

I. Introduction to the writer and the Text

A Thousand Acres is written by an American writer, Jane Smiley. The book was published in New York in 1991 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction the following year. She was born in Los Angeles, California, on September 26, 1949. Set in the late 1970s, *A Thousand Acres* focuses on Ginny, a forty-something house-wife, and her growing awareness of her dissatisfaction with life in remembering sexual abuse at the hands of her father. Ginny and her sister Rose, are two of three daughters in a well-respected, white farming family in rural Iowa. Early in the story, their father, Larry Cook, signs his farm over to Ginny, Rose and their husbands, Ty and Pete, with the intent of forming a corporation. Soon after, Larry's behaviour and disposition become erratic and confrontational, presumably as he perceives a loss of status within the family. After an explosive confrontation between Larry and his daughters, Rose reveals to Ginny that he sexually abused them both. In the remainder of the book, Ginny questions the entirety of her life. More specifically, she reevaluates the authority of her father, husband, and the patriarchal structure of families and society they represent.

A Thousand Acres is a contemporary retelling of William Shakespeare's seventeenth-century drama *King Lear*. Both stories focus on the relationships between a father and his daughters and explore themes of gender roles, the dynamics of family relationships, and sibling rivalry. But whereas the daughters in *King Lear* behave badly out of their own sense of greed and selfishness, those in Smiley's novel are responding to their current situation after surviving a lifetime of emotional and sexual abuse at the hands of their father. The results in both cases are the same.

In this text Larry Cook owns a total of a thousand acres land. He had three daughters. Ginny, Rose and Caroline are his daughters living with him in Zebulon Country. Larry has a neighbour, Harold Clark. Clark has friendship with Larry on

common experience of farming. Ginny's mother dies when Ginny is small. Her father uses her and her sister, Rose, for quenching his sexual desire. In the beginning, Ginny can't recall her past experiences, but when she is forced by her sister to recall the memories, she does so. After the revelation of the past memories, she gets relief. She has married Ty but their relation cracks down when her husband knows her five miscarriages. Rose, has two daughters but she has always fear that her daughters can be molested by her father. Caroline becomes a lawyer functioning a male's work.

The book has been revisited by a lot of writers from different perspectives. *A Thousand Acres* is generally considered to be Jane Smiley's breakthrough novel. Because the book is an unabashed retelling of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, most critics judge it on the basis of how it compares to original. James Schiff compares this novel with *King Lear*. He says that the purpose of revisioning *King Lear* is to reverse the positions of characters and their roles. "*Lear* contains such a mystery, the one that Smiley latches onto what could have caused such hatred and brutality from Goneril and Regan" (17). In *King Lear* the major character, *King Lear* is suffered and tortured by his daughter and their extreme greed. Whereas in *A Thousand Acres*, the major characters Ginny and Rose are suffered from their own father. Thus, James opines that Smiley wants to reverse the characters and situations. He compares Ginny with Goneril, Larry with Lear, Pete with Cornwall, Rose with Rogan, Frank with France and so on. Thus, she sees *A Thousand Acres* is a pure revisioned version of *King Lear*.

Many critics consider the novel a feminist revision of the original tragedy because Smiley appeals to readers to sympathize with the two elder daughters instead of the father. In Shakespeare's version, the roles are reversed, and Lear is a sympathetic protagonist from whose point of view readers see the wrongdoings of the daughters. Rebecca Valentine is a freelance writer and editor who considers this novel

from a feminist perspective, focusing on character development of the three sisters. As she writes, "Ginny, Rose and Caroline each represent a different stage of awareness of feminist thought, and when deconstructed their characters reveal the idea that awareness does not necessarily equal" (211). She views that all have feminist attribute but degree is different. The youngest daughter, Caroline, is found more feminist as she doubts about her father's decision to divide all his land among his daughters. She is the embodiment of feminism. The idea of androgyny is represented in this character: she is consistently described throughout the book in terms of her actions, and the reader is never given a solid image of what she looks like. As she writes, "This is in keeping with the feminist tenent that physical appearances should not define a person's value or existence" (212). In the novel we don't get clear physical features of hero. Similarly, Rose, the middle on the continuum of feminist ideology. A survivor of both incest and breast cancer at the beginning of the novel, she has designed for herself a fierce existence. As Valentine writes, "Having attempted to submerge her fathers' abuse in a series of affairs, Rose turns to Jess, knowing full well that he is Ginny's lower. Worse, perhaps, she regards this behaviour as her right (212). Her resistance towards her father's atrocities makes her more feminist. In the same way Valentine presents the major character, too a strong feminist:

Ginny recognizes that knowledge is the one gift she can take away from a life time of forgetting and protecting. However, this gift will continue to enrich her life, and it allows her to pull away from the patriarchal system that so thoroughly damaged her younger self and prevented her from seeing her life and even her loved ones as they really were. (213)

Ginny recognizes all the patriarchal oppressions at the end and she leaves her husband as well. She starts living on her own. In this way, Valentine, reads this novel focusing the feminist tenets and feminist appliances.

Catherine Cowen Olsen sees this novel through the eyes of types of foods the characters prepare and eat. She shows a direct connection between the blandness of the food the Cook family eats and the self-denying, pinched lives they live. As she writes:

This novel deals largely with the complications of mid western farm life. And what could seem more harmless than bland food ? The spiceless meat-and potatoes dishes that the characters choke down are all so undisguised that we are tempted to assume that nothing could be simpler. (21)

The pure well water turns out to be laced with poisons that cause the women's miscarriages. The meats are also tainted with drugs and vegetables are chock full of insecticides. Ginny prepares the foods for the family but she feels minor. From the opening of Harold's roast to the poisoned sausages the conflict and connection of power among the family members is reflected. She shows Larry as an ordering character. In this way she presents all the characters and their power through the foods they eat. Larry as a roast eater and order giver uses much power. Whereas, Ginny uses poison to Rose to take revenge up on her.

Trauma & Trauma Theory

Trauma is an emotional shock which often has a lasting psychic effect. This shock results in a person's prolonged psychological negative effect. The shock lies in the deeper level of the mind which frequently comes into memory of the person to remind the incidents which have caused that effect. Trauma can be caused, because of horror attack, sexual violence or incest relation, childhood rape etc, or by human acts or natural disasters as well earthquakes, hurricanes, floods etc. Survivors may be attacked emotionally when they themselves witness the event and hear their relatives cry a lot. Likewise, due to sex violence, rape or incest relation or attack by other people too can cause an emotional effect in the human psyche. When the people or the tortured victims suffer sense of safety they may get slow psychic effect which to can result in trauma.

Emotion serves as the radar for both our bodies and the confusing world around, us they are central to our survival. Emotions register on our faces and in our body language as we experience pleasure.

Trauma injures its victims in several ways. It disables the early warning system or our survival radar. It confuses us because we can no longer keep the details of our lives in order. It not only prevents the expression of some emotions but it may rob of the words we need to talk about the injury may be more severe and costly in early childhood, William cote and Roger Simpson say, "For children, every aspect of the self will be distorted and bent in the direction of the traumatic exposure." Our ways of remembering change too, planning the traumatic experience deep in our brains. Sometimes effectively supported by the brain, those traumatic memories may reach us in horrifying nightmares or intrusive flashbacks to the event.

The medical profession has approached trauma in its most severe manifestation. They urge that the collection of symptoms continuously troubles a person for a long time after a traumatic event. In looking at these long-lasting cases they gave the name post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Its symptoms are intrusive recollections, avoidance and heightened anxiety.

The, basic PTSD has three ingredients. They are flash black of events, numbing the pain, false alarms, avoidance and forget fullness. There reactions must be present at once and must be caused by an event that terrifies, horrifies or makes someone helpless. In other words, the sufferers are so haunted by a terrible event that they cannot forget it. What especially distinguishes PTSD from more temporary effects is recurring and unavoidable recollections. That is not just a lasting and unpleasant memory of a bad event but one that hits so often and so hard that the person cannot lead a normal life for example a war soldier may frequently remember the persons killed near by him. A woman may feel a rapist grabbing her. Sometimes, the victim may not have such clear images but when they sleep, the same terrifying dreams of the trauma come. After they wake up, it takes a little time to fade a way. PTSD also is marked by emotional numbing and avoidance. The victims want to remain silent and don't like to remember. Most survivors of trauma will avoid reminders and change their usual patterns for a while to prevent unpleasant recollections from surfacing. They don't like to go near it, for example, a passenger who was deadly shocked in a train accident, never tries to go near any train for a while. The victims may remain quiet or silent about the event. They don't like to reveal their pain. But this state remains for a while and after they think it to be the right time they reveal all. Their memory is suppressed either by immediate shock or by persistent trauma.

