

An Attempt to depict Grief in John Green's The fault in our stars

Project submitted to the University Of Calicut in partial fulfillment of

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In

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by

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Declaration

I, **Niranjana P.R** , hereby declare that this project entitled **An Attempt to depict Grief in John Green's Thefaultinourstar** submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature, is a research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of **Miss Lis Merin Peter**, Assistant Professor, Department of English & History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **An Attempt to depict Grief in John Green's The fault in our stars** is a record of research work carried out by **Ms. Niranjana P.R** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Introduction

Trauma theory denotes a vibrant, interdisciplinary area of Western scholarship developed since the 1980s through cross-fertilization between psychology and the humanities. The incorporation of trauma theory into film and media studies, realized in relation to the field-shaping influence of psychoanalytically informed film theory (see *Trauma and the Inner World*), has enabled a fuller explication of the power and complexity of the relationships among calamitous historical events, media objects and networks, spectator positioning, and mental processes. The foundation for trauma theory has been firmly established across multiple disciplines and fields ranging from American studies, history, and psychoanalysis to cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology among others, with a particular upsurge in scholarship during the 1990s.

Grief is one of life's most complicated emotions. It is a vibrant source of stress but at the same time is the most effective catalyst in revealing one's own identity. Grief, as an emotion strikes at our loss of someone or something which we hold dear or is important to us but it can also come at a point of time when we know that we are going to lose the thing we love. Grief is something through which people express the loss of a core part of their lives, it ranges from the loss of a loved one to loss of mental or physical health. The most unique character of grief is the fact that each person experiences in their own way because it urges the person to move on or cope with the grief and once again find meaning in life and this factor makes grief a much lived but often unused emotion in literature. The main reason why grief is not shown in its fullest is

because how grief affects one varies from person to person hence the writers cannot easily find a unified direction to the story and its moral messages meant to be conveyed.

The five stages of grief are also used in treating the patients who are actively anticipating their own death, a tendency that is called ‘Anticipatory Grief’ which is the basic plot point of *The Fault in our Stars*, written by John Green. *The Fault in our Stars*, written by John Green is a story which has a central and unifying theme of inevitable doom. This is later re-affirmed by Hazel Green when she says no one stays in this world for so long and that “Oblivion is inevitable”. Besides this, *The Fault in our Stars* is also a beautiful exploration of how to make the best out of each and every situation and how much valuable optimism is in one’s life. Throughout the story both Hazel Green and Augustus Waters face hard hurdles and steep challenges but still goes on as if everything was fine like it’s supposed to be. Throughout this friends-turned-lovers story saga, it can be easily recognized that Hazel Green and Augustus Waters stay together both in joy and in pain and always looks out for each other. Here, in the backdrop of grief, John Green paints out a beautiful picture of good natured friendship.

In this project with the help of the novel, *The Fault in our Stars* I analyse the three main events of human life that is trauma, grief, and death. *The Fault in our Stars* teaches us different lessons about grief and how one should cope with it. The first chapter which is the theory chapter deals with the introduction of Trauma theory and also discusses how it is applied in the novel. The second chapter deals with the information about John Greene who was the author of *The Fault in our Stars*, and also discusses his other works and writing styles. And finally, the third chapter analyses the stages of trauma and

incurred grief present in the characters of *The Fault in our Stars*. These are the major themes that we are going to discuss.

Even if *The Fault in our Stars* was written in the form of a Young Adult fiction, it does manage to find some space for philosophical musings. But unlike other contemporary writings which have philosophical content, *The Fault in our Stars* has placed those musings at the right place and at the right time which in turn, actually served complementary to the overall storyline and the reading experience. One of the best things John Green did to this book was to do justice by it. He made sure that each and every part of the book served one purpose or the other whether it is situation build up, character development or expositions. Even though the whole story is built up on grief, throughout the story each and every important character experience love, loss and grief which make each character both aesthetically and morally deep and dynamic.

CHAPTER 1

Trauma theory and Grief in *Fault in our Stars*

Grief is one of life's most complicated emotions. It is a vibrant source of stress but at the same time is the most effective catalyst in revealing one's own identity. Grief, as an emotion strikes at our loss of someone or something which we hold dear or is important to us but it can also come at a point of time when we know that we are going to lose the thing we love. Grief is something through which people express the loss of a core part of their lives, it ranges from the loss of a loved one to loss of mental or physical health. The most unique character of grief is the fact that each person experiences in their own way because it urges the person to move on or cope with the grief and once again find meaning in life and this factor makes grief a much lived but often unused emotion in literature. The main reason why grief is not shown in its fullest is because how grief affects one varies from person to person hence the writers cannot easily find a unified direction to the story and its moral messages meant to be conveyed. With the popularization of the concept of 'de-familiarization', more and more writers tried to bring out grief through their works by filling the settings and the situation with artistic representations. They used literature as a tool to describe the indescribable. Specific types of literature like poetry have helped people get through and cope up with grief, literature both inflicts grief as well as show the readers a way to get rid of it this is, aesthetically speaking the beauty of literature.

