SEEING WITHOUT SIGHT: PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF VISUALLY CHALLENGED SUBJECTIVITIES IN SELECTED WORKS OF DOERR, HINGSON AND PAMUK

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Seeing Without Sight: Psychogeography of Visually Challenged Subjectivities in Selected Works of Doerr, Hingson's And Pamuk** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Seeing Without Sight: Psychogeography of Visually Challenged Subjectivities in Selected Works of Doerr, Hingson and Pamuk

This research study attempts to discover dynamics of psychogeography as lived experience of people without sight by conducting a phenomenological study of blindness as experienced by characters in the following literary works: *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, *My Name Is Red* by Orhan Pamuk, and *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson and Susie Flory. I have applied theoretical concepts from Marie's Marlowe Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* such as, the definition of phenomena phenomenal field and transcendental phenomenological reduction along with sense, perception and proprioception. In addition to this, I have used definitions of psychogeography by Guy Debord and of sight, blindness and disability by Rod Michalko as a lens to analyze the persona of blindness as depicted in characters from selected works. The major dynamics of psychogeography as experienced in blindness found in these novels are as follows: The socio-psycho inequality experienced in an ocular-centric world is an inherent element of experiencing blindness but does not necessarily allude to its being a misfortune. The subsequent skillset required to mitigate the resultant situation constructs an alternative reality which centers on a vision created by interacting with respective surroundings via other sensory modalities. One of the core constituents which lends validity and stability to the resultant conception of people, places and things is the emotional responses they incur. While the core constituents of these experiences are similar, the constructed realities are as diverse as the emotions created by the subjects experiencing blindness, and the means with which they are experienced. Moreover, these three works explicitly describe the use of assistive devices coupled with imagination and habitual memory as methods of not only navigating their psychosocial environs in their respective geographies, but also of living the beauty experienced in art and existence alike. This research would provide literature students, along with students of sociology and psychology, a new lens to study and perceive people with blindness and other disabilities: not solely under the presumptuous edicts of mainstream narrative but rather as people with diverse abilities. It would also help them to critically analyze societal values, customs, and beliefs as represented in literature. This might prove to be a stepping stone towards a better future for the stereotypically portrayed and marginalized groups in a given societal structure.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, to all my teachers and especially to all my friends without whom I could never have become a student let alone completed this important milestone in my academic journey.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

The extent of individual knowledge and awareness of this world, its occurrences, and our own surroundings constitute the diverse strand of reality that we experience in our personal capacity as our unique worldview. As such, one's reality might just be another's fantasy. The way we gather knowledge of the world and gain awareness of our surroundings, determines our ability and inability to bring our consciousness into an intersubjective interaction, which implies a correlative connection between the human subject with a perceived but conscious world. Keeping in view this premise, this research will attempt to explore how literature depicts the psychogeography of visually challenged people and how they orient themselves within city spaces by employing their other senses to perceive and interact with their surroundings. Psychogeography entails the study of the influences created by the geographical environment on emotions and behavior irrespective of conscious and unconscious knowledge. However, literary trends that revolve around the conceptions of sight and blindness are largely informed by stereotypical presumptions associated with the loss of sight. As a result, the inability to see is synonymously treated as a disability that inevitably creates a social dependency on the sighted. The notion of disability eclipses the fact that visually challenged people perceive reality in a way that is unique to their own perspective. As such, this research explores how psychogeography of visually challenged subjectivities is not only uniquely distinct but merits recognition as an equally valid reality.

The texts examined in this study are either authored by people without sight or feature fictitious characters which are a product of observations made after thorough research concerning blindness and the lives of people without sight. Firstly, *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr has been analyzed. It features a female protagonist, Marie Laure, who becomes blind at age six and learns to navigate the city of Paris by creating a mental map of her residential area with the help of a miniature model that is given to her by her father, who works at the Paris Museum. Marie Laure's character captures the essence of Doerr's ten years of research on blindness and its experiences by the following people. Jacques Lusseyran, a French author and resistance fighter against German occupation who was blinded at a young age, greatly inspired Doerr through his autobiography, *And There Was Light: The Extraordinary Memoir of a Blind Hero of the French*

Resistance. Fanny Crosby, an American missionary and hymn writer who became blind in infancy, Helen Keller, the famous American author, political activist, and lecturer who was deaf and blind, Daniel Kish, a blind expert in human echolocation, who used a form of sonar for navigational purposes, and Geerat J. Vermeij, a renowned evolutionary biologist who was blinded at the age of three. Doerr created Marie Laure's character to capture the lived experiences of these notable names who became leading figures in their respective fields by utilizing their tactile, auditory, and other sensory modalities.

