously injured in an inmate fight, sustaining a severe blow to the maxillary sinus. Yet, to her sigh of relief, the doctor assures that he will not die of his injury. She even starts feeling for him as she admits, “I tried to imagine how it would feel to be Shay—hurt, aching, and confused—whisked away to an unfamiliar place for what seemed to be a prelude to his own execution(189). She even intends to see him there. “Shay was hospitalized, and I was

here, for better or for worse” she says, “I smiled at Shay Bourne and pretended that I was the person he needed me to be” (189).

Eventually, Claire gets a heart ready for transplant after all legal proceedings “Inside, the heart was beating sure and strong, a clear sign that it wasn't hers” (195). After that June “woke up from the nightmare, sweat-soaked, pulse racing” (195). She believes “what was at issue here was not where this heart came from, but whether it came at all” (196). June has not revealed it to Claire though. Yet “Even a long shower couldn't get the nightmare of Claire out of my mind, and I realized that we had to have the conversation I had been so studiously avoiding” (196). When she reaches out to Claire and turns the TV off, June hears something awkward for the first time. “What is wrong with you?” Claire cried, “Why are you being such a bitch!” (196). Is it because of the heart of a beast? She is utterly confused. June feels guilty for transplanting a criminal's heart and that too without asking for her daughter's permission.

In the hospital Claire feels traumatized. “I'm going to die in here,” she gasps, “Why can't I just go home and do it there, instead of hooked up to all of this stuff?” (212). “I want to sleep in my own bed,” Claire says, “instead of one with stupid plastic sheets and a pillow that crackles every time I move my head” (221). Leaving Claire at the hospital June heads home after almost a week. She feels everything strange outside. She drives her car into the cemetery where Elizabeth and Kurt were buried. She parks and starts walking to their shared grave. She kneels “on the grass and traced my finger over the lettering on the headstone: Beloved Daughter. Treasured Husband” (222). There she reminisces time spent with Kurt and feels lost. Picoult narrates:

After the murders, I would sleepwalk,” she reveals “I'd find myself the next morning in the gardening shed, holding a spade. In the garage, with my face pressed against the metal cheek of a shovel. In my subconscious, I was making

plans to join them; it was only when I was awake and alert and felt Claire kicking me from within that I realized I had to stay.(223)

Though she feels that Claire is urging her to live, she feels “Would she be the next one I'd bury here?”(223). She feels she will be putting her family back together in one place, that is, in the same graveyard. As she lies down prone on the grass, she pretends she “was cheek-to-cheek with her husband, a hallucinatory union.

Change of Heart demonstrates the male-made society's superiority and men's extreme domination over women. The tragic loss of her husband in an accident, loss of her second husband in a murder, loss of daughter as well and other instances of harassment lead the protagonist June to a state of trauma. She attempts to get rid of all these traumatic incidents but has to bear even worse situations one after another. Freedom and peace look alien to her. She is recurrently traumatized as she recalls those horrible incidents. Like Tal who echoes Caruth in saying that there is an emphatic tendency to focus on the destructive repetition of the trauma that governs a person's life, June cannot come out of her horrible past. “The repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be re-traumatizing,” argues Caruth, “as it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration” (63). June's struggle for survival and her fear of her convicted murder makes her always panicked. The repetition of traumatic events leads her to nightmares. Death of her most loved ones, necessity of a heart to save her only surviving daughter's life, the potential heart of the murderer and the legal proceedings to gain the approval for the heart are all agonizing experiences of the female protagonist June who gets traumatized. Picoult illustrates how family members, mostly males, fail to understand women's agony thus making it more difficult for females to cope with the society and life. The patriarchal structure is so unfriendly to women that it leads them to induce deep psychological problems and eventually

trauma. The novelist dares bring out such a horrible reality of being a female member of a hostile society where males have much say. Therefore, as Picoult seems to be saying, men are not just unfriendly to women, but are the source of almost all psychological breakdowns of women.

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