Poetry is one of the rarest forms of literature which actually harnessed the true essence of grief and brought the power of grief out through elegies which are written

to commemorate a person's death or loss. The psychiatric societies have come to the conclusion that people who are struck by grief could be helped in finding solace through literature. C.S. Lewis, in his chronicle of the loss of his wife, says, "Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything" (13). According to him, the grief and the thought reminding the loss is not just constricted to a single momentary point of time but it is omnipresent throughout the course of one's life. W.H. Auden also has his own idea of grief which he depicts through the following lines in his poem "Funeral Blues" which is as follows: "he was my North, my South, my East, and my West/ my working week and my Sunday rest"(11. 9-10). Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" states that "mourning takes time and mental labour to revive, relive, and release" (Mac Kenzie 131). This theory was the foundation of five stages of grief which is the psychiatrists' point of reference to cure grieving patients. These five stages are greatly depicted in Marvel's penultimate ending to the Infinity Saga, Avengers: Endgame. The five stages of grief are also used in treating the patients who are actively anticipating their own death, a tendency that is called 'Anticipatory Grief' which is the basic plot point of *'The Fault in our Stars'*, written by John Green.

The Fault in our Stars, written by John Green is a story which has a central and unifying theme of inevitable doom. Besides this, *The Fault in our Stars* is also a beautiful exploration of how to make the best out of each and every situation and how much valuable optimism is in one's life. Throughout the story both Hazel Green and Augustus Waters face hard hurdles and steep challenges but still goes on as if everything was fine like it's supposed to be. Throughout this friends-turned-lovers story saga, it can be easily recognized that Hazel Green and Augustus Waters stay together both in joy and in pain

and always looks out for each other. Here, in the backdrop of grief, John Green paints out a beautiful picture of good natured friendship. Even if *The Fault in our Stars* was written in the form of a Young- Adult fiction, it does manage to find some space for philosophical musings. But unlike other contemporary writings which have philosophical content, *The Fault in our Stars* has placed those musings at the right place and at the right time which in turn, actually served complementary to the overall storyline and the reading experience. One of the best things John Green did to this book was to do justice by it. He made sure that each and every part of the book served one purpose or the other whether it is situation build up, character development or expositions. Even though the whole story is built up on grief, throughout the story each and every important character experience love, loss and grief which make each character both aesthetically and morally deep and dynamic.

'The Fault in our Stars', written by John Green has a very dynamic set of characters interacting with each other trying to cope up with the impending grief and trauma which they know is something that has long been coming. In a way, the story is also about how these characters help each other to overcome the fear and general concern about trauma about the upcoming death which is about to unfold and impact their lives. Most of these characters help each other unknowingly but it does not take away the strong foundation of trauma in the story which author John Green magnificently sets up. This is the reason why *'The Fault in our Stars'* becomes a perfect mouthpiece for propagating the themes of grief, trauma, life, and death. The main characters of the story, where Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters being the prominent ones, are different from other young people of their age in the fact that while others deal with

temporary emotions, desires and lifestyles, the protagonists of *'The Fault in our Stars'* deals with issues of death and 'what happens to those who loves us after our death'. These questions are raised by them or remembered by them on a daily basis and every decision the characters take is an aftermath or consequence of their specific thought process which in this case is death.

The field of trauma ponders in artistic analysis increased huge consideration in 1996 with the distribution of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and *Kali Tal's Worlds of Hurt Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. Early grant moulded the underlying course of abstract trauma hypothesis by promoting the possibility of trauma as a un-represent able occasion. A hypothetical pattern was presented by researchers like Caruth, who spearheaded a psychoanalytic post-structural approach that proposes trauma is an unsolvable issue of the oblivious that lights up the inborn inconsistencies of experience and language. This Lacanian approach makes an idea of trauma as a repetitive feeling of nonattendance that sunders information of the outrageous experience, subsequently forestalling phonetic worth other than a referential articulation. For Caruth's deconstructive analysis specifically, the model permits an exceptional accentuation on semantic indeterminacy, questionable referentiality and aporia. The unspeakable void turned into the predominant idea in analysis for envisioning trauma's capacity in writing. This exemplary model of trauma engaged a scope of faultfinders working outside of post-structuralism too because of the thought of trauma's irreversible harm to the mind. The expected inborn neurobiological highlights of trauma that deny portrayal and cause separation were critical to contentions that looked to

underscore the degree of significant experiencing an outside source, regardless of whether that source is an individual culprit or aggregate social practice.