The numbing aspect of PTSD includes forgetting with great force as well as memories that cannot be suppressed. This is called psychogenic amnesia, this kind of forgetting originates in the mind or in mental or emotional conflict, rather than physical injury. In this situation the sufferer does not forget the horrible details of the bad experience but cannot remember all of what happened.

Avoidance is a symptom of PTSD, although therapists caution that it may not continue for so long that a formal diagnosis of PTSD is warranted. Most survivors of trauma will avoid reminders and change their usual patterns for a while to prevent unpleasant recollection from surfacing. Numbing and avoidance, then can help someone upto a point. The concern in PTSD is that this aspect becomes a serious obstacle to recovery. The numbing aspect of PTSD includes forgetting with a revenge, as well as memories that can not be suppressed. Called psychogenic amnesia, this kind of forgetting originates in the mind or in mental or emotional conflict, rather than from physical injury. In this situation the sufferer does not forget the horrible details of the bad experience but cannot remember all of what happened. In fact, the missing pieces lie beneath the protective piece of forgetfulness. It is too terrible or painful to be exposed to the daylight of consciousness.

The final PTSD ingredient is a physical, not emotional, condition. It is caused by the mental trauma but takes the form of greatly aroused bodily reactions. The person shudders or jumps at unexpected noises, not necessarily those that are similar to noises that occurred during the original trauma carried to extremes, that sensitivity can set off so many false alarms that the person can not concentrate or sleep restfully and is irritable or withdrawn. The ability to enjoy intimacy and friendship may be weak, making a normal sex life difficult.

So post-traumatic stress disorder can show itself in very different and seemingly opposite effects: numbness, reoccurring bad memories & extreme irritation or withdrawal. No people show PTSD exactly the same way what the sufferers have in common is that a trauma has so distressed their lives that they cannot function well in social, occupational or other important everyday situation.

PTSD may be caused by sexual violence, rape or incest. The victim during the assault get surprised initially by the attack and it includes physical injury and use of physical force or a weapon that imposes the threat of death. The victim then suffers the violation of her or his body. They try to self-defend themselves but it often becomes or appears to be useless, even life threatening the brain and nervous system and overwhelmed the foundation is set for a lasting injury William Cate and Roger Simpson say, "Each component of the ordinary response in an altered and exaggerated state long after the actual danger is over. Traumatic events produce profound and lasting changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory" (162).

Incest is a sexual relation between the persons who are relatives. They can be daughter, father or brother, sister etc. A father may have forceful sexual relation with his own daughter. The daughter may suffer a lot resulting into trauma. Childhood sexual trauma causes or results in severe difficulties in personality development. The difficulties are particularly serious when incestuous abuse has been committed inside the family by the father, stepfather, the mother's partner, and so on, from whom, because of their dependency, children can't escape. It is also accepted hypothesis that at the same time the children are victims of pressure to secrecy from the wrongdoers, pressure by which they are reduced to silence although they are witnesses to the violence. It seems that these child victims focus their energies on simply surviving the inescapable horror of their experience by means of coping strategies which are shaped

by the pressures for denial and the threats of punishment from the abusers. Reality is perceived in a distorted way, negative affects are split off, and apparently harmless fragments of experience remain in consciousness. Experience can also be completely negated. The victims surrender their own perception and interpretation of reality under the influence of the abuser's meaning-system. They shouldn't hear and speak rather should remain numb. This leads to a permanent impairment of reality functioning even in adulthood, and also to continuing vulnerability to the threat of violence. This causes that the personality development of a child can be either impaired or undone in a defensive regression, this makes for severe hindrances in the child's or the adult's relationship to the self and to others.

Rape is also a vital factor of trauma. After the rape ends, the person who survives may face immediate contact with strangers, police, family, friends and medical personnel. This event occurs as she begins a lifetime. The intrusive memories of the assault and the numbing constriction follow the trauma. Balance, confidence and control over reality disappear. The victims can't open their mouths. They choose to be silent about the assault, suffering the trauma without any help. Children raped or molested by parents, teachers, or neighbours often endure the trauma in silence for all or much of a lifetime, hiding their pain in ways that block recovery.

Trauma affects continue for years. Even as they become less frequent, the rape survivor faces the possibility that reminders of the assault will revive the trauma symptoms. Individually vary greatly in their response to rape, but studies suggest that although some trauma symptoms may be less frequent after several months, fear and anxiety persist much longer, leading in some survivors to nervous breakdowns, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.

Women who are the victims always want their privacy. They have a fear that they may lose all their status if anything is disclosed. They feel insecure of their personal safety while hiding their matters. Sometimes they happen to choose very trivial choices. Every relationship poses new stresses, every encounter may set off new fears; even friends and family now respond with blank stares and flatering conversation. This process is very changeable. It is marked by feelings of guilt, then of hatred and fear. Nothing in the day is predictable, nothing in life is certain. For most of us privacy is simply a passive claim to keep things much as they are. Violations of our privacy are at most, minor irritations. For the rape survivor privacy is an essential condition for taking steps toward recovery. Choosing to give personal information to police, friends and reporters often is a step forward. Choosing to give their name or to with hold it has proved profoundly important to survivors.

Traumatic events are often harder on children than on adults. Children who are raped are very delicate. More over, when a child is raped by fathers, stepfathers or other relatives the case is more critical. Most of the incest victims are very young. They may be five or six years old. The abuse may continue over a long period. Their abuse or victimization easily do not come to public. The victims struggle to confront the trauma they had suffered several decades earlier because of assaults by their father or uncle etc. They are unable to cope with the pain, shame, anger and emotional crippling that followed them into adulthood. Their trauma doesn't go away even the torturers die when the victims open their secret, their other relatives don't believe it easily. When the victim is fully grown up she goes to see a psychiatrist or therapist. In the course of treatment, she appears to remember being sexually abused by her father during early childhood. She uses her recovered memory and confronts the attacker, tells other about the assault and takens action against the accused.

When a girl is continuously abused by their father or the caretaker, they develop or suffer a long psychic effect. The chronic incestuous abuse and the development of post traumatic stress symptom severely damage their capacity for free actions and ability to relate positively to themselves and others. Social scientific literature as child maltreatment overwhelmingly demonstrates that children require a great degree of consistent external protection by the care providers to develop a healthy sense of self, agency and the ability to relate constructively to others. Instead of taking care of the children, when a parent sexually abuses a child and violates her bodily, her psychic integrity is lost. The child never tries to attach to her parent because the child's attachment to her parent is severely threatened. But the child needs such attachment for her basic survival therefore, she generally reacts to sexual abuse by denying its reality. The child dissociates the violent, traumatic events from one's consciousness. Dissociation refers to separating and splitting off elements of the traumatic experience, i.e. emotions, thoughts, sensation, location, time etc. Dissociation or the shattered fragments of reality caused by the abuse defies conscious integration. For most children who are sexually abused for a long period, the dissociation as a complete coping mechanism will not be effective in consistently denying the reality of the abuse when dissociation fails, children tend to take full responsibility for the abuse and conclude that there is something intrinsically bad about them that causes the abuse. But interestingly, this process of self-denigration and self hatred occurs even in children who experience complete dissociation and retain no conscious memories of the abuse.

Dissociation and self- blame enable the sexually abused child to remain attached to her care providers, but due to these activities the abuse is not exposed and stopped. Most children respond by experiencing a lot of post-traumatic stress

symptoms that frequently persist through adulthood. First children experience the traumatic even in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, intense bodily or emotional sensations, very terrifying sensory perceptions, behavioural changes etc. Then, re-experiencing the traumatic events causes them to happen between continuous forms of emotional numbing and hyper arousal. It reacts as the encouraging factor for the potential danger. Some signs appear to them. They feel irritation. They show angry outbursts. They become restless. They feel difficult to concentrate and fell difficult in sleeping too. In their attempts to prevent from hyper arousal, sexually abused children and other trauma victims experience withdrawal and detachment from emotions and physical sensations. When emotional numbing does not occur naturally, children often choose automatic arousal they include self-mutilation. They damage their body parts themselves. They go on fasting, vomiting. They show compulsive sexual behaviour. They are equally compulsive risk-taking. Such automatic arousal offers temporary relief from unbearably negative emotions. Likewise, trauma victims tend unintentionally to reenact the trauma compulsively by either acting self-destructively, harming others or becoming revictimized. They try but again they may feel victimized. Such post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms result in a severely fragmented self. The self of the victims is fragmented, separated and can't join together. Jennifer Beste describes this fragmentation as follows:

All the structures of the self-the image of the body, the internalized image of others, and the values and ideas that lend a sense of coherence and purpose- are invaded and systematically broken down ... while the victim of the single acute trauma may say she is "not herself" since the event, the victim of chronic trauma may lose the sense that she has a self. (8)

Incestuous abuse thus distorts and can even destroy central aspects of the self necessary for a healthy self-concept like self-awareness, self-continuity, self-coherency etc. The structure of a personal self or the image of a person which is internalized and values are all broken. The victims can't find their self as well as images that convince them that they have lost them. They feel as if they don't have their 'self' with them. The loss of self or fragmentation of 'self' causes more victimized. Such fragmentation of the self in turn impedes developing an effective sense of agency. Many incest victims, due to their post-traumatic stress symptoms and extreme negative self-concept, lack basic skills needed for effectively constructing a life plan. The abilities they can achieve are: achieving a sufficient degree of self-reflectiveness and self-awareness. They possess a minimal sense of self-worth, and being able to imagine a future for oneself.

