



THE VALUATION OF VANISHING: SUICIDALITY AND PERCEIVED BURDENSOMENESS IN YANAGIHARA'S A LITTLE LIFE

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Abstract

This paper explores the subtle depiction of death and suicidality in Yanagihara's *A Little Life*. The novel's rigorous examination of profound trauma, persistent physical pain, and emotional alienation provides a fertile foundation for a psychological and literary intersection, specifically through its central protagonist, Jude St. Francis. By applying Joiner's theoretical framework centered on perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and the acquired capability for suicide this inquiry endeavors to decode the intricate psychological architecture of Jude's deteriorating mental health. Joiner's theory elucidates the factor that precipitate Jude's suicidal ideation while simultaneously highlighting the systemic failure of interpersonal relationships to restore his sense of self-worth and social rapport. The research further assesses how Yanagihara frames Jude's cognitive decline through themes of chronic suffering, silence, and corporeal discomfort, thereby transforming the narrative into a discourse on obscured affliction and institutional negligence. Finally, this study probes the reader's ethical position as a witness to profound anguish and their conscientious engagement with fictionalized trauma.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, Perceived Burdensomeness, Psychological Deterioration, Suicide Ideation, Trauma.*

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1. Introduction

Death is an inevitable fact, later or sooner, everyone dies. Some people die naturally, some by accidents, murders, deaths in wars is another way, but some people choose to die before time solely with their own very will of putting an end to it. But death by suicide is not merely an end__ it is often the apex of deep psychological rupture, emotional isolation, and an extended turmoil with selfhood. However, one is more likely got to know about it in fiction than encounter it first-hand. Suicide have been discussed and depicted excessively in fiction but it's still a controversial topic to talk about till today. No suicide or suicide narrative is the same, which means the investigation into literary suicide is ever-changing and evolving task. Furthermore, suicide remained a taboo topic if narrative does not provide the safety or assurance. Defining suicide and suicidality can be a not so easy task depending on how broad the concept is. The American Psychological Association defines suicidality as the "risk of suicide, usually indicated by suicidal ideation or intent, especially as evident in the presence of a well-elaborated suicidal plan". The simplest definition of suicide can be as The Oxford English Dictionary defines it, "the action or an act of taking one's own life".

Suicide has always been seen as a moral and philosophical lesson, or as the dramatic end in literary studies. However, representations of anguish, embodiment, and mental decline have replaced sensationalized or idealized objects in contemporary fiction. Because of perceived burdensomeness, disordered belonging, and cumulative pain, these shifts can be seen as larger tendencies in suicide research and mental health discourses to stress suicide as a preventable, if extremely complicated, phenomenon (Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010). Suicide is not portrayed in the novel as a dreadful occurrence, but rather as a way to justify long-term agony rather than a temporary relief.

A Little Life is the narrative of a man's childhood abuse, constant pain, and mental trauma, all of which contribute to his sense of invaluableness and dispensability. Even though the narrative spans decades and includes instances of friendship and successful work life, they do not break Jude's suicidal consciousness. Rather, survival is portrayed as resilience rather than recovery, which supports the novel's cynical assertion that trauma can be constitutive of identity. Jude's final suicide is not presented in the novel as an incident or accident, but rather as the logical continuation of years of suicidal ideation that he has cultivated within himself throughout time.

Jude St. Francis appears in the narrative as an actor driven by chronic trauma rather than episodic sorrow. His mistreatment is long-term, repetitive, and extremely formative, resulting in complex trauma, a condition characterized by pervasive shame, emotional dysregulation, and a negative self-concept (Herman, 1992). Suicidal ideation occurs in Jude not only in response to specific crisis events, but also as a state of psychological existence.

The Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, developed by Thomas Joiner, is one of the most useful theories for assessing this trajectory. Joiner is someone who exhibits suicidal tendencies as a result of a combination of three factors: perceived burdensomeness,

thwarted belongingness, and learned competence to commit suicide (Joiner 2005). Joiner's approach emphasizes perceptions and developed tolerance for pain and anxiety, as opposed to psychopathology models, which exclusively evaluate psychopathology. This makes it particularly valuable in literary study, where academics can investigate how characters' perceptions about their personalities and connections influence their attitude toward death.

This paper uses a thanatological perspective on Joiner's theory to critically assess Jude's death in a non-romantic, clinically based approach. Suicide is not praised or trivialized in *A Little Life*, but rather addressed as a tragic conclusion to long-term psychological and interpersonal suffering. This type of treatment not only improves literary knowledge of the novel, but it also contributes to broader discussions about how literature might objectively describe suicide without aestheticizing and normalizing it.