Mental trauma, its portrayal in language, and the job of memory in moulding individual and social characters are the focal worries that characterize the field of trauma theory. Psychoanalytic hypothesis on trauma combined with extra hypothetical systems, for example, post-structural, sociocultural and postcolonial hypothesis structure the premise of analysis that deciphers portrayals of an extraordinary or extreme experience and its impact upon subjective character and memory. The idea of trauma, itself a wellspring of evaluate, is commonly comprehended as a seriously utter world. Trauma studies investigate the effect of trauma in writing and society by examining its mental, explanatory and social criticalness. The formal developments of writings, both print and media that show bits of knowledge into the ways that character, the oblivious, and recalling are impacted by outrageous occasions in this manner remain a noteworthy focal point of the field.

CHAPTER - 2

Grief in Green's Point of interest

John Michael Green is an American author and YouTube content creator. John Green is the New York Times bestselling author of *Looking for Alaska*, *An Abundance of Katherine's*, *Paper Towns*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Turtles All the Way Down*, and the upcoming essay collection *The Anthropocene Reviewed*. He is one half of the vlog brothers on YouTube and co-creator of educational series Crash Course. Green was born on August 24, 1977 in Indianapolis, Indiana, to Mike and Sydney Green. He attended Glen ridge Middle School and Lake Highland Preparatory School in Orlando. He later attended Indian Springs School outside of Birmingham, Alabama, graduating in 1995. He used Indian Springs as the inspiration for the main setting of his first book, *Looking for Alaska*. Green graduated from Kenyon College in 2000 with a double major in English and religious studies. He has spoken about being bullied and how it had made life as a teenager miserable for him.

After graduating from college, Green spent five months working as a student chaplain at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, while enrolled at the University of Chicago Divinity School (although he never actually attended the school). He intended to become an Episcopal priest, but his experiences of working in a hospital with children suffering from life-threatening illnesses inspired him to become an author, and later to write *The Fault in our Stars*. Green lived for several years in Chicago, where he worked for the book review journal *Booklist* as a publishing assistant and production editor while writing *Looking for Alaska*. While there, he reviewed hundreds of

books, particularly literary fiction and books about Islam or conjoined twins. He has also critiqued books for The New York Times Book Review and created original radio essays for NPR's All Things Considered and WBEZ, Chicago's public radio station. Green later lived in New York City for two years while his wife attended graduate school.

Green's first novel, *Looking for Alaska*, published by Dutton Children's Books in 2005, is a school story and teen romance inspired by his experiences at Indian Springs, Alabama, fictionalized as Culver Creek Preparatory High School. The novel was awarded the annual Michael L. Printz Award by the American Library Association, recognizing the year's "best book written for teens, based entirely on its literary merit." It also appeared on the ALA's annual list, "Top 10 Best Books for Young Adults." The film rights were purchased in 2005 by Paramount, which hired Josh Schwartz as writer and director, but five years later, with no progress on the project, Green told fans that, while he "desperately loved" the screenplay, there seemed to be little interest at Paramount.

Green's second novel, *An Abundance of Katherine's* was a runner-up for the Printz Award and a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. In May 2018, it was announced that *Looking for Alaska* would be made into a Hulu series with Schwartz and others on board. The casting was announced in October 2018. *Looking for Alaska* was released to Hulu on October 18, 2019. In 2008, Green's third novel, *Paper Towns*, debuted at number five on The New York Times Best Seller list for children's books, and the novel was made into the 2015 film *Paper Towns*. In 2009, *Paper Towns* was awarded the 2009 Edgar Award for Best Young Adult Novel and the 2010 Corinne Literature Prize. After this, Green and his friend, young-adult writer David Levithan, collaborated

on the novel *Will Grayson*, which was published by Dutton in 2010. The novel debuted on The New York Times children's best-seller list after its release and remained there for three weeks. It was the first LGBT-themed young adult novel to make it to that list. It was a runner-up (Honour Book) for two of the annual ALA awards, the Stonewall Book Award (for excellence in LGBT children's and young adult literature), and the Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production.