The temporal setting of the novel is the time of World War II. As the novel unfolds, Marie employs her acquired abilities to assist the resistance against Germany during her stay at Saint-Malo. How Marie orients herself to her surroundings via her sensory experience of the city is examined in the light of psychogeography as posited by Guy Debord. The novel describes Marie Laure's journey from being a child with sight to her growth as a person with blindness and captures her efforts to rediscover her surroundings via skills such as the use of a white cane, her memory and her imagination. As such her experiences of blindness enhance her cognitive abilities rather than becoming an inability which could hamper the perceptual appraisal of her surroundings.

Secondly, the novel *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson and Susie Flory is based on a true account of a blind man, his guide dog, and their familiarity with New York's local landscape, which allows them to survive the 9/11 incident. As the story unfolds, the reader is made aware of how the absence of the protagonist's sight intensifies his perception of the environment, and his guide dog becomes an extension of his motor skills to interact with his surroundings. The account Michael Hingson gives of his struggles against societal prejudices regarding blindness contributes to this research by explicating how the image conceived through psychogeography in a blind person's worldview is inclusive of the sociopolitical dynamics concerning the social placement of people with disabilities. It also elaborates on the extent to which people with blindness could contribute with their respective skills to society's betterment as Hingson did in leading the evacuation out of the World Trade Center disaster site.

The third text selected for this study is the novel, *My Name Is Red* by Orhan Pamuk which will be examined by employing transcendental phenomenological reduction, focusing on the portrayal of blindness as the epitome of artistic sensibility. Prior to writing this novel, Pamuk studied historical records of miniaturists who experienced blindness. Capturing their reverence for the resultant experiential knowledge these artists attained via their blindness, Pamuk created his fictitious miniaturists to reveal how traditional miniaturists would use their diminishing sight to

enhance their sensory experiences of the beauty they perceived and depicted in their art form. These miniaturists thereby engage their consciousness with the essence of multiple colours they perceive in existence juxtaposed with the 'blackness' ensuing from their blindness, as God's omnipresent shade of divinity over all the colours. This conception of blindness will be examined to study its contrasting portrayal as a divine gift rather than a deprivation which constitutes an alternate perceptual paradigm to the existing stereotypical understanding of blindness.

Consequently, this project makes use of the conceptualisation of psychogeography as posited by the situationist Guy Debord. He suggests that the environment one frequents in one's daily commuting, whether as casual leisurely walks or as purposeful travel to one's school, university, office, or even hangout places; all of this constitutes a person's urban imaginary and thus creates an effect on one's psyche. The conscious and unconscious influence of these effects on one's emotions and ways of thinking contributes significantly to developing individual personalities and how they orient themselves within the ensuing worldviews. As a result, this research examines how the reality of these worldviews is perceived and sustained outside the realm of sight and what is generally understood as a visual experience.

The general concept of vision consists of capturing images of one's surroundings in one's mind through the eyes via the sense of sight. However, by employing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception, this study aims to discover how real and fictitious characters process and interact with their respective environments without their sight. The above-mentioned texts have been studied closely to assess instances where the character's consciousness is being informed through their sensory experiences which involve auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory experiences of the body. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the relationship between human consciousness and the universe it interacts with is perception, which is an ongoing process. Thus, complete and independent determinacy of what the universe holds as concrete objects is not possible without the sensory experience of the perceptual process. This process comprises lived experiences called phenomena. However, when human consciousness comes into contact with any object, it reflexively forgets the phenomenon and only remembers the object it perceives. Consequently, phenomenology is the study wherein these phenomena are examined by applying the method of 'transcendental idyllic reduction', which refers to the bracketing out of all prior assumptions and presuppositions about the nature of existence and focusing entirely on the consciousness produced by the relationship of perception between the perceiver and the perceived.

Additionally, while perception is governed by the intention to perceive, sensation remains instinctive and void of any particular intent. Nevertheless, the phenomenal field, which is the area where these unconsciously retained lived experiences are gathered, is governed by what Ponty calls 'proprioception'. The term refers to the implicit perceptual integration of all sensory abilities. For instance, even if a person does not see their cat, the auditory input of its mew, coupled with the tactile input of a warm furry feeling they sense with their hands, leads them to perceive the animal as a cat. As a result, when one faculty of senses, such as sight, is damaged or otherwise non-functional, human consciousness is informed by the awareness perceived via the principle of proprioception through all other senses, which constitutes a vision of the world that does not center on sight.