1.1. Research Questions

1. In what ways does perceived burdensomeness shape Jude St. Francis's death-oriented selfhood?
2. How does the novel's representation of trauma contribute to acquired capability for suicide?

1.2. Significance of study

The significance of this study stems from its focus on *A Little Life* as a suicide novel rather than a shallowly traumatized one. It contributes to the academic literature by giving a thanatological reading in which suicide serves as the novel's structural and psychological focus. The analysis accountable for a substantial gap in the current literature is the transfer of vital interest in terms of endurance and friendship to death via suicide. The study is ethical since it promotes responsible and non-romantic interactions with suicide in literature. Instead of offering aesthetics to pain or delivering a serene death as the decisive event, it critically examines the psychological process that ritualizes death into the main character's self-image.

This is especially relevant given the way suicide is portrayed in popular literature nowadays. In practice, the study serves as an intermediary between literary and suicide research, indicating that novels may be used to investigate suicidal cognition, perceived burden, and death-oriented identity. By doing so, it contributes to a broader, trauma-sensitive, and psychologically conscious critique of the humanities.

2. Literature Review

Suicide has historically been the focus of sociological and philosophical research, but it is important to recognize that it is a phenomenon that is impacted by social structures, cultural norms, and existential implications rather than a straightforward act of an individual or response. Domestic conceptual approaches to suicide believed that tensions between social identity and individual identity lead to self-injurious death and concentrated on the relationship between the individual and society. Among other academics, Jack D. Douglas proposed the theory that suicide is a social construction whose

interpretation is based on cultural representation, interpersonal sensibility, and symbolic expression rather than solely on objective cause (Douglas, 1967). In such a sense, suicide is more than a death behavior, it is a kind of expression which makes sense out of suffering and which is placed in social situations.

Sociological approaches have also stressed on the case of social regulation, moral standards and shared systems of meaning in influencing suicidal behavior. According to Baechler (1979), suicide is a strategic reaction to circumstances that are perceived to be unbearable and that it should be used to escape, to be aggressive, or to punish. These understandings emphasize both the instrumental and symbolic aspects of suicide and how people internalize social pressures and moral expectations to live up to those pressures in their constructions of self-destruction. Notably, such directions acknowledge suicide as both in-depth and in person mediated.

The contemporary psychological and clinical scholarship has reformulated suicide as a process as opposed to a one-time occurrence. Instead of concentrating on the demographic or diagnostic correlates, current models lay an emphasis on suicidal ideation, self-perception, and cognitive-emotional patterns which develop over time. The theory that introduces one influential point of view is the escape theory by Baumeister, the theory can be described as the process of suicide as an escape to unpleasant self-awareness, whereby people want to escape painful self-validation and feeling of failure in their personal lives (Baumeister, 1990). In this model, the desirability of suicide is taken to occur where the consciousness itself is perceived to be unbearable.

The significance of self-perceptions in suicidal thinking has also been clinically predicted over the last couple of years. Beck et al. (1985) found hopelessness as an even more potent indicator of suicide than the presence of depression itself, showing the ways in which expectations in the future are negatively corrosive to the desire to live. Suicidal persons frequently come up with hard cognitive schemas where death is seen as an escape, need or duty. These results explain why internal statements are significant in the maintenance of suicidal motivation.

A major change in depiction of suicide was in the modernist literature, which was linked to the fragmentation of the psyche and existential dissipation of the new century. Instead of embedding suicide as melodramatic tragedy or other moral transgression, modernist writers utilized the theme of self-inflicted death as a form of alienation, inner disintegration and despair. The modernist interest in interior monologue and fragmented narrative formations helped focus on suicidal consciousness as a psychological condition. In literature by critics like Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka and T.S. Eliot, the suicide or death-oriented mindset is common in reaction to the degradation of stable identity and coherent social sense. The protagonists of Kafka, e.g., often live in the world of crashing guilt, physical weakness, and bureaucracy, in which even the state itself is seen as something

inhuman (Kafka, 1925/2009). Though this is not necessarily an act of suicide, the ubiquitous nature of the death desire is indicative of a serious alienation by life.