In August 2009, Green announced he was writing a new book entitled *The Sequel*, which was later scrapped. His sixth book, *The Fault in Our Stars*, was released in January 2012. He crafted the novel by collaborating with Dutton editor Julie StraussGabel. Green explained that several parts of *The Sequel* were reworked into *The Fault in Our Stars*. Green signed all 150,000 copies of the first printing and his wife and his brother applied their own symbols, a Yeti and an Anglerfish (known as the "Hanklerfish"), respectively. The New York Times Best Seller list for children's books listed *The Fault in Our Stars* at number one for two weeks in January and February 2012. The novel has been made into a major motion picture of the same name, released in the United States on June 6, 2014. Green filmed a cameo role for the movie that was not included in the final cut of the film. In late 2013, Green stated that he was writing a new book with the working title *The Racket*. He sold 5,000 words of a rough draft on IndieGoGo for \$10 each in order to raise money as part of the Project for Awesome charity event. On November 16, 2014, Green wrote on his Tumblr page that he was not working on *The Racket* but was working on something else with a different title.

Green's rapid rise to fame and idiosyncratic voice are credited with creating a major shift in the young adult fiction market. While reviewing the *Andrew Smith* young-

adult novel, Winger, J. Jacobs of The New York Times used the term "Greenlit" to describe young adult books that contain "sharp dialogue, defective authority figures, occasional boozing, unrequited crushes, and one or more heart breaking twists." According to the Wall Street Journal, "some credit him with ushering in a new golden era for contemporary, realistic, literary teen fiction, following more than a decade of dominance by books about young wizards, sparkly vampires, and dystopia. A blurb or Twitter endorsement from Mr. Green can ricochet around the Internet and boost sales, an effect book bloggers call "the John Green effect." Zareen Jaffery, executive editor of Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers said: "What I really like about what people are calling 'the John Green effect' is that there's more of an interest in authentic, genuine, relatable characters."

Young-adult readers and authors, including Green himself, have been critical of the terms. Green has voiced his disagreement with the idea that he is singlehandedly responsible for launching or promoting any one individual's career. Green has commented on these arguments: "My concern is that popular work by women receives far more vitriolic criticism from the public (like, in terms of several demeaning jokes...) than popular work created by men... Also, I would like to see equal attention given to the sexism in popular work by men, from Nicholas Sparks to, for instance J. D. Salinger. *Catcher in the Rye*—although I like it very much—is profoundly and disturbingly misogynistic and yet seems to get a critical pass both online and off. This happens a lot, I think, with books by men, and I don't want male writers (including me!) to get that pass." Relating to this issue, Green has stated that he considers himself to be a feminist.

In 2015, a Tumblr post from user virgin generated media controversy, as it claimed Green is "a creep who panders to teenage girls so that he can amass some weird cult-like following." Other users commented on the post, criticizing his writing and tagging Green to bring the post to his attention. Green responded to the post, defending himself, stating, "Throwing that kind of accusation around is sick and libellous and most importantly damages the discourse around the actual sexual abuse of children." Green added that he would use the social media website less often, stating, "I'm not angry or anything like that. I need some distance to my well- being." Fellow young-adult authors Rainbow Rowell and Maggie Stiefvater came to Green's defence. Stiefvater wrote on Tumblr, "You can have your own opinions on Green's books and Internet presence, but the fact remains that he is a very real positive influence on thousands of teens. You're not just making sure you can't have nice things. You're taking away other people's nice things." In a subsequent email to USA Today, Stiefvater stated, "I had to say something. Not because of the nature of the posts, although they were distasteful and borderline libel. But because the grotesquerie was being force-fed to the author. "On July 14, 2015, Greg Ballard, the mayor of Indianapolis, proclaimed that that day would be "John Green Day" in his city. That month, Teresa Jacobs, the mayor of Orange County, Florida, declared that July 17 would also be John Green Day.

The Fault in our Stars is a novel by John Green. It is his fourth solo novel, and sixth novel overall. It was published on January 10, 2012. The title is inspired by Act 1, Scene 2 of Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, in which the nobleman Cassius says to Brutus: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings." The story is narrated by Hazel Grace Lancaster, a 16-year-old girl with

thyroid cancer that has affected her lungs. Hazel is forced by her parents to attend a support group where she subsequently meets and falls in love with 17-year-old Augustus Waters, an ex basketball player and amputee. An American feature film adaptation of the same name as novel directed by Josh Boone and starring Shailene Woodley, Ansel Elgort, and Nat Wolff was released on June 6, 2014. A Hindi feature film adaptation of the novel directed by

Mukesh Chhabra and starring Sushant Singh Rajput, Sanjana Sanghi, Saswata Chatterjee, Swastika Mukherjee and Saif Ali Khan was released on July 24, 2020, on Disney+ Hotstar. Both the book and its Indian and American film adaptation were met with strong critical and commercial success.