In addition to this, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of motor skills has been used to examine how people without sight acquire abilities and devise strategies to meet the demands of their world of sensory experiences. For instance, a park's conception in such a world would comprise a myriad of sensations including auditory signals such as shouts and laughter of children playing coupled with olfactory cues like the fragrance of flowers and the smell of grass, and the tactile sensation of hardness experienced on the pebble-strewn jogging track. Navigation with such sensory cues requires skills such as mobility with the help of tapping a wide cane, guide, or a guide dog to create a perception of the paths being walked. The term motor skills refers to his concept of practical knowledge, which he believes comes into action as one perceives the requirement of one's situation. After perceiving their immediate environment and an initial appraisal of the possible action, a person's body responds with an appropriate reaction. For example, if one limb stops working or gets injured the other limb would reflexively start developing skills to perform the functions of the two. As such, it becomes a form of self-knowledge wherein the person understands not only his/her environment but also how their body needs to respond to the corresponding action.

It follows that with a repetitive structure of practice, the necessary skills and abilities to maneuver through the surroundings are acquired. The acquisition of these motor skills is a practical manifestation of how the body manifests perception and constitutes our relationship between the perceived objects and the perceiver. In essence, this research employs Ponty's idea of motor skills to assess how visually challenged people acquire different abilities to manage their lives and navigate the world around them in an absence of sight.

The acquisition of these abilities creates an entirely different reality unique to the set of inabilities and subsequently acquired abilities of the individual who attempts to experience the

world as ordinarily as possible. Nonetheless, the efforts made in this pursuit and the resulting wealth of experiential knowledge create such a uniquely distinct worldview that does not conform to the set standards of ordinariness and normalcy. To study how and why disability is stereotypically perceived as a problem or a debilitating abnormality, I will refer to Rod Michalko's definition of disability as a social space over and against which a person strives to achieve their sense of individuality. Michalko (2012) describes sight as a combination of two actions, that of seeing and looking. Seeing entails a general appraisal of one's surroundings while looking requires a focus on the object being perceived. In effect, seeing performs the function of accessibility, and looking subsequently is the act of participating, which is to say, interacting with the object being looked at. The relationship between accessibility and participation is what Michalko defines as the ability of sight. As a result, when a person loses their sight the inaccessibility via sight becomes an overwhelming barrier to their participation in their life experiences. In this way blindness is commonly assumed to be a disability and is perceived as an abnormality. However, Michalko describes disability as a social situation within which an individual strives to create his/her identity by employing a variety of skill sets. These skills create accessibility for such individuals to participate in their daily life activities. Consequently, Michalko defines blindness as a compound phenomenon of estrangement and familiarity wherein a person strives to reconcile between the familiarity of predominantly set socio-economic structures adhered to by the people around them, and the navigation of the estrangement of such a world via other sensory experiences. This ongoing process of reconciliation through the differently acquired abilities cannot be labeled a problem or an abnormality because the functions of accessibility and participation are achieved via other sensory modalities than the one experiencing inability.

The conceptual lens created by the above-discussed theoretical dimensions will be applied to analyze varying aspects of blindness in the selected literary works, i.e. *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson and Susie Flory, and *My Name Is Red* by Orhan Pamuk.

1.2 Thesis Statement

This research aims to explore the psychogeography and spatial imaginaries constructed by visually challenged subjects in the literary works, *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, *My Name Is Red* by Orhan Pamuk, and *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson and Susie Flory. By employing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach towards perception, the project

studies how their sensory experience informs their awareness of things and, as such, constitutes a vision in its own right.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the role of psychogeography in experiencing blindness and intensifying sensory perception to create a vision in its own right?
2. How does the inability of sight impact artistic insight and sensibility in the novel *My Name is Red*?
3. How do various sensory modalities contribute diversely to the creation of cognitive maps of Marie Laure's residential neighbourhood in Paris, and Saint-Malo and Michael Hingson's in Palm City in the selected works *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson respectively?