The postmodern and contemporary fiction reflects a turning point of the way suicide is represented in literature as a sign of symbolic, allegoric, philosophically detached representations, stating them with the focus on the psychologically realistic and ethically charged depictions. Unlike in past traditions of literature in which suicide was frequently framed as metaphor and existential gesture, latest literary narratives are placing self-inflicted death more and more into the context of embodied experience, the history of trauma, and long-term psychological decay. The change is indicative of larger cultural shifts in the perception of mental illness and suicide due to innovations in the field of psychology and psychiatry, as well as trauma research (Heise, 2016).

The trauma theory has taken the center stage in the modern literary criticism especially in the examination of the works of literature that portray long-term suffering, memory loss and degraded identity. Although trauma studies have played a major role in enhancing knowledge about the influence of violence and abuse on subjectivity, their interactions with suicide have been indirect in most cases. Trauma is often discussed as an explanatory context and suicide is considered as a tragic denouement instead of a leading psychological course.

Literary criticism has started to explore the use of interdisciplinary approaches in psychology, psychiatry and research in mental health in analyzing representations of suicide in the past few decades. This interdisciplinary shift represents an acknowledgement that texts of the literary genre provide a singular access to subjective experience, specifically to the inner narratives that people use to formulate meaning around pain and death. The narratives psychology formulated by Jerome Bruner highlights the fact that human beings make meaning of their lives through stories implying that suicide narratives in fiction expose mathematical and emotional cycles that are barely available in empirical studies (Bruner, 1986).

A Little Life has produced a very polarized critical reception, having ended up occupying a controversial place in the discourse of modern literature since its release. Initial academic and critical reactions often focused on the novel as the demonstration of inhuman suffering, as an epic of pain, love, and persistence and not a prolonged reflection about death addressed in the form of suicide (Wood, 2015). The text was frequently read as an experience of affective experimentation by critics questioning the ability to prompt empathy and emotional fatigue on the reader and preempting the stylistic explosion of the work and its prodigious expansiveness of the narrative (Sehgal, 2015).

Although the topic has been critically engaged in significantly, suicide as one of the main organizing principles in *A Little Life* has not been given adequate attention. The death of Jude St. Francis has been widely reviewed and discussed as a shock or

controversial conclusion in many reviews and scholarly analysis with the emphasis on reader response instead of how the novels have constructed suicidal ideation over a long period (Franklin, 2016). This focus on the conclusion obstructs the view of the mode of how death is predicted, practiced, and made normal through the story, and thus, the interpretation of the role of suicide in the text is fragmented.

3. Theoretical Framework

The interdisciplinary study of death, dying and human responses to mortality (based on psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, medicine and cultural studies) generally define Thanatology as a study of the way death is understood, experienced and represented (Ariès, 1981). In contrast to biomedical methods of death that treat it as a physiological terminal, thanatology focuses on death as a lived, expected, and medially symbolic experience. With this approach, scholars can examine how death is produced as well as how people and cultures imagine, fear, normalize or resist it in cultural discourses (Howarth, 2007).

In the thanatological thinking, death is understood not so much as a biological event as a psychological one and even a cultural process. According to Norbert Elias, recent societies have gradually privatized and elitized death, making it more of an internal psychological experience of isolation, anxiety, and unspoken fear (Elias, 1985). It is through this perspective that death turns out to be something people live in their minds long before it takes place. Thanatology thus serves expectation, denial, acceptance and emotional work of the existences lived in the shadow of mortality (Kellehear, 2007).

Thanatology, a post-modern approach to the study of suicide, favors the apprehension of suicide as being not just an act of dying, but as a state of death consciousness in which persons re-establish their being-relation. Suicide is viewed as a process where the death becomes cognitively accessible, emotionally drilled and ethically justified in the worldview of the individual (Cholbi, 2011). This is a strategy that changes the point of analysis to be the one before death but this is negotiation that goes on longer. One of the most important notions in thanatological explanations of suicide is death anticipation. According to the arguments of scholars, the problem of suicidal ideation is the fact that people who have it live with the heightened sense of death, perceiving it as relief, escape, or moral necessity (Lloyd, 2007). Such expectation makes the association of death from an abstract inevitability into a concrete psychological presence, which organizes day-to-day thinking and emotional control. Thanatology therefore views suicidal ideation as an organized and permanent association and interaction with mortality, as opposed to a transitory habeas corpus.