Hazel Grace Lancaster, a 16-year-old with thyroid cancer that has spread to her lungs, attends a cancer patient support group at her mother's behest. At one meeting, Hazel meets a 17-year-old boy currently in remission named Augustus Waters, whose osteosarcoma caused him to lose his right leg. Augustus is at the meeting to support Isaac, his friend who has eye cancer. Hazel and Augustus strike a bond immediately and agree to read each other's favourite novels. Augustus gives Hazel *The Price of Dawn*, and Hazel recommends *An Imperial Affliction*, a novel about a cancer-stricken girl named Anna that parallels Hazel's own experience. After Augustus finishes reading her book, he is frustrated upon learning that the novel ends abruptly without a conclusion. Hazel explains the novel's author, Peter van Houten, retreated to Amsterdam following the novel's publication and has not been heard from since.

A week later, Augustus reveals to Hazel that he has tracked down Van Houten's assistant, Lidewij, and, through her, has managed to start an e-mail correspondence with Van Houten. The two write to Van Houten with questions regarding the novel's ending; he eventually replies, explaining that he can only answer Hazel's questions in person. At a picnic, Augustus surprises Hazel with tickets to Amsterdam to meet Van Houten, acquired through the story's version of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, The Genies. Upon meeting Van Houten, Hazel and Augustus are shocked to discover that he is a mean-spirited alcoholic. Horrified by Van Houten's hostile behavior towards the teenagers, Lidewij confesses to having arranged the meeting on his behalf. Lidewij resigns as Van Houten's assistant and takes Hazel and Augustus to the Anne Frank House, where Augustus and Hazel share their first kiss. Later that night Hazel and Augustus lose their virginity to one another in Augustus's hotel room, confessing their mutual love for each other. The next day, Augustus reveals that his cancer has returned. Upon their return to Indianapolis, Augustus's health continues to deteriorate, resulting in him staying in the ICU for a few days. Fearing his death, Augustus invites Isaac and Hazel to his pre-funeral, where they give eulogies. Augustus dies soon after, leaving Hazel heartbroken. Van Houten shows up at Augustus's funeral to apologize to Hazel, but Hazel does not forgive him. Hazel learns that Augustus had written an obituary for her, and reads it after Lidewij discovers it amidst Van Houten's letters. It states that getting hurt in this world is unavoidable, but we do get to choose whom we allow to hurt us, and that he is happy with his choice, and hopes she likes hers too. The book closes with Hazel stating that she is happy with her choice.

In June 2014, the movie adaptation of *The Fault in Our Stars* was released, directed by Josh Boone, produced by Fox 2000 and Temple Hill, and starring Shailene Woodley, Ansel Elgort, and Nat Wolff. The screenplay was written by Scott Neustadter and Michael Weber, who went on to adapt *Paper Towns* for film. Fox 2000 and Temple Hill released *Paper Towns* in the summer of 2015, starring Nat Wolff, Cara Delevingne, Justice Smith, Austin Abrams, Halston Sage, and Jaz Sinclair. In the second half of 2015, John signed a first look production deal with Fox 2000. The limited series adaptation of *Looking for Alaska* was released on Hulu on October 18th, 2019 starring Kristine Froseth, Charlie Plummer, and Denny Love. A Netflix adaptation of *Let It Snow* was released on November 8th, 2019 starring Isabela Merced, Shameik Moore, Kiernan Shipka, Odeya Rush, Liv Hewson, Joan Cusack, Mitchell Hope and more. In 2007, John and his brother Hank ceased textual communication and began to talk primarily through video blogs posted to YouTube. The videos spawned a community of people called nerd fighters who fight for intellectualism and to decrease the overall worldwide level of suck. (Decreasing suck takes many forms: Nerd fighters have raised millions of dollars to fight poverty in the developing world; they also planted thousands of trees around the world in May of 2010 to celebrate Hank's 30th birthday.) Although they have long since resumed textual communication, John and Hank continue to upload two videos a week to their YouTube channel, vlog brothers. Their videos have been viewed more than 800 million times.

John and Hank launched educational YouTube channel Crash Course in late 2011 with funding from YouTube's original channel initiative. John, Hank, and a range of other hosts teach humanities and science courses to viewers, with multiple new

series launching each year. World History, Literature, Economics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, and Government are just some of the courses available to date. Crash Course has over 10.7 million subscribers and 1.2 billion views. John and Hank are involved with a myriad of other video projects, including The Art Assignment, Ours Poetica, SciShow, hank games, Eons and Healthcare Triage. John's book reviews have appeared in The New York Times Book Review and Booklist, a wonderful book review journal where he worked as a publishing assistant and production editor while writing *Looking for Alaska*. John grew up in Orlando, Florida before attending Indian Springs School and then Kenyon College. He currently lives in Indianapolis with his family.