The incest victim can change her life, can make a future plan. Even if an incest victim is able to master the tasks needed to construct a life plan, many of the physical, psychological, and behavioural effects of incest hinder her from being able to reflect on her present options and choose actions that actualize that plan. The incest victim may have good cognitive and affective skills but the victims are often stunned and deformed by the abuse and subsequent PTSD symptoms. The victims do doubt their own skills and abilities. They commonly have difficulty accurately assessing and getting their situations. They often doubt the accuracy of their perceptions. They look hurried to do anything instantly. They often react impulsively, making it difficult to protect themselves in threatening situations and to choose the best option to promote their progress.

Chronic sexual abuse is very fatal. It has lots of problems. The problems caused by it has very long lasting and causes with victims' sense of self. It can deeply

distort incest victims' capacity to relate constructively to other persons. The victims are always looking forward to trust from their family of origin. But, when they get betrays of trust in their family and their negative self-esteem, adult incest victims are hopeless or desperate to find care, protection and external validation of themselves. Similarly, they are very afraid of trusting anyone at once or being abandoned by others. Often they are more frightened to be abused too. These conflicting desires make it very difficult to establish and enjoy authentic, intimate relationships. Most often, their abusive families have isolated them from others. They stop the victims for their development of social skills needed for authentic connection.

The victims may have various past experiences. They might have been victimized in different ways which result into the variation in attitudes towards relationship. Some adult survivors feel threatened by the prospect of intimacy and, as a way to avoid being revictimized. They do not want to form any close relationships. They deeply fear that the incestuous abuse has destroyed their capacity to love other persons. But some of them respond to their abusive past by hopelessly seeking attachment to others at all costs. They behave in that way hoping for social approval of their desire.

The cultural forces are also very responsible for the fragmenting memory and undermining kinship and social ties. Despite the several women's movement the incest or abused women are facing lots of problems in their society. For the treatment of the victims we need to use their memories. But their memories are recovered in their adulthood. Therapists who defend recovered or delayed memory claim that amnesia for traumatic events is a common defense, particularly of children. Trauma seems to create both intrusive remembering – often described as "flashbacks" – and amnesia for overwhelming events which is accompanied by emotional numbing. Intrusive

remembering is much more common consequence of trauma than is amnesia. Memory is highly controlled and reconstructive sometimes the victims can be led to believe false accounts of their experiences and to defend them with the emotional conviction of true memory. Sexual violations create an important basis for feminist struggles against patriarchy. But it is not easy because it is challenging to the validity of memories of sexual abuse. Beyond these challenges to the memories of women is the closely allied problem of professional authority in interpreting those memories. As the mental health field is increasingly 'feminized', with women numerically dominating the professions, the debate over recovered memories takes on a double-gendered cast. While clinical spokespersons in the memory debate are men, the vast majority of practicing clinicians, as well as many of the leading theorists in the field of trauma and sexual abuse, are women.

The feminist unity can be called in response to the memory controversy to use defensively by women professionals. They obscure the range of problematic issues. Survivors of sexual abuse are part of the 'adult child' movement that has advanced a broad critique of the American family and its dysfunctionality. Unlike earlier periods, when poor families were the primary focus of professional scrutiny, the adult-child movement combines self-help groups and psychotherapy to advance an indictment of middle class families. As a drama that seems to resonate with many middle-class families, the memory debate is part of a larger cultural struggle over authoritative accounts of the past and implicitly a challenge to the word of both the real and the symbolic father. The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s confronted the hegemonic ideal of a unified collective memory. In this context, the recovery of repressed memory may be understood as the subjective experience of struggle against a received truth in creating a new identity and narrative account of the past.

Karl Rahner's theological anthropology and trauma theory appear to present vastly different accounts of the self and human freedom. His conception of the self is an important starting point for consideration. He depicts persons as endowed with a self-consciousness that makes possible the capacity to transcend who they presently are as they actualize their potentialities and grow into greater degree of being. The human self relies on other persons, then, in the sense that interaction with others is necessary to experience the continual process of self-transcendence and self-realization.

The experience of incest victims, by contrast, strongly suggest that self awareness, self-reflection, and self-transcendence are dependent upon more than reason and interaction with one's environment. Developing sufficient degrees of these attributes appears to be contingent to a significant extent on the absence of overwhelming stress and the presence of supportive relationships. The desires to know more, learn, grow, explore, place everything into question and be open to further possibilities are deeply influenced by one's material and social condition. As we have seen, severe interpersonal harm and its resulting post-traumatic symptoms can severely disable and even destroy at times the capacity for sufficient self-awareness and forms of self-transcendence necessary for one to act freely. The experience of incest victims also cast doubt upon the adequacy of Rahner's understanding of how persons receive and respond to God's grace. Rahner argues that, besides offering God's very self, God gives each person sufficient grace to receive and accept God's grace. Rahner confidently claims that such grace enables a person to open himself or herself to God's love and experience. Many incest victims despair at experiencing only silence, distance, betrayal, and judgment from God.

If we accept Rahner's above account of God's grace as fully adequate, we appear committed to the belief that God's grace must somehow enable incest victims' freedom to love God, neighbour, and self, presumably, any failure an incest victim has relating lovingly to others throughout her life is a sufficiently free response that accepts to the existential of sin pervading each person's life. To conclude, trauma is a state of being overwhelmed both physically and psychologically. It is the experience of terror, loss of control and utter helplessness during a stressful event that threatens one's physical or psychological integrity or both.

Trauma caused by incestuous relation between child(s) and their parent can be more severe since they have moral ground and value too. The abused can't express their sexual abuse because they get regular threat from the perpetrator and the moral proprieties as well. They keep the abuse within themselves and the repression of such an experience deeply hampers the psychological development of the victims. The victims don't reveal the fact; they rather try to conceal and adjust with the situation. They suffer alone.

In case of father daughter incest it creates the most severe distortions in the daughter's identity, capability for effective agency and capacity for healthy forms of rationality. The daughter even after their marriage can't live happily; she frequently changes her relations with her husbands. Her final stage can be the avoidance of marital life too. Memory plays a vital role to liberate her from her psychic disorder. Revelation of past memory of victimization can relieve her from traumatic effect and make her feel strong hatred towards her perpetrator father. They become inclined to reject the patriarchy that has victimized them.

II. Trauma of Incest in *A Thousand Acres*

Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* is at once a remarkably faithful and a profoundly subversive revision of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, transplanted from ancient Britain to a family farm in Iowa around 1979. The intertwined stories of Larry Cook's division of his prosperous thousand acres among his three daughters and the strained relationship of his neighbour, Harold Clark, with his two sons immediately establish Smiley's Shakespearean pre-text, as she relocates the story from Albion to Zebulon county.

Although her reviewers repeatedly express nervousness about Smiley's debt to or reliance on *King Lear*, it seems clear that it was, in no small measure, the conspicuous ambition of this novel to rewrite *King Lear* which generated much of its critical acclaim, earning Smiley both a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Critics Circle Award in 1992.

Smiley's novel, *A Thousand Acres* and Shakespeare's novel *King Lear* are intertextually analyzed from the perspective of incest trauma. How the characters in each of the novels share almost the same experience. It is true that *A Thousand Acres* has more graphic depictions of sex than those offered by Shakespeare, it is worth noting that the adulterous affair between Ginny Cook Smith and Jess Clark is perhaps the least graphic sexual encounter in the novel. Placing the unnarratable trauma of incest at the dramatic and literal center of the novel, Smiley recasts *King Lear* in ways that destabilize the father's narrative in both novel and play. *A Thousand Acres* is not simply a sensationalist variation on *Lear*; what it does is to force the reader to confront his or her complicity in resisting the novel's retroactively self-evident secret. What makes the revelation all the more shocking is its illumination of the motive force behind our resistance to knowledge. Because we know that Larry Cook is *Lear*'s shadow, we cannot admit about Larry what we are unwilling to think of *Lear*.