1.4 Objectives of The Research

1. To investigate how psychogeography shapes the experience of blindness, intensifying sensory perception to create a distinct form of "vision" in the selected literary works.
2. To examine the impact of blindness on artistic insight and sensibility in *My Name Is Red,* considering how alternative sensory experiences influence creative expression.
3. To analyze how different sensory modalities (touch, sound, smell, etc.) contribute to the formation of cognitive maps of characters' environments (like Marie Laure's and Michael Hingson's neighborhoods) in *All The Light We Cannot See* and *Thunder Dog.*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores in detail the literary and academic aspects that have been developed so far in the field. The discussion brings out areas of these works that support the direction of this research while simultaneously emphasizing the relevance of how this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

2.1 Depiction of blindness and its significance in shaping life and literature

Throughout history, the theme of blindness has frequently appeared in literature. It is a potent narrative technique that is used to examine themes of perception, self-discovery, and the human condition. However, the following discussion examines how the portrayal of blindness has mostly been done with a loss and misfortune paradigm in various literary works spanning different genres and historical ages. It consequently eclipses the uniqueness and distinct value of the worldview acquired by the people in the absence of their sight and, as such, perpetuates the idea of any inability, particularly the inability of sight, being an irreprehensible damage to one's self-worth and value addition to society. The review explores the metaphorical and physical aspects of blindness, illuminating the complex ways in which writers employ this subject to imply deeper meanings.

Blindness is frequently used in ancient literature as a metaphor for fate, divine intervention or tragic irony. One of the first instances is in Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" when the main character, Oedipus, blinds himself after learning the truth about who he really is. His self-blinding act is a reflection of his growing awareness of his acts and their effects. As such, both the ancient Greek audience and the contemporary reader imbibe the idea that, on the one hand, blindness is a fatalistic decree of punishment from divinity and on the other, the agony of truth revealed is as consuming of life's light as the blackness of blindness.

Another recurrence in recent literature of the same theme with respect to blindness as an apocalyptic catastrophe has been depicted in Jose Saramago's *Blindness*. The novel explores physical blindness with greater psychological depth. It centres on an entire society succumbing to an abrupt blindness outbreak that causes social standards to collapse and a thorough examination of human fragility. Saramago uses blindness both literally and metaphorically to augment the theme of anarchy implying that the loss of humanity is akin to the loss of sight, however, implicitly

the reader is also conveyed the idea that in the face of adversity, the loss of sight makes a person just as consumed by calamity as in any epidemic.

These are some of the examples of metaphorical as well as literal blindness which show how blindness has been used as an umbrella term to express fatalistic tragedies, socio-political vices, and irrevocable personal plight. This dissertation delineates the uniquely distinct perceptual dynamics and subsequent ways of interacting with the world that a person with blindness experiences as a form of self-growth and contribution to society.

The role of blindness and literature has been tremendous as noted by Jorge Louis Borges in his essay "Blindness". At the beginning of the essay, he describes blindness with a melancholic resignation. However, later when he describes how it impacted his insight into literature, he describes it as "a way of life: one of the styles of living" (qtd. in Lopate 478). He then goes on to describe notable names such as John Milton, James Joyce, Homer, Paul Groussac, and Francisco Salinas; all had a history of losing their sight at one point or the other in their lives and sharpening their poetic abilities and artistic perception. As a result, Borges states the reason for this enhancement is in Socratic wisdom "who can know himself more than the blind man" (482), for those without sight live in the dark, and according to Borges "if we accept that in the good of heaven there can also be darkness, then who lives more with themselves? Who can explore themselves more? Who can know more of themselves?" (482). Nevertheless, the essay does not elaborate on what exactly are the defining traits of blindness as the way of life that was lived by such illustrious literary figures in history. Also, while the essay is an apt tribute to all the people without sight, an average, cited reader would only glean an impression of emotional consolation rather than the appreciation of the beauty of an alternate reality. Thus, this project undertakes the study of identifying those defining features and the impact of blindness on literature as a perception that effectively becomes a vision without sight.

Mianes and Karnopp describe the representational patterns in literature that create and sustain a variety of discursive realities concerning the conception of disability with special emphasis on blindness. In their article Representations of blind characters in contemporary literature, they describe disability as a social construct and trace the evolution of its meaning from antiquity to contemporary times by examining the portrayal of blind characters in literature. Oedipus's blindness is a form of divine retribution that symbolises one extreme of the ancient belief about blindness, while Tiresias's blindness is a mark of his prophethood as an oracle of Apollo. Gradually, with the development of medical science, the two narratives were blended in with the belief of blindness being an anatomical deficiency. Together these beliefs began to shape patterns