John Green's *The Fault in our Stars* is written in the perspective of its protagonist, 16-year-old Hazel Grace Lancaster. Over the course of the novel, it becomes very easy for the reader to become attached to the characters of the book, due to Green's ability to get the audience to connect to them. Green makes it simple for the reader to connect to Hazel; for them to understand her, and to sympathize with and realize what she is going through, even if the audience themselves have never been touched by the disease which her life revolves around. The reader is able to do this due to the style in which Hazel narrates. Hazel speaks and thinks in a manner that causes the reader to feel as if they and Hazel have been friends for quite some time. "Look, let me just say it: He was hot. A no hot boy stare at you relentlessly and it is, at best, awkward and, at worse, a form of assault. But a hot boy...well." Green's sarcastic, yet out going and humorous style makes the reader feel like they know her, and assists in the formation of the attachment to the character. Green writes Hazel as a snarky, intelligent young woman, but also a bookworm teen with more introverted hobbies/tendencies. Green makes Hazel likable,

which therefore helps with the attachment to the character. His diction and way of phrasing his sentences allows this to shine through, Hazel is a typical teenager with some atypical characteristics.

John Green also portrays his characters as real human beings, and especially his cancer patients, for whom they are. He recognizes, throughout the book, that the majority of young cancer patients are not heroes, who "fight" the disease with a passion, and set up charities and are remembered forever and ever after they die. He shows that the majority of cancer patients are just normal people who are attempting to beat the disease, and go back to regular life. Green does not portray Hazel and Augustus as heroes; larger than life people, he portrays them as fairly normal, struggling along in the world. "The real heroes anyway aren't the people doing things; the real heroes are the people noticing things, paying attention." (312) This allows the reader to really connect to his characters, because they are not perfect people, they are not larger than life, they have things that make them human, they have faults, they get angry, and they can be hurt. It gives the reader the chance to connect with them, without the feeling that they are inadequate to the character. "Because there is no glory in illness. There is no meaning to it. There is no honour in dying of."

The Fault in our Stars has many moods, many atmospheres, depending on the portion of the book one is in. However, throughout the entire novel, this is an underlying feeling of sadness, mainly due to the topic of which the book deals with.

(Ahem..Cancer..Ahem.) "Little boats were moored at the brick banks, half full of rainwater, some of them were near sinking." (162). This quotation especially demonstrates this underlying atmosphere of sadness, because although Hazel and

Augustus are out, enjoying a wonderful meal in Amsterdam, on a beautiful night, There are these poor little boats, left to sink into the canal. This sentence may just be a casual observation, but it does have a tint of sadness to it, which helps convey this subtle emotion throughout the book. The tone in *The Fault in our Stars* is uniquely teenager and very John Green. His writing style comes through in his tone as well, making his work conversational, and adding to that teenager-y element. "I nodded. I liked Augustus waters. I really, really, really liked him."

CHAPTER – 3

Trauma, Grief and Death: Analysis of the novel,

The Fault in our Stars

In this chapter we are going to analyse John Greene's novel *The Fault in our Stars* on the basis of trauma theories. As said in the previous chapters grief has become a driving force in the story line. *The Fault in our Stars* storyline mainly revolves around distress, grief and trauma. *The Fault in our Stars*, written by John Green has a very dynamic set of characters interacting with each other trying to cope up with the impending grief and trauma which they know is something that has long been coming. In a way, the story is also about how these characters help each other to overcome the fear and general concern about trauma about the upcoming death which is about to unfold and impact their lives. Most of these characters help each other unknowingly but it does not take away the strong foundation of trauma in the story which author John Green magnificently sets up. This is the reason why *The Fault in our Stars* becomes a perfect mouthpiece for propagating the themes of grief, trauma, life, and death.

The main characters of the story, where Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters being the prominent ones, are different from other young people of their age in the fact that while others deal with temporary emotions, desires and lifestyles, the protagonists of *The Fault in our Stars* deals with issues of death and 'what happens to those who loves us after our death'. These questions are raised by them or remembered by them on a daily basis and every decision the characters take are an aftermath or consequence of their specific thought process which in this case is death. This thought is

established by author John Green in the first meeting between Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters which takes place in the support group meeting which, as Augustus Waters humorously calls “taking place literally in the heart of Jesus” where Augustus Waters shares his desire to achieve an immortal remembrance within his confined life which ironically is mortal whereas Hazel Grace, a character who has accepted death and is worried about those who loves her, almost instantly opposes this statement by saying everything is impermanent and “Oblivion is inevitable”.