We find suppressed incest narratives in the novel what is perhaps the most shocking and radical aspect of Smiley's reading of *King Lear* is not that she insists on the reality of an incestuous encounter between parent and child understanding incest not as a confused expression of love, but as a brute exercise of power and control, Smiley raises several retrospective questions for the play: How does Goneril reflect and play upon her father's desires when she pledges to her father a love "that makes breath poor, and speech unable" (1.1.60). Why do Lear's accusations invariably sexualize his daughters when they refuse to defer to him, although he was the one who commanded them to perform their love for him? Smiley's reworking of the Lear plot is significant, however, not because it offers a revisionist Lear or because it supplies the girlhood Goneril does not receive in the play what Smiley's novelistic treatment discloses is the intimate connection between memory and revision in the perpetuation of inherited myths, be they familial or social. This is a process, which, if properly understood, produces nothing less than a new way of reading Shakespeare's play and the cultural work it performs in its construction of Lear's tragedy as the intersection of the personal and the political. The radical reconstruction to which Smiley subjects her own narrative in midcourse makes inevitable the necessary reconstruction of the narrative these two texts share. Whether this results in blindness or double vision is, in the final analysis, a function of the nature of, and the relationship between repression and oppression.

Rather than focus on the agon of blindness and insight in the psychic construction of the play's fathers, the novel makes the daughter's shifting perspective the lens of perception and the instrument of revision in the story. Ginny, the likable and unlikely counterpart to Goneril, is the novel's narrator, and it is through her eyes that we witness the painful deterioration of her family and marriage.

In the novel, Ginny and her sister get molested by their father at their early age after the death of their mother. As Ginny says "when we were teenagers. How he came into our rooms. I licked my lips switched my legs so the right crossed over the left. We had separate rooms. But he went into your room at night" (194).

The perpetrator threatens the victims not to reveal the fact. The victims become submissive and accept the reality. They are morally and psychologically threatened, thus they happen to repress all the tortures. In the novel Rose says:

On the surface, I thought it was okay, that it must be okay if he said it was, since he was the rule maker. He didn't rape me, Ginny. He seduced me. He said it was okay, that it was good to please him, that he needed it, that I was special. He loved me. (196)

Here Rose suffers much. She knows that what her father has done upon her is unacceptable and unbearable. But she has to accept it saying that he is a rule maker. The evil act must be okay. She feels herself inferior to him, so she thinks that it is good to satisfy or please him. The father always does such work but she has got to say that she loves her.

The victim of incest trauma has conscious as well as unconscious thinking. She is conscious of her activities but unconsciously negative attitudes and feelings about herself join the consciousness. They feel humiliated as Ginny expresses:

The whole way I was conscious of my body-graceless and hurrying, unlit, panting, ridiculous in its very femininity. It seemed like my father could just look out of his big front window and see me naked, chest heaving, breasts, thighs and buttock jiggling, dignity irretrievable. (117)

Here she says she is conscious of her body but she thinks it is graceless. She feels inferior and doesn't see herself as a woman. She feels herself ridiculous always hurrying. No light is lit for her to make her life bright. She always thinks that her father is looking at her naked body. She has such feelings all the time. This regularly haunts her and makes her feel that her father is looking through a big window and wants to attack her for sex. She feels that she has lost her dignity and she will never be able to gain it again.

The victims of trauma have frequent nightmares. They recur the dream about horror and terrifying experience or events. In their nightmares also they see nakedness of themselves:

What's worse is I have this recurring nightmare about grabbing things that hurt me, like that straight razor Daddy used to have, or a jar of some poison that spills on my hands. I know I shouldn't, and I watch myself, but I can't resist. I dream about standing in the lunch line naked. It's always the lunch line in ninth grade. Nakedness dreams are very common. (59)

Very bad nightmares take place in her. She sees about being grabbed and hurt. She dreams that her father carries razor and hurt her. He has a jar of poison which he spills on her hands. This nightmare always haunts her which hampers her personality development as well. She just goes on seeing because she can't resist or psychologically she is defeated. She always dreams that she stands naked in the lunch. These dreams of nakedness are recurring in her life causing her nightmares that haunt her psychology badly.

The victims start hating the perpetrator as they remember the bad experience. Though they dare to hate them, they have still fright of the perpetrator. They can't do anything to him so, they simply want him to die or curse him as Rose says:

He's dangerous ! He's impulsive and angry, and he doesn't give other people the same benefit of the doubt that they give him ! 'I know that. Last night I really gave him a talking to.' I hate him. Sometimes waves of hatred just roll through me, and I want him to die and go to hell and stay there forever, just roasting ! (193)

Here, Rose is also suffering from her father's abuse. Sometimes she recalls the bad experiences of her childhood. When she does so, she is very angry with him. She curses him that he lives in the hell. Her evaluation or judgment of her own father shatters and takes the side from where she gains extreme hatred towards her father. But she can't do anything physically since she knows that he is 'dangerous.' She knows how she was physically violated or molested. Thus she uses her words or desire only against him.

She chooses to be silent. She gets help from the noises produced by animals. She is familiar with silence and comfort. As she says:

The parrot wasn't entirely silent beneath his covering. I could hear him scrape the perch. A cat walked through the room and marked two chairs by rubbing his arched back against them. I like the silence and the sense of companionship I felt from the animals, and I experienced, for the first conscious time, the peaceful self regard of early grief when the fact that you are still alive and functioning is so strangely similar to your previous life that you think you are okay.

Her choice of animals and choice of silence show that she is fed up with the regular contact of man. She makes her consciousness work in peace and regard and thinks that it is still alive and working.

As Ginny begins to remember, at her sister Rose's insistence, the suppressed narrative of their father's abuse, she finds herself occupying a new place in the story whose shape she is never able to control, nor entirely to escape. Indeed, giving the woman's perspective is in no way redemptive for this novel ferociously resisting a sentimental portrayal of female empowerment through the discovery of the female voice. Smiley makes clear the many ways in which Ginny's perspective has always been and continues to be - even after she remembers her father's nocturnal visit - partial, tentative, speculative, neither unmediated nor of her own making.

Reflecting upon events which have yet to be disclosed to the reader, Ginny muses to herself:

Perhaps there is a distance that is the optimum distance for seeing one's father, farther than across the supper table or across the room, somewhere in the middle distance: he is dwarfed by trees or the sweep of a hill, but his features are still visible his body language still distinct. Well, that is a distance I never found. He was never dwarfed by the landscape ... (20)

Ginny's inability to find a proper distance from her father to put him in perspective is only later shown to be a function of his inability to maintain a proper distance from her. But for most of the novel she herself can offer no explanation. Significantly, even after he gives away the farm and she and Rose become the legal executors, she finds there is no room for her point of view, even in her own mind.

It was easy, sitting here and looking at him, to see it his way. What did we deserve after all ? There he stood, the living source of it all, of us all. I squirmed, remembering my ungrateful thoughts When he talked he had this effect on me. Of course it was silly to talk about "my point of view." When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished. Not even I could remember it. (176)

The eventual revelation of child abuse and necessary revaluation this entails casts a long shadow back over both the novel's opening crisis and the play that inspires it. The knowledge of this father's sins makes horribly concrete the inappropriate demands of love which Larry Cook places upon his adult daughters, Ginny, Rose and Caroline as well as offering a context for his very different treatment of the elder daughters and the favourite youngest child. Moreover, these revelations implicitly extend to a reconsideration of the private context for *King Lear*'s public test of love.

Where *King Lear* begins with the division of the kingdom, *A Thousand Acres*, ironically, begins with an "incorporation." In an attempt to evade inheritance taxes and shield his property against the prospect of his death, Larry Cook decides to make his family farm into a corporation, dividing the stocks among his three daughters. Larry cook's suffocating and controlling "incorporation" is in no way a concession to age, nor does he seem to imagine this legal maneuver as a relinquishing of power. Not only does this suggest a fascinating reading of Lear's "darker purpose" in giving away his kingdom, it performs a grotesque literalization of cook's annexation of his two older daughters, while he holds his youngest at a distance. As Caroline's eventual reincorporation into her father's affections suggests, incorporation for cook represents a complete melding of identities rather than the maintenance of familial distinctions or paternal preferences. Even cook's fondest memories of his favourite child chillingly

put together his daughter's histories in what can only be regarded as his uncanny self-serving senility.

The novel's opening crisis is precipitated when the youngest and favourite daughter, Caroline, cannot, or will not, heave her heart into her mouth to support her father's plan. Ginny and Rose and their husbands Ty and Pete, support the idea publicly, while privately wondering about Larky's wits. For expressing her doubts, Caroline gets a door quite literally slammed in her face. "You don't want it, my girl, you're out. It's simple as that" (21). His vengeance is so swift as to seem expected, planned.