Literary thanatology extends the knowledge of death studies to written work, exploring how fiction constitutes, predicts and demonetizes death in the consciousness of its characters and its place in the storyline. Instead of viewing death as a terminal event,

literary thanatology examines the ways that stories organize meaningfulness around the subjects of mortality, absence and loss (Bronfen, 1992). This method is especially appropriate to those works where death is used as the continual force molding narrative action. Characters in death-oriented stories tend to display what scholars call death consciousness, a developed awareness of death that alters perception, memory and moral judgment (Bauman, 1992). Fictional forms of such consciousness enable the readers to gain the subjective experience of existential approaching death to see how expectancy and dread can enter ordinary thinking. Reading literary works is therefore a simulation of death-oriented psychology and this provides an insight to the unavailable experiences.

The narrative framework and characterization of *A Little Life* specifically lends itself to the combined framework of thanatology and a psychological perspective on suicide since the novel always depicts death not as an exterior disintegration but as an interior horizon that defines the subjectivity of Jude St. Francis. Opponents have noted that Jude lives a life cycled by pain, memory and anticipation as opposed to having progress or recovery, thus his existence can only be understood in terms of death (Sehgal, 2015). This predisposition to death can be considered as an existential situation of psychology instead of a melodramatic narrative climax, which Thanatology can do. The way Jude thinks of himself is quite observable in connection with the psychological construct of perceived burdensomeness in that he continues to infer care, love and support to be signs of duty instead of appreciation. According to literary critics, Jude denies intimacy on the basis of detachment but rather on a moralized view that his existence is a harm to those in love with him (Chu, 2016). The interpretive pattern is in accordance with the psychological discoveries that self-perceived burdened individuals re-socialize the conceptualization of relational closeness as ethical breakdown, consequently perpetuating suicide desire (Christensen et al., 2016).

Using suicide theory in literature works is an ethically serious issue and especially the danger of romanticization or moralizing. More recent ethics-of representation theorizing cautions that aestheticizing suffering is prone to automatically normalize or celebrate self-destructive conduct unless it is critically framed (Hawbotham and De Leo, 2018). This paper takes up this risk by basing its approach on the ground on clinical and thanatological theory by focusing more on process, cognition and consequence and not spectacles. A literary analysis of suicide also has the burden not to judge morally. The ethical critique is that the reduction of the psychological facts of suicide with dichotomies of strength and weakness through the convincing or dismissal of suicide is simplistic (White et al., 2017). With that in mind, this paper does not consider the suicide of Jude as an act of heroism, as well as it is not perceived as a failure; it is a tragic result of the prolonged emotional degeneration.

Despite its analytical capacity, the selected framework has several limits that should be acknowledged. Psychological theories of suicide are used less to explain fictitious awareness and more to minimize dangers in therapeutic settings. In order to prevent the characters from becoming diagnostic cases, their employment in literary works must be changed very carefully (McCarthy, 2019). Therefore, rather than being a classification tool, this research is grounded in theory as an interpretive technique. The other restriction is the difference between fictional representation and clinical reality. Fiction is time-compressive, affect-intensifying, interiorizing, and this interiorizing is not directly related to lived experience (Palmer, 2004). Although suicide theory might be useful to explain narrative logic, it cannot be used to explain the entire aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the text. This weakness is addressed through the incorporation of thanatology which is attentive to meaning, culture and narrative structure as opposed to empirical forecast.

4. Analysis

This study revolves around the novel's reassertion of suicide as its primary thematic and psychological structuring force. Jude's early trauma, ongoing suffering, and emotional deprivation are presented as processes that build up over time and lead to an internalized value of nothingness and a chronic sense of disposability rather than as isolated incidents. According to Joiner (2005) and Van Orden et al. (2010), these experiences overlap the concepts of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness, which serve as the cornerstones of psychological processes that teach Jude to defend death as a necessary and moral requirement. According to this interpretation, trauma is not seen as a conclusion but rather as a condition that shapes the emergence of a death-oriented self.