However, the character of Hazel Grace, a girl who has issues with her mortality and someone who tries to keep the distance from people in order to hurt as less people as possible. This fear is portrayed in the part where she says to Augustus Waters that she is a “Grenade waiting to explode”. This meagre fear is later turned into a phobia which ultimately ends up creating an addiction for her towards a fictional novel called *An Imperial Affliction*. The book itself resembles the basic theme of the story and in a way, symbolizes the grief present in the story. *An Imperial Affliction* catches Hazel’s eye for its abrupt ending without a proper closure. She believes, rightly so, that the ending accurately represents death which is just like the ending, abrupt, unclear and closure less. While she loved the book and praised it for its abrupt ending, as the novel progresses it is shown that she longs to know what happens after which makes the readers aware about her affinity towards the concept of after life or what happens after each of us die. Though she wants to know what happens after, the reason as to why she wants to know how it ends reveals much more about her character which is the question of what happens to the family after the death of the main character. This is reminiscent of the Hazel’s thoughts where she is anxious and concerned about what will happen to her family when she dies.

The critical point in *The Fault in our Stars* happens when Augustus Waters spend his last wish (from 'The Genie Foundation') on taking Hazel to Amsterdam to meet the author of *An Imperial Affliction*, Hazel's favourite book and also to know what happens after the end of the book. This happens after the relationship between Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters evolved in a way that they both now consciously know about the impermanence of life which is where the inception of grief occurs. Amsterdam is the place where the relationship of Hazel Grace and Augustus Waters reaches a new height which paves way for the teen romance in the backdrop of grief. In a scientific or meta-textual sense, the desire of Augustus Waters to live after death through the memories of others gets fulfilled at this point where he establishes a legacy by being in the book itself which makes him part of the immortal and everlasting literature through the readers. In the strict literary sense, he establishes his legacy through giving out good moments and memories to Hazel and her parents. Hazel Grace Lancaster, for the first time through her relationship with Augustus Waters steps out of the fear of impending grief and tries to live a life of her own in the face of death.

When Augustus Waters passes away from cancer which came out of remission, something which he reveals to Hazel Grace in Amsterdam which makes their character dynamics change drastically, Hazel Grace evolves so much so that she musters up the strength to cope with the loss of a loved one which ultimately completes her character evolution too when she reaches the point of realization that the people who love her, her parents, will cope up with her death after she's gone. Hazel Grace's character evolution reaches its epitome when she says in her eulogy for Augustus Waters that "without pain, we would not know joy". Through this statement, we are made to know

the fact that Hazel Grace Lancaster, the person who feared her death for the sake of others has come to understand that death makes one value life. Hazel Grace Lancaster, throughout the story is seen to ponder over her existential crisis even though she has a clear identity of her own. As a result, she is seen to put up several defensive mechanisms of her own. Since she is a dynamic character, her character undergoes several changes throughout the course of the story. It is also important to know that most of these mechanisms are applied unconsciously by Hazel Grace.

One of the foremost defence mechanism employed by Hazel Grace early on in the story is Selective Perception she chooses to hear and see what she wants or in other words, instead of seeing the whole picture she chooses to see the comfortable parts of the picture. This is clearly seen in her relationship with Anna, the protagonist of her favourite novel *An Imperial Affliction*. She loves the book so much because of the thoughts of Anna presented in the novel. Anna only says what Hazel Grace wants her to say since they have so much alike, things which people around her, even her parents, don't say to her. This is why she re-reads the novel many times. Anna, much like Hazel Grace believes cancer not to be an illness but a part of a mutation process which would eventually make Earth more diverse and colourful.

Another self-defence mechanism employed is denial where she believes she is totally fine even though she is diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer. At several points in the story she also employs avoidance where she avoids confronting a problem. This is mainly seen in her childhood where Hazel, after learning she has incurable cancer, avoids her friends and refuses their kind hearted support and sympathy. Throughout the story we can observe Hazel Grace Lancaster trying out different other defence

mechanisms too, like *Displacement* where she chooses less threatening books over friends and family who could give back emotional response to her compared with static and passive books, fixation where Hazel breaks connection with the outside world and fixates upon the novel *An Imperial Affliction*, and many others like Identification, Rationalization, etc.