Caroline is, in fact, the only daughter to have escaped the farm, an escape made possible only by the protection of her older sisters, who shield her not only from the abuse of their father, but from the knowledge that such abuse ever took place. And it is again a tribute to Smiley's profoundly tragic and unsentimental vision that without this knowledge, Caroline only resents her sisters for having come between her and her father—provoking her, in the end—to take his side against them. Because the reader is also at this point shielded from that knowledge, Larry Cook's "darker purpose" is as tangled and unavailable for representation as it is in Shakespeare's play. The whole plan for "incorporation" seems to all three of his daughters an inexplicable whim concealing as common sense. As Ginny remarks, "That wasn't him talking, it was some banker talking. Or else, if it was him talking, he was talking about something besides accepting his mortality and avoiding inheritance taxes. That would be an awfully farsighted and level-headed thing for him to do" (22).

Larry Cook, in attempting to force Caroline to claim her legacy in his lifetime, seems to be claiming the right to punish her for leaving the farm and rejecting the only life he has ever known, the only gift he has to offer. As in *King Lear*, the design

of this test of love seems to provoke and even guarantee its failure. At this point, Smiley gives no more clues than Shakespeare for understanding the irrational and disproportionate rage he feels toward the youngest daughter who was only moments before his acknowledged favourite. Smiley, however, eventually introduces a fuller emotional context when Caroline is revealed to be the only daughter spared paternal incest. Consequently, it is not so much the strength of Larry Cook's love for Caroline that motivates his fury. For it is her love and loyalty alone he counts on since she is the only one of his daughters who he believes has no reason to hate him.

It is tiresomely inevitable that the incest narrative in *A Thousand Acres* should raise the specter of "political correctness", whether framed in terms of blame or praise. It concludes cheerfully that the book is saved in the end because Smiley knows exactly what she is doing ... and her purpose is art rather than sexual politics. Fuller's attempt to clear her of the charge notwithstanding, Jane Smiley is quite clearly and unapologetically writing about the politics of sex, about fathers' ownership of daughters and about the deep connections between the patriarchal appropriation of women and exploitation of the land "women", appropriation of women and exploitation of the land "women", Smiley has remarked, "just like nature or the land, have been seen as something to be used. Smiley thus represents incest not as a perversion or turning away from traditional notions of the duty of women and nature to yield to man but as the extreme enactment of such conceptions of ownership. The impulse to incest concerns not so much sex as a will to power, an expression of yet another way the woman serves the man moreover, far from being a recent phenomenon, a cultural obsession with incest can be traced to the early modern period, revealing the long history of patriarchy's incorporation of women.

Smiley's revision asks us to reconsider the assumption that Lear's shame is groundless or out of all proportion, at the same time she blurs the lines between shame and guilt. While Smiley renders unambiguous the father's actual guilt, there is no reason to assume that he remembers or acknowledges- even to himself-his drunken nocturnal visits to his teen-aged daughters' rooms any more than Ginny herself could remember these events before Rose pressed her to accept the memory of that horror. Shame, seems precisely to describe the feeling which causes Larry to scream at Ginny during the novels' "Storm scene":

You barren whore ! I know all about you, you slut. You've been creeping here and there all your life, making it up to this one and that one. But you're not really a woman, are you ? I don't know what you are, just a bitch is all just a dried-up whore bitch. (181)

Ginny listens with unflinching fascination: "I admit that I was transfixed; yes I thought, this is what his been thinking all these years, waiting to say it" (181). Rose, who has never forgotten what Ginny has not yet remembered, stands by, impassive during her father's Shakespearean soliloquy of self-pity: "I gave you everything, and I get nothing in return, just some orders about doing this and being that and seeing points of view (182) Rose responds,

We didn't ask for what you gave us. We never asked for what you gave us, but may be it was high time we got some reward for what we gave you: You say you know all about Ginny, well, Daddy, I know all about you, and you know I know. (182)

She stills remembers what her father desires to get from her. He says he has given something to them so wants as return. In his response, Rose says that they have given a lot to him. Which he also knows. What he has got from them in clear to the both

daughters. So, she raises questions to him to get something from him. But whether her father does 'know' what she knows is a question which is never satisfactorily answered in the novel. When Rose later declares to Ginny, "I won't be satisfied until he knows that he is", Ginny asks her sister, entirely unrhethorically, "Do we know what we are ?" (216). This seems to an answer which, if addressed to the daughters instead of the father, suggests a very different principle of identity and consequently a very different moral.

After her father's death and Ty's failure to keep the farm going, Ginny faces her now-estranged husband's obvious disbelief that any abuse could have taken place. She says to Ty, without any hope of persuading him.

You see this grand history, but I see blows. I see taking what you want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I see getting others to pay the price, then covering up and forgetting what the price was. (342)

The death of the father simply renders his story immovable and opaque, beyond argument and proof. Ty remains quietly convinced that it was Rose and Ginny's selfishness that made things go wrong. The evidence of his own eyes tells him this is so, and what he cannot see, he will not know.

Ginny feels alien and shows longing for the mother. Ginny's longing to speak with her mother and hear what her mother has to say about Larry is thwarted, because her mother died when Ginny was so young. Ginny first thinks about her mother when she has taken Rose's daughters swimming and her mother's friend, Mary, apologizes for not befriending Ginny after Ginny's mother had died. Mary tells Ginny that her mother had been "afraid for you. For the life you would live after she died because she knew what your father was like, even though I think she loved him" (48).

According to Mary, Ginny's mother wanted her daughters to have "choices" and was afraid that Ginny stand up to him.

After Mary tells Ginny these things, Ginny dives into the pool, an action which suggests a symbolic delving into her subconscious memories of her mother, who "died before I knew her, before I liked her, before I was old enough for her to be herself with me" (50). She remembers her mother and regrets that she couldn't know her. She couldn't get what she wants now which can help her in the present situation Ginny remembers her mother as "matter-of-fact and brisk who impersonally bottle-fed her daughters and had no meaning with the child into symbolic fleshy warmth (51). Even though Ginny does not remember physical closeness with her efficient mother, Ginny still desires this symbolic fleshy warmth and still desires, to know more about her mother. Her mother has already departed from her when she was old enough to understand her. She feels as if her mother's presence is close to her.

Ginny also remembers her mother after the storm scene, when Larry has left his house and Ginny prepares a room for Jess, who has been kicked out of his father's house. Being alone in her father's house gives Ginny an opportunity to search for clues about her mother. Ginny remembers that her mother "had a history ... and for us this history was to be found in her closet (54). She recalls all the past experiences when she is alone when she is in her house she goes to check her mother's closet where she finds things used by her mother. The things made her remember the past. She says that her mother had history. The whole story which was untold but confined to a closet. Their mother had not told Ginny and Rose her history, but they had unearthed it from her pre-world war II wardrobe:

Although her present was measured out in aprons- she put a clean one on every day- her past included tight skirts and full skirts and gored

skirts, peplum waists, kick pleats, arrow like darts, welt pockets with six-inch-square handkerchiefs inside them, shoulder pads. Chinese collars, self-belts with self-buckles, covered buttons ... The clothes in the closet ... intoxicated us with a sense of possibility, not for us, but for our mother, lost possibilities to be sure, but some how still present when we entered the closet. (55)

For Ginny, remembering her mother is remembering her mother's closet and she recalls the closet when she seeks to love her mother since her mother's death, no clothes or other physical evidence of her mother remain because Mary and the other church ladies had cleaned out her mother's belongings and given them to charity. Even when Ginny looks for traces of her mother, she finds "nothing" (58). Ginny longs for her mother had been alive "to tell us what to think of Daddy (59).

"Remembering what you can't imagine" alludes to the father's incests the second major deviation from the Lear story while the longing for the mother serves a feminist purpose and is not an implausible deviation from the Lear story told from Ginny's point of view. In *A Thousand Acres*, the scene of storm marks the reader's first awareness of a new thread-incest. During the storm, Rose tells Ginny that their father "came after us" (83). She starts revealing her past memories. She says that her father used to come after them into the room. When Ginny denies it, Rose tells her, "after he stopped going into you, he started coming in to me ... we had sex in my bed" (84). When Ginny doesn't believe what Rose says, Rose explains that their father used to have sex with Ginny first after the death of their mother. Then he shifted himself from Ginny and started having with Rose several days later, when Harold has taken Larry in and has kicked Jess out, Ginny realizes the truth of Rose's memory as she is making up her old bed in her father's house for Jess:

Lying here, I knew that he had been in there to me, that my father had lain with me on that bed that I had looked at the top of his head, at his balding spot in the brown grizzled hair, while feeling him suck my breasts. That was the only memory I could endure before I jumped out of the bed with a cry.