Suicide in *A Little Life* is not shown as a black and white break or an unexpected narrative resolution; on the contrary, it serves as an ever-present thematic element that pervades the life of Jude St. Francis since his childhood up to adulthood. The novel develops suicidal thought as a slowly developing, cumulative process of psychological functioning, whose existence permeates through Jude in his daily consciousness and perception of himself. In a thanatological view, death is not being placed as a sort of external insertion, but as a sort of expected frontier towards which the life of Jude is continually moving (Kastenbaum, 2000). This framing requires that suicide be understood not as a shocking occurrence, but as a fundamental organizing concept of the story. In the novel, the concept of his further life being a mistake reoccurs in the thoughts of Jude many times in the form of an interior monologue. Among the initial, and the most telling, manifestations of this conviction, behave the thoughts of this only man that survives: "He knew now that he should never have been born, that everything that had happened since had been a punishment for that original error. Some people, he thought, were mistakes from the start, and he was one of them." (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 115)

Structural repetition also increases this inevitability produced in the novel. There are repetitions of self-harming, being hospitalized, and withdrawn feelings without changes, to provide long-term change or redemption. Such repetitious arrangement deprives the reader of anticipating a healing effect and instead the result is what Frank (1995) still refers to as a chaos narrative: where suffering does not proceed toward healing but appears to intensify. Suicide, in this case, is prepared narratively prior to it happening. This preparation Jude himself admits when in reflection he says: “He had been practicing for this his entire life, learning how to endure pain, how to disappear inside himself, how to survive without hope.” (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 724)

The traumatic event is portrayed in *A Little Life* as the defining and structuring force that shapes Jude St. Francis's identity, self-concept, and attitude toward life and death rather than as a collection of distinct past events that are restricted to his issue. The novel depicts childhood abuse as a persistent condition that permanently reorganizes Jude's inner reality rather than something that can be resolved. According to trauma theory, this ongoing violence has what Herman (1992) called a complex trauma, a condition in which repeated abuse causes enduring alterations in moral identity, affect regulation, and self-concept. In this context, trauma is the support over which Jude erects his death-oriented selfhood. The abusive experience as depicted in the novel relating to the childhood of Jude is characterized by repetition, time, and betrayal, all of which compound its psychological impact. The years of being controlled by Brother Luke feel to Jude inevitable and set in blame within himself: “It had gone on for so long that he had stopped thinking of it as something that was happening to him. It was simply how life was. Pain, humiliation, punishment—these were not aberrations but the rules by which he existed. He learned early that his body was not his own, that it could be used, damaged, and discarded without consequence, and that resistance only prolonged the suffering.” (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 148).

The most effective and morally significant factor that characterizes Jude St. Francis's attitude toward life and death among the psychological factors that have inspired suicidal thoughts in *A Little Life* is perceived burdensomeness. Jude's belief that his prolonged existence is a pain that causes others who love him to suffer is what ultimately transforms suicidal thoughts into moral action, even if trauma is a required condition of harm and thwarted belongingness is an additional factor contributing to the emotional isolation. Perceived burdensomeness, according to Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, is the belief that one's life must be a liability to others and that one is more valuable dead than alive (Joiner, 2005). The novel by Yanagihara recreates this belief on various occasions as an inner moral argument and not an emotional perversion and therefore the suicide is seen not as a cry of despair but as duty.

The idea of Jude as a harmful person is clearly presented in the entire novel. In his opinion, his existence dictates emotional, physical, and moral work on others owing especially to those, who take care of him. This conviction comes out through the acts in which Jude thinks about his friends: “He knew that they loved him, but he also knew that love was not free. It required patience, vigilance, and sacrifice. Every time they worried about him, every time they adjusted their lives to accommodate his pain, he felt the weight of what he was costing them. He was not a comfort to those who loved him; he was a task, an obligation they had never agreed to.” (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 402)

Although perceived burdensomeness serves as the moral basis of Jude St. Francis suicidal thought, thwarted belongingness serves as its emotional catalyst. In *A Little Life*, Jude does not spend much time alone physically; he has friends, caregivers and intimate partners who keep on telling him that they love him and are committed. Nevertheless, the novel continues to depict Jude as an emotionally detached person incapable of internalizing and perpetuating a feeling of genuine connection. Thwarted belongingness according to Interpersonal Theory of Suicide by Thomas Joiner is the perpetual psychological situation where people have an unattended desire to obtain significant emotional attachment despite the existence of social connections (Joiner, 2005). This state of affairs is illustrated with impressive accuracy and uniformity by the story of Yanagihara, who speaks of loneliness not as deprivation of others, but rather as inability to feel embraced in any relationship.