The reason for these peculiar character traits of Hazel Grace can be traced back to when she became critically ill few years before the story takes place when her mother told her to go to sleep (subtly implication to die) which essentially was the first traumatic experience for her. This is what drives her actions throughout the course of the novel. This experience led her to believe that death is doom and it hurts people who loves us, this is the reason why she keeps her distance from people from the very beginning itself and it is only after the intervention of Augustus Waters into her life that she begins to subdue such defensive mechanisms and it is only through Augustus Waters that she found a solution to her existential crisis and finally overcame the grief which was a driving factor in all her actions.

Looking at *The Fault in our Stars*, we can see that the main storyline itself is focused around grief and trauma. The main point is that *The Fault in our Stars* shows these kind of emotions in a more 'passive' way which makes the story and the narration ever so better. In *The Fault in our Stars* we can see the 5 stages of grief. The first few stages can be observed in the case of the male protagonist of the novel Augustus Waters like Denial, Anger and Depression. Augustus Waters has a cancer which has imparted severe physical restriction to him but nevertheless he wants to achieve objectives only suited for people with full physical abilities and throughout the book, until Hazel's

furious monologue he strongly believes he could achieve this and he does this without thinking about the reality which is his physical disability. This is his stage of denial where he simply denies the facts lying in front of him.

In the next stage which he sets into at the third act of the story he is seen to become frustrated, a shadow of his former self where he hates everything happening in his life and he is furiously asking to let him die in peace. This is his stage of anger where he looks towards reacting to the grief incurred to him by the trauma, he was the victim of. The next stage Augustus Waters is in is his final few days where he enters 'depression'. He gets so involved in this stage that it begins to affect him physically in the form of vomiting, peeing on himself etc. At the beginning of the book, we already see Hazel Lancaster in the stage of depression where she secludes herself from the world, reads a specific book repeatedly and having wild thoughts which could arguably be considered near-suicidal. She often recounts about the time she had a near death experience due to the spreading of cancer when she, even though unconscious, heard the parents asking her to let go of life and stop fighting. All of this affected her in a way that when we as readers gets to know her, she becomes this depressed and frustrated young teenager. Towards the end of the story, we see Hazel Grace Lancaster reach the stage of acceptance. We gets a few glimpses of this stage when she meets Augustus Waters. It can be observed that as the story of *The Fault in our Stars* progresses, Hazel Grace Lancaster slowly accepts the fact that they are suffering from such a kind of disease and her resistance towards this fact decreases as she moves into the acceptance stage. It can be said that the love shared by Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters was the catalyst for Hazel to be in the Acceptance stage and this is what helped her battle cancer.

Conclusion

Literature is an umbrella term used to indicate a wide variety of forms of art propagated through different Medias. This is contrary to the conventional thought that literature refers to a canon which is restricted to just books alone. Even though the structural rules of the literature and the method of propagation which is the type of medium or media used are different to some extent, a close analysis of the history of literature shows us that the core emotion and its way of appealing to its audience is somewhat similar in nature in many of the medias. This project is a quick glance of insight into the intertwining nature of literature and a comparison between how the audience gets stimulated by hidden and layered undertones of emotions and the direct effect of hard hitting realistic emotion.

One of the foremost themes of contemporary literature is trauma. It manifests itself in popular fiction, playing a central role in *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and other similar novels written clunky present perfect continuous tense, later to be adapted into films starring attractive but ironically real actresses. A central claim of contemporary literary trauma theory asserts that trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity. This serves as the basis for a larger argument that suggests identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. However, a discursive dependence upon a single psychological theory of trauma produces a homogenous interpretation of the diverse representations in the trauma novel and the interplay that occurs between language, experience, memory, and place. Considering the multiple models of trauma and memory presented in the trauma novel draws attention to the role

of place, which functions to portray trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means.

It is also important to make note of the different layering of literature. From reading between the lines to decoding what they chose not to show or spoon feed, the two greatest forms of literature – books and cinema are the epitomic exemplifiers of this fact. In John Green's novel *The Fault in our Stars* the trauma theory can be applied quite easily since the effect of trauma and grief are present in the surface level of the story with the under layering being nothing but different shades of it. As a whole, we spend a great deal of time trying to avoid pain but, if we read carefully, *The Fault In Our Stars* also teaches us that “pain demands to be felt” and “the universe likes to be noticed.” No matter how we try, Gus is right- we don't get to choose if we get hurt; it is a near certainty that we will. Although the characters try to live by their support group mantra, “Living our best lives today”, every action, relationship, and experience is cast in the shadow of their impending mortalities. The theme of life and death unfolds through Hazel's relationship with Augustus.

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