Ginny comes to realize the past experiences. It is an open event and its actuality of incest relation between father and daughters. She remembers that when she was small her father lay her on the bed and slept together. After that he climbed upon her touching her body parts. She felt him sucking her breasts. She tried hard to come out of his grip. She still remembers she jumped out of the bed with a cry.

Days later, when she is shopping in town, she overhears her father talking to Caroline Hiding in a dressing booth, Ginny remembers the suggestiveness of her father's tone of voice. "All soft and affectionate but with something underneath that I can't describe" (86). She tells Rose, "I thought I was going to faint" and admits. "I happened like you said" (87). When Rose forces Ginny to remember the past she recalls some events which resemble Rose's. When she recalls the memory she nearly gets fainted she becomes the victim of frequent haunts of the past incestuous event. Ginny realizes that "One thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body (88). Her memory power is also lost because of that event. Psychologically she happened to be very weak so she can't remember the events. She remembers that her father had sex with her and that she didn't resist. "I remembered, over and over again, that the top of his head looked like. But I never remembered penetration or pain or even his hands on my body, and I never sorted out how many times there were" (89). Due to this incestuous event she frequently gets haunted by the same memory. But it is like a dream so that she can't remember the

pain and penetration. Actually what happened to her body she is unwilling to share or she is psychologically disturbed, thus she can't remember the penetration. What she can remember now is his bald head over her body.

A Thousand Acres can also be read as a feminist modernization of the primary themes in *King Lear*. If, as many critics have pointed out, *King Lear* is concerned with the antinomy of natural law versus positive law. Smiley demonstrates Larry's failure of authority as a sexual being and as a father figure. By raping his daughters he has treated them as his possessions. The rapes are not portrayed as violent but as unnatural violations- the father's misuse of his daughters. Smiley's addition of the incest plot is consistent with the view of critics who have suggested that Lear may be harbouring such a suppressed incestuous desire for Cordelia.

Rose responds to Larry's incest with a seething rage. Ginny responds with a realization that "the memory of her body has been taken" (108). With the "riddle ... of how we judge those who have hurt us when they have shown no remorse or even understanding (109). Their father never repents nor does he beg to sorry with his daughters. Rose is very angry and so does Ginny but both they say that it is their father's fault so he must repents not them.

Ginny does not understand her father's basic character, much less his incest. She says that

Trying to understand my father had always felt something like going to church week after week and listening to the minister ... Marshall the evidence for Gods' goodness, or omniscience, or what ever, but the problem was that my father had no minister, none to make him gel far us even momentarily. My mother died before she could present him to us as only a man, with habits and quirks and preferences, before she

could diminish him in our eyes enough for us to understand him. I wish we had understood him. That, I see now, was our only hope. (18)

Mainly Ginny's problem is that she can't understand her father. He comes and attacks her. He had always sex her. She can't understand where he is her father. She regrets that her mother didn't tell anything about him. She doesn't know about his character but instead of protecting his daughter he attacks and uses her after the death of his wife.

Smiley's novel demonstrates both dominant reality and suppressed feminine reality. For instance, Larry oppresses Ginny's point of view "when he talked, he had this effect on me of course it was silly to talk about my point of view. When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished. Not even I could remember it" (162).

Of course the lady incest victim fears to be public and be bold. Ginny puts her view but it is frequently opposed by Larry she becomes vulnerable in front of her father. What ever activities he does on her, they get vanished she even can't remember it.

The incest victim can't be active sexually even though they have strong feeling of it. They repressed the abuse and try to hide it but after they are fully grown they remember sexual act but when they are ready for it, they can't do it properly. They feel uncomfortable during the sex. When Ginny contemplates having sex with Jess, she becomes aware of her sexual desire:

I could feel my flesh turn electric at these thoughts, could feel sensation gather in my nipples, could feel my vagina relax and open, could feel my fingertips grow sensitive enough to know their own shapes felt blasted with desire, when we had sex next day irradiated, awkward like a sow longing to wallow dog." (164)

Ginny's sexual desire for Jess is short-lived and overshadowed by her sexual repression and shame both before and after she remembers the incest. Even before she remembers the incest, she is uncomfortable with her body and sexuality. Initially when she remembers incest she imagines good sex so her fingertips grow sensitive, her body gets electric current and gathers all sensation into the nipples. Her vagina relaxes. But after a day she felt this, she had sex with Jess but due to the repression she couldn't relax. She happens to compare her sex with Jess with animals'.

The incest victim represses her memory of incest and happens to be highly affected in the mind. The repressed memory of incest fills her with shame, which poisons her sexually. Ginny assumes that all of this is normal but after she remembers the incest, she acknowledges that "one thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body" (108). Her father not only exploits her body but also psychologically weak so as she is not able to remember what happens to her body. She has shame which makes her forget everything.

The victims are regularly molested or abused by their own father, the perpetrator beats them since he wants the thing not to be disclosed. The victims accept all the atrocities taking all these as a way of life. The victims are not only victimized by the abuser but also the society knowingly or unknowingly discriminates or can't see the pathetic state of the victims. The society either doesn't know the real abuser as the victims do or they turn their blind eyes and deaf ears to the victim because what he does to them doesn't matter. So, the victims think the whole society is against them. Due to this kind of behaviour of the society, the abuser gets respect, power which further more silences the voice of the victims. As Ginny says:

But he did fuck us and he did beat us. He beat us more than he fucked us. He beat us routinely. And the thing is, he's respected. Others of

them like him and look up to him. He fits right in. However many of them have fucked their daughters or their stepdaughters or their nieces or not, the fact is that they all accept beating as a way of life. We have two choices when we think about that. Either they don't know the real him and we do, or else they do know the real him and the fact that he beat us and fucked us doesn't matter. Either they themselves are evil, or they're stupid that's the thing that kills me. The person who beats and fucks his own daughters and go out into the community and get respect and power, and take it for granted that he deserves it. (211)

The most pathetic situation and a vicious circle falls on the girls. Ginny and Rose both are very sad because they have been molested by their father however he has good respect and power in the society. They were routinely 'beat' and 'fucked'. They say that people in the society never see the things correctly. They take him as a right man. Ginny wonders and questions why the abusers who abuse their daughters can go freely in the community. In her society also their father Larry Cook has a good status and he is respected by the people. So they are unable to come out to the society. They are compelled to hide their pains.

The victims start to have their own feeling and opinion towards the situation. Initially they care about the phenomena but later they don't care what they are going to do, they certainly do because they seem more obstinate and rigid. They hate people if they feel the people are having negative opinion about them. When Ginny got back in the car. It was the presence of Roberta Stanley that made her back in the car. Larry turned and walked heavily toward the door. Ginny says: "All of the Stanley's would certainly hear about this, since Roberta was a terrible gossip I hated to think about

how people felt about us. It didn't matter what it was, disapproval, ridicule, even sympathy or fondness. I hated to think of them having any opinion at all" (214).

Smiley's text most obviously presents the theme of memory through the central character and narrator, Ginny. Ginny's situation in the novel is an interesting one, because unlike her sister Rose she has forgotten, or repressed, the memories of her father's abuse. At the opening of the novel, she is married and still living on the family farm, and she seems in many ways to be stuck in an eternal presence, especially in her relationship with her father. She says of Larry at one stage:

How many thousands of times have I seen him in the fields, driving the tractor or the combine, steadily, with certainty, from one end of the field to another. How many thousands of times has this sight aroused in me a distant, amused affection for my father, a feeling of forgiveness when I hadn't consciously been harbouring any annoyance. It is tempting to feel, at these moments, that what is, is and what is, is fine (136-37).

Ginny's acceptance of the status quo is a clear example of what Greene sees as the danger of forgetting: Ginny's inability to explain her "annoyance" has left her stuck in a cycle of repetition, where her father continues to exert dominance over her life. Rose's revelation of the details of the abuse mid way through the novel shatters this status quo. Like the fictional protagonists by Greene, Ginny must transform a "disabling fiction" into an "enabling fiction" through the use of memory. This involves not simply remembering the abuse itself but also searching for memories of her mother, who died when Ginny was fourteen and whom Ginny has largely forgotten: "Daddy's presence in any scene has the effect of dimming the surroundings, and I didn't have many recollections at all of our life with him before her death (48).