The emotional isolation of Jude is evident even in the first descriptions of his friendships. Though Jude is strongly bonded to Willem, Malcolm and JB, he constantly makes himself peripheral, emotionally inaccessible even in intimacy: “He sat among them, listening, smiling when he knew he was expected to, but always with the sense that there was a glass wall between them. They spoke to him, included him, loved him, and yet none of it seemed to touch him where it mattered. He could mimic belonging well enough, but he had never learned how to feel it.” (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 233)

This lack of emotional connection is also supported by the fact that Jude cannot embrace intimacy, especially in romantic relationships. Another place where the failure of belonging cannot take a hold is in his relationship with Willem, despite it being one that is loving and patient: “Willem loved him openly, without reservation, and that frightened him more than indifference ever had. To be seen so completely felt dangerous, as though the slightest mistake would cause everything to collapse. He wanted closeness, but only at a distance where it could not demand anything of him.” (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 458).

In *A Little Life*, self-harm is not depicted as an improvised response to suffering but as a discipline that is repeated and rebuilt that can redefine Jude St. Francis engagement with pain, fear and the integrity of his body. Although trauma lays the first precursors to psychological trauma, it is the lifetime of self-harm that allows Jude to overcome the

boundary between suicidal intent and suicidal action. Besides the desire to die, the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide by Thomas Joiner assumed that suicidal behavior must also possess an acquired ability; a learned ability to tolerate pain and also a lesser fear of death (Joiner, 2005). Yanagihara narrates this process in meticulous detail, introducing self-harm as a process by which pain becomes normalized and death more and more an option. Jude starts his self-harming behavior as a continuation of abuse in childhood, where suffering is already accepted and ethically correct. Self-injury does not shock or alarm him as an adult as it now functions within an established logic of endurance: "Pain was not something to be avoided; it was something he understood. It followed rules, had limits, and behaved predictably. Unlike memory or emotion, it could be measured and controlled. When he hurt himself, he felt briefly steadied, reassured by the certainty of sensation." (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 493)

Repetition has been shown to transform pain from something endured into something anticipated. Jude demonstrates the principle of desensitization at the heart of Joiner's hypothesis as the body develops accustomed to being hurt: "He had learned the thresholds of his body: how much blood was dangerous; how much was manageable; 47 how long pain could be sustained before it blurred into something distant. The body adjusted, adapted, endured. What once terrified him now felt procedural, another task to be completed in silence." (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 521)

Suicide amorality becomes structurally imperative as the novel unfolds by repetition and increasing accumulation instead of escalation. Jude is not tortured dramatically at the very end, but he keeps repeating the same trends previously. This monotony is something that supports the inevitability: "There was no moment when it became unbearable, because it had always been unbearable. Nothing happened that pushed him over an edge; He had been standing there his entire life. What changed was not the pain, but his willingness to continue pretending that endurance was enough." (Yanagihara, 2015, p. 719).

The novel presents perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired competence as interrelated processes that create a composite of death-centered subjectivity rather than as distinct explanatory words. In this sense, suicide is a meaning-making conduct that is not impulsive and is the outcome of long-term psychological conditioning. This study is significant to literary suicide work because it reframes suicide as a structural and psychological hub rather than a controversial conclusion. It demonstrates how *A Little Life* inevitably constructs suicide as an ethically neutral story using Joiner's interpersonal model and the synthesis of thanatology. The book challenges the redemptive paradigms of trauma literature and forces readers to confront the unsettling and frightening likelihood that love, compassion, and perseverance can coexist with an unalterable suicidal attitude. To summarize, the interactions between trauma, burden,

belongingness and acquired capability culminate in suicide in *A Little Life* and is entrenched in a death focused system of meaning. The interdisciplinary approach used in this case suggests a strict and ethically accountable approach to the analysis of suicide in modern fiction to promote literary criticism outside of shock, sentimentality or moral rectitude.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the construction of suicide in Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life*, specifically how extended trauma, perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired competence interact to produce a subjective death. Based on Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide and the idea of thanatology, the study attempted to move beyond a reductive or sensational view of suicide by situating it within the framework of long-term psychological, ethical, and narrative processes. The key objective was to demonstrate that suicide plays a narratively and psychologically believable function in the novel, rather than being a sudden and unexpected action conditioned by long-standing conditions of unhappiness and self-lockout. The current study was conducted in response to the growing critical and ethical discussion of suicide symbolism in modern fiction, with a focus on Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life*. This is due to the protracted version of self-inflicted trauma and subsequent suicide, which has polarizing impacts on readers and researchers in this novel. Some reviewers have stated that the work engages or emotionally exploits the reader, while others have emphasized its brutal approach to agony and psychological injury. In this context, the current study aimed to go beyond moralistic or emotive treatments by offering a theoretically supported, multidisciplinary explanation of suicide as a long-term psychological and narrative process rather than a tragic occurrence.

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