of sociopolitical behaviour towards people with blindness and formed stereotypical representations in societal norms as well as the subsequently produced literature. The article discusses these representational patterns as ‘psychicism’ (2019). Mianes (2015) proposed the term to depict the attitude which makes undue generalisations, overestimations, or functions with a reductionist ideology that perceives people with blindness as incapable individuals and/or objects for society’s pity. For instance, the article describes 4 kinds of such psychics from a novel written by Waldin de Lima (2001). The novel is about a blind man who previously showed great aversion to blindness and blind persons but eventually became one himself. Firstly, those who believe blindness limits the working capacity of the blind person, for a large segment of society blindness is a real disability that causes significant limitations for the blind person without depersonalising the person; they feel no shame in relating to blind people and think that blind men and women can participate fully in society despite their disability. Secondly, there is a portion of the population that is able to see but who thinks that blindness dehumanizes the blind person and renders them only deserving of sympathy and pity. They are a burden that society must carry. Thirdly, some are firmly convinced that blindness endows the blind with extrasensory perception. Phrases like "God takes one thing and gives another", "blind people have a sixth sense," and other similar statements seem to elevate blind persons to the status of gods in this instance. Finally, a small portion of the population, on the other hand, views blindness as a form of death or semi-death and they find it uncomfortable to be near the dead. Blindness is associated with tragedy or even bad luck, so they should naturally distance themselves. There are instances where people are traumatized and even afraid to consider becoming blind due to the situation's shock value. Although this categorization is by no means an definite one, it certainly highlights the discursive patterns that can be identified in a society.

The article examines such similar patterns of behaviors in following works about blindness: *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson, a novel written by Waldin de Lima who was blind, *Redness* by Lena, and the conference paper titled “Blindness” by Jorge Luis Borges. Excerpts from these literary works have been quoted as examples to illustrate the formation of identity by societal behaviour and subsequent self-actualisation with respect to the experience of blindness. In *All the Light We Cannot See* Murray Laur’s blindness is considered a curse by the people in her neighbourhood but her father rejects the notion and perceives it as a situation to be managed which results in the acquisition of her lifelong skills. The novel *Redness* by Lena explores the relationship of a sighted husband with his blind wife and establishes the idea that people with blindness are usually not passive receivers of sympathy but are required to be acknowledged as equal and potential contributors in a relationship, and in their

connection to society. Jorges Luis Borges describes blindness as a gift that opened up many new vistas of appreciating literature and the world while Michael Hingson further elaborates that blindness is not a burden but a different way of living life and looking at things. *Thunder Dog* as described by this article is an autobiographical account of Michael Hingson who assumes a leadership role in leading the way out from the World Trade Center at the time of the attack of 9/11. He, with his guide dog Roselle, walks down 72 floors of the building while trying to keep everybody from panicking. He narrates the story of his blindness and how he perceives the world. With reference to this project, Hingson's account has been examined to trace the acquisition of his perceptive ability and how he subsequently oriented himself in society during the many phases of his life.

The article is a great commentary on the stereotypical portrayal of blindness in literature which greatly substantiates the entire premise of this research. It gives a great insight into many representational patterns and discursive realities constructed by society concerning blindness and disability. However, It does not identify the perceptual mechanics that underline the experience of blindness and explains how blindness intensifies the interactive ability to the effect of creating a unique socio-psycho awareness. The current project undertakes to explore how people with blindness create A perceptual vision of their own to interact with their surroundings and, as such, construct an alternate reality. Also, in concurrence with the article, this research debunks the belief of blindness being merely the inability of the site; rather, it creates a perceptive awareness of its own, which allows people with blindness to navigate the various psychosocial contours of what they conceive with their city experience and which in turn constitutes the landscape of their city. As such, this research examines the selected works not only to study the sociopolitical dimensions of blindness but also to analyse how they impact a person with blindness in terms of their psychogeography.

In an interview to the American foundation for the blind 2004, Michael Hinson elaborates upon such socio-psycho aspects of his experiences as a blind professional. The interview explores his life as a blind individual and how his experiences affected both his personal perspectives and advocacy. Hingson's words entailed details about his struggles before, during, and after the 9/11 attacks, drawing from his autobiography "Thunder Dog". He says, "I was brought up to believe blindness is just a characteristic, not a defining limit." The discussion highlights how Hingson's parents, who refused to pamper him or put a limit to his abilities, taught him independence and self-reliance despite societal assumptions, stating, "My parents refused to let my blindness become an excuse." Hingson stressed on the importance of guide dogs and his partnership with Roselle,

especially on the occasion of 9/11, emphasizing how "trusting my dog was about working as a team- she wasn't saving me; we were saving each other." He addresses workplace and public attitudes, describing bias and ableism: "Most people still think being blind is an absolute barrier to meaningful contributions or leadership, and that's just not true." The interview closes with Hingson's call for societal change, stressing on education, inclusion, and adaptive technology to "let people with disabilities contribute fully and be recognized for their talents."