Ginny's search, then, is both for her lost memories of abuse and for her lost mother, and at times these seem to be the same search:

As I neared the house, it seemed like Daddy's departure had opened up the possibility of finding my mother ... now that he was gone, I could look more closely. I could study the closets or the attic, life things and peer under them, get back into cabinets and the corners of shelves ... she had known him — what would she have said about him ? How would she have interceded ? Wasn't there something to know about him that she had known that would come to me if I found something of her in his house ? (225)

She longs her mother due to her father's abuse upon her. When she comes and searches the things used by her mother she starts remembering her mother. Ginny's story thus foregrounds the sexual politics of memory and forgetting, suggesting that remembering can be a form of resistance to the erasure of women's lives and of domestic histories of abuse within patriarchal discourse; the novel bears clear affinities to recent feminist work on traumatic memory and testimony. However, the novel also highlights the ambivalences of such remembering and its associated retelling. Ginny is often reluctant to remember, visualizing the dormant images of abuse as "radioactive wastes" with the potential— once reactivated- to destroy her identity (229); the narrative she reconstructs of the abuse remains a partial one: "What I remembered of Daddy did not get into a full figure, but always remained fragments of sound and smell and presence" (280). While smiley refuses to posit memory memory-work as a quick fix solution, this is not to say that the novel advocates repressing traumatic memory or returning to the simplicities of the status quo at the start of the narrative. It is in showing the price Ginny pays in remembering the

traumatic past that the novel acknowledges the horror of the past. As Marina Leslie points out: "Forgetting is a kind of death, but then so also is remembering ... To underestimate (Ginny's) enduring emotional scars is to contribute to the suppression of what she has suffered and what her suffering has made her capable of (1998, 48).

Alongside the specific history of Ginny's childhood, memory can also be viewed in a more general sense in Smiley's text. As a narrator, Ginny is not only telling the story of her own past, its loss and (partial) recovery; she is also telling us the story of the thousand acres themselves, remembering how they were accumulated, and recording how they are eventually lost. In the course of the narrative, Smiley shows how the two stories- the story of the land and the story of Ginny's childhood are intertwined. The novel suggests that Larry's abuse of his land and his abuse of his daughters are connected: both are justified by a patriarchal discourse of property and implicitly condoned by his community. As Ginny tells her husband at the end of the novel :

You see this grand history, but I see blows. I see taking what you want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I getting others to pay the price, then covering up and forgetting what the price was. Do I think Daddy came up with beating and fucking us on his own ? ... No, I think he had lessons, and those lessons were part of the package, along with the land and the lust to run things exactly the way he wanted to no matter what, poisoning the water and destroying the topsoil and buying bigger and bigger machinery and then feeling certain that all of it was "right", as you say. (342)

Ginny's narrative can thus be described as a testament not just to the traumas of her own past but also to the "history of blows" out of which her community has been

formed. Smiley is using the Larry- Ginny plot to critique a society characterized by the "covering up and forgetting" both of individual crimes and of its own history. Ginny's act of witnessing for the land occurs in tandem with her attempts to reimagine her forgotten childhood. Sites like the dump and the quarry are sites of childhood memory, and they also seem to offer the possibility of reexperiencing that childhood, in the same way that walking in the city functions for Michel de Certeau: "To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood, it is, in a place, to be other and to move toward the other" (Decerteau 1988, 110). This is why Ginny is so upset at the obliteration of Mel Scott's farm, with the loss of a childhood landmark comes both the loss of her ability to "orient" herself and the loss of childhood itself. Writing her past thus means both writing herself into the landscape and remembering what it felt like to be a child, something that is crucial given that "one thing Daddy took from me when he came to me in my room at night was the memory of my body (108).

While the function of Ginny's writing of childhood memory is, therefore, clear, the tone of this writing is less easy to explain. Her memories often seem to combine intense longing with pain and anxiety, or they combine a sense of immediacy with a sharp detachment and distance. This ambivalent tone is especially obvious in Ginny's memory of playing at the drainage well:

I loved going over to the Ericson's, and Ruthie was my best friend. One of my earliest memories, in fact, is of myself in a red and green plaid pinafore, which must mean I was about three, and Ruthie in a pink shirt, probably not yet three, squatting on one of those drainage-well covers, dropping pebbles and bits of sticks through the grate. The sound of water trickling in the blackness must have drawn us, and even

now the memory gives me an eerie feeling, and not because of danger to our infant selves. What I think of is our babyhoods perched thoughtlessly on the filmiest net of the modern world, over layers of rock, Wisconsin till, Mississippian carbonate, Devonian limestone, layers of dark epochs, and we seem not so much in danger as fleeting, as if our lives simply passed then, and this memory is the only photograph of some nameless and unknown children who may have lived and may have died, but at any rate have vanished into the black well of time. (46-47)

This passage is a good example of the ironies that emerge from Ginny's retrospective narration. The obvious sense of loss in the extract (the children's lives are described as "fleeting") might initially be explained as Ginny regretting the loss of her childhood friend, given that we know that the Ericsons will sell and move away when Ginny is a teenager. Only on a second reading are we aware that their departure which coincides with her mother's death will be the cue for the start of the abuse and, hence, that Ginny as a retrospective narrator is not just lamenting the loss of her friend Ruthie but also the lost childhood innocence that pervades this description of her and Ruthie playing. The reference to her father "checking the grates often" is also significant: this could be seen as a lamentation for a time when her relationship with her father was innocent, when she could rely upon him looking after her indeed, it is noticeable that almost all of the memories of childhood that emerge in the novel are associated with punishment, and an explicit connection is made between the father's excessive beatings of his children and the later sexual abuse. We could, thus say that memories such as the drainage-well memory are ambivalent: they exhibit a sense of loss and

longing, but they are also characterized by an awareness of the pain of the past, and most important, they do not set up childhood as an idyllic place of refuge.

Leo Spitzer explains that nostalgia is very powerful which comes when a man or woman suffers a lot. He/She looks for the best past event to forget the unbearable present. His definition of nostalgic memory as "the selective emphasis on what was positive in the past" (153) does not seem to cover the range of emotions apparent in Ginny's engagement with the past. Ginny's nostalgic memories are a complex development of longing and pain: in addition to a yearning for the past they include a critical awareness of the negative aspects of that past. According to Svetlana Boym, such critical nostalgia can be distinguished from the nostalgia that focuses only on what is positive in the past. She defines these two tropes as "reflective" and "restorative" nostalgia, respectively

Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time. (Boym, 2001, 41)

Boym's distinction can be usefully applied to the difference between Larry's and Ginny's nostalgic memories. Larry's nostalgia is "restorative" in that he attempts to restore an idealized version of the past, one in which the incongruities between past and present are smoothed over: for example, the incongruity of the adult Rose and Ginny's rebellion is solved by simply removing them from his version of the past. Ginny's nostalgia, on the other hand, is "reflective": her account lingers on those gaps,

puts into question the "wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition and reveals that thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection (49-50). This immediacy is then juxtaposed with a sense of sharp detachment and distance, as the narrator adds her own retrospective qualification to the memory:

Even now the memory gives me an eerie feeling ... What I think of is our babyhoods perched thoughtlessly. Layers of rock layers of dark epochs some nameless and unknown children who may have lived and may have died, but at any rate have vanished into the black well of time. (Smiley, 47)

The consequence of this disorienting memory is thus to leave us with a vision of the "fleeting" and irretrievable nature of individual memories—even of individuals themselves—in the darkness of the past. The novel restores the link between present and past only to break it again, in the process revealing the "full, visible emptiness" of the lost childhood.

Smiley's tragedy connects the patriarch's story to national myths of identity and value that erase women and authorize their abuse. Ginny's narrative virtually begins with her father's view of women as objects for use. Larry Cook has "a whole theoretical system" concerning the place of women in the scheme of things: Caroline is twenty-eight and failing her function, because "According to Daddy, it's almost too late to breed her [...] He'll tell you all about sows and heifers and things drying up and empty chambers" (10) inevitably, he thinks of Ginny as a "barren whore" and "a dried-up whore bitch" – she is a whore because she is sexual, but she is "not really a woman" because she has produced no children" (181). Producing, bearing, and

nurturing children are the avenues to fulfilled womanhood in Larry's system; Larry regards as livestock.

Ginny's discourse is shaped by a culture that devalues and silences woman. Girls learn to be quiet and unremarkable, to be seen and not heard. When Ginny remembers family harmony in her childhood, none of the girls speaks: their silence appears to be the condition in which the father's contentment can be expressed. She recalls driving in the first family car, a new Buick sedan, sitting in the back seat with Rose listening to "my father's and mother's voices commenting on what they saw (5). Girls and women are not supposed to have a point of view separate from that of the man who heads the household. Ginny tries unsuccessfully to persuade Daddy to respect his daughters and to consider their point of view, but when he rejects her speech, condemns her ingratitude and calls her "my girls", her assertiveness collapses." "Of course it was silly to talk about 'my point of view. When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished. Not even I could remember It" (173).

Another of Ginny's childhood memories makes clear that wives are subject to the same requirements as daughters; they are not allowed to express criticism of their husbands. At a school Halloween party, Ginny has lost a shoe and kept her father waiting while she looked for it. Once they reach home, her mother notices the missing property, and Larry spanks Ginny hard. "I could hear Mommy saying: "Larry ! Larry ! This is crazy ! He turned to her and said, 'you one her side ? Mommy said, 'No, but — [...] There's only one side here, and you had better be on it. There was a silence" (182-93). Mommy teaches her daughters in this scene how to respond aggression and violence, silencing her protest at what seems unfair and excessive punishment. By no accident, she dies without speaking to Ginny of her fears for the girls. Ginny and Rose have never spoken, not even to each other, about their father's sexual abuse and

neither ever tells the community. At eighteen, Ginny has married Daddy's younger son as a partner to finish the job of silencing her voice. Ty, like Daddy, believes that women should be quiet and humour men, and he criticizes Ginny for talking back. "You could handle him better. You don't always have to take issue. You ought to let a lot of things slide" (104). In her own married life, Ginny is often silent and always agreeable she has no voice in the decisions that affect her property and even her body is not her own— Ty has decided that they must not conceive again.

The novel focuses on Ginny's expanding awareness and therefore on the increasing depth and confidence reflected in her style. To make her transformation possible and credible, she must, early in the narrative, show glimpses of a forceful and critical point of view, nascent, tentative and quickly repressed. And indeed she does: the voice we can eventually distinguish as her own appears briefly on occasions when she reflects silently and inwardly on her situation or surroundings. She meditates on the abiding presence of water in the soil:

I was always aware, I think, of the water in the soil, the way it travels from particle, molecules adhering, clustering, evaporating, heating, cooling, freezing, rising upward to the surface and fogging the cool air or sinking downward, dissolving this nutrient and that quick in everything it does, endlessly working and flowing, a river sometimes, a lake sometimes. (16)

The verbs she attaches to water molecules give them energy and force, as if these small, even invisible particles of a traditionally feminine element have a subversive power to remake the seemingly solid earth and to change their own form. Thinking of the subterranean power of water gives strength to her voice; for it suggests her own

potential to change her world and herself, and once she passes the tentativeness of "I think", she creates a forceful metaphoric vision of hidden subversion.

The novel traces Ginny's acquisition of voice: as speaker in and narrator of her experience, she grows into a style commensurate with the power of her imagination. First she begins to speak up, to talk back, to object and criticize. The style in which she does that is not elegant: her spoken words to her father never lose the stripped-bare simplicity in which she has learned to camouflage herself, but they do acquire the force and volume of anger. During the storm scene, Larry has delivered a self-justifying version of the past that makes Ginny responsible for his sexual abuse of her, and Ginny—who does not yet remember the abuse—recalls instead his beating her as a child. She breaks her own long silence and speaks what turn out to be the last words her father is able to hear her say: "Daddy, if you think this is bad, then you'd be amazed at what you really deserve. You don't deserve even the care we give you. As far as I'm concerned, from now on you're on your own (183). What he deserves she is unable to specify, but she has at least opened up the realm of her own fury. In court, a deranged and confused Larry melds all three daughters together and ascribes all of their acts as children to Caroline; Ginny objects vehemently:

All of a sudden, I shouted, 'Daddy, it was Rose who had the velveteen coat ! It was Rose who sang : It was me who dropped things through the well grates !' I was squawking, right out there in the courtroom, and everyone's head swung toward me. All but one. Daddy didn't pay any attention at all. (321)

Though the style of those statements remains simple, the very baldness of the assertions conveys its own powerful insistence on setting the records straight, not for

the court but for herself. Rather than "letting things slide" and "making allowances", Ginny claims her own past and speaks for herself, even at the cost of making a scene.

Ginny's most forceful spoken assertion occurs in her last conversation with Ty. She leaves him, moves to Minnesota, and works as a waitress serving food she has not cooked to people who pay for her labour. Ty comes, three years later, to tell her he saw "real history" on the farm. Ginny objects:

I can remember when I saw it all your way ! The proud progress from Grandpa Davis to Grandpa cook to Daddy. When 'we' bought the first tractor in the country, when 'we' built the big house, when 'we' had the crops sprayed from the air, when 'we' got a car, when 'we' drained Mel's corner, when 'we' got a hundred and seventy-two bushels an acre." (342)

The collective "we" now appears in quotes, identifying her ability to think with critical irony about Daddy's catechism as a story of patriarchal conquest over errant female nature. The family's "proud progress" emphasizes measurable events important to the men and erases the women's identities and achievements together with any reflection of the quality of life Ginny rejects this version of a "grand history."

I see blows. I see taking what you want because you want it, then making something up that justifies what you did. I see getting others to pay the price then covering up and forgetting what the price was. Do I think Daddy came up with beating and fucking us on his own ?" Ty winced. "No I think he had lessons, and those lessons were part of the package along with the land and the lust to run things exactly the way he wanted to no matter what, poisoning the water and destroying the topsoil and buying all of it was 'right'. (342.43)

Ginny defines patriarchy with blunt and socially unacceptable words that she has heard from Rose but has not spoken before, words that make Ty wince. Her language in this passage is not simply communicative, but rather lists supplements for what she sees in her father's actions— blows, taking, rationalizing, and victimizing- and for "the package" that shaped them— lessons, land, and lust. In developing those lists, Ginny is delivering an extended interpretation that connects what she sees in her experience with what she thinks allowed it to occur, and neither list is single or simple.

Ginny's style becomes fully commensurate with her imagination in the novel's epilogue, where she reflects back on events and relationship and lists her various inheritances. Though she does not include discourse among them, it is clearly the major gift she bears cut the novel's end she concludes her narrative by understanding her father's abuse.

I can't say that I forgive my father, but now I can imagine what he probably chose never to remember- the goad of an unthinkable, pricking him, pressing him, wrapping him in an impenetrable fog of self that must have seemed, when he wandered around the house late at night after, working and drinking, like the very darkness. This is the gleaming obsidian shard I safe guard above all the others. (370).

The powerful knowledge of her father's lust and selfishness, so overwhelming that he fled all consciousness of it, becomes her most valued fragment of knowledge, "the gleaming obsidian shard" is more threatening, more like an arrowhead to clutch in the night against the father's arrival. Larry chose not to remember, in part because he had no language for what pricked and pressed him; Ginny gains that memory though language- also a product and tool of patriarchal culture, but now seized by the daughter and transformed into the weapon of her resistance.

III. Conclusion

To conclude, the incest victims or the daughters suffer trauma because of their repression of the violent and the father's atrocities. They can't develop their career, become introvert and often like lonesome. They are frequently haunted by nightmares. They long for their mother and hate the perpetrator but their hatred can't be expressed outwardly since they fear the abuser a lot. But when they reveal all the past 'dark' experiences through memory, they start coming forth challenging all the patriarchal norms through resistance.

A Thousand Acres is full of incest trauma and resistance to overcome it. In the novel the first two daughters, Ginny and Rose are molested by their father after the death of his wife. Ginny is hardly fourteen when she takes over all the wifely duty to take care of her father. She has repressed all memories of the years of incest and abuse. She is afraid and feels discomfort to talk to a new man because she fears man. Similarly, Rose's life is also not successful since she has fear of her father all the time she has two daughters, Pammy and Linda but she is reluctant to keep them in the house because she thinks they also can be the victims of her father.

As the eldest daughter of Larry Cook, Ginny is arguably the one who has been most intensely affected by his alcoholism, temper and sexual abuse. She marries Ty but their marriage can't be successful. She has frequently miscarriages and can't have any children. Her life after the death of her mother is very difficult and full of chores. Although being a victim of incest has greatly influenced Ginny's psychological development, she has repressed those memories until Rose forces her to confront them. At first, reluctant to believe the truth, Ginny eventually acknowledges it; however, the moment of recognition is painful.

So I screamed. I screamed in a way that I had never screamed before,
full out, throat wrenching, unafraid-of-making-a-fuss-and-drawing-

attention-to-myself sorts of screams that I made myself concentrate on becoming all mouth, all tongue, all vibration. (236)

Through confronting that suffering, Ginny finds liberation and the power to move past those invisible ties that held her down for thirty-six years.

Memory plays a vital role throughout the novel. Ginny frequently gets haunted by the past incestuous activities. She remembers her father entering the room and sucking her breasts sleeping upon her. Rose weans her memories like a cloak and finds that they propel her forward. Despite the fact that she is dying of cancer, Rose refuses to forgive her father for victimizing her. Their lives' emptiness and pains are shown in the novel. After their recognition they start hating their father and leaves him alone As Ginny's awareness grows, so does her relentless and feeling of confinement. Her marriage crumbles, her relationship with Jess ends and she leaves Iowa for St. Paul, Minnesota. In this way the victims of incest trauma finally overcome their repression even after a great deal of loss.

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