Although in this published interview Hinson gives many insights into his autobiography Thunder dog, he does not adequately elaborate on the sociological elements of experiencing blindness and how they enable the person to attain their individuality. this dissertation examines his autobiography to study and identify those socio-psycho constituents of experiencing blindness; and how they subsequently contribute in attaining individuality by a combination of psychological growth as a blind individual and their social positioning as a person with disability. The focus of this project is thus to examine the socio-psycho process which culminates in the individual attaining their self-efficacy and actualization as fully fledged, productive members of society.

Hinson's assertions concerning blindness and other elements of social and psychological development that manifest in experiencing blindness are depicted in the other two works selected for this project. One of these novels is *All the Light We Cannot See*. The novel centers around the events of World War II and concerns individual narratives of a variety of characters but mainly Marie-Laure LeBlanc, a French blind young girl who lives with her father near the National Museum and a German orphan named Werner Pfennig. The novel unfolds in a parallel timeline, exploring the impact of war on their lives and the eventual intersection of their paths. Marie-Laure and her father flee Paris carrying the most valuable jewel while Werner Pfennig becomes entangled in the German military. Multiple themes have been woven into the story; however, the following discussion focuses on various aspects that have been researched in relation to the theme of blindness and other closely related subjects.

Emily Tate's 2018 article throws light on how society often limits the capacity of disabled people through attitudinal barriers, prejudice, ignorance, and low expectations that stem from the disability. The author writes that Marie Laure's life in the novel, *All the Light We Cannot See* is affected by all these societal attitudes. The author argues that the very structure of societies (and novels) tends to be normative, which consequently creates a sense of abnormality or alienation for disabled people like Marie-Laure. The article highlights how the people around Marie-Laure show a lack of faith in her ability to be independent or have agency, sometimes treating her with pity

rather than respect. This reflects real-world experiences where disabled individuals are often viewed as people with limitations or weaknesses. In a nutshell, Tate suggests that the novel both exposes and resists the notion that disability is simply a deficit, while highlighting the enabling qualities found in alternative ways of being, even as it examines real social limitations imposed by others. Nevertheless, she does not discuss the intersection between the social and psychological aspects of individual and societal attitudes which need to be navigated by an individual experiencing blindness. This project aims to highlight this intersection and its subsequent navigation in experiencing blindness by studying the psychogeography of blind individuals.

Jaseela (2022) highlights how the novel focuses on Marie-Laure's "refusal to be defined or limited by her disability, and her willingness to rise above obstacles through inner strength". The article delves into the way society often underestimates the abilities of people with disabilities, arguing that, as shown in the novel, meaningful support and encouragement, along with personal determination, enable differently abled individuals to achieve far more than what the common perceptions regarding disabilities suggest. While the analysis concludes that Marie-Laure's growth is affected by both her own resilience and the changes in her family and community's attitudes, it does not discuss the significance of experiencing society's prejudiced alienation and individuals' determination to navigate such alienation in their psychological and social make-up as blind individuals. This study deeply examines how such a strife is inherently embedded in experiencing blindness and forms one of the constituent elements against which a person attains their individuality as an individual with disability.

Campbell (2017) highlights the aspects of selective blindness in terms of remembrance and forgetfulness with regard to historical events. The article discusses how history is always written by the victors and, as such, tends to turn a blind eye towards relatively insignificant events and individual stories of loss and incurred war trauma. Campbell describes selective blindness as a coping mechanism of the character Jutta. Sister of the protagonist, Werner, and a German, she experiences a traumatic experience of abuse at the hands of German soldiers in Berlin. However, despite her sharp mind in post-war days, she chooses to forget this suffering as a psychological defense against the oppressive memory. A similar instance of selective blindness, as per the article, is depicted in the German protagonist Werner, who has a sound understanding of right and wrong and has a keen sensitivity and observational skills to perceive pain as he himself grows up as an orphan. Yet, he fails to perceive the suffering of the Holocaust victims and just barely notices the dead bodies of prisoners when he witnesses a train carrying them all night before his eyes. Campbell points out that Werner's character reflects that as a German victorious force, he only

perceived pain when it was of significance to him and his; for the rest of the world, he chooses to remain blind to their suffering. Apart from these instances of selective blindness, Campbell describes Marie-Laure's literal blindness as a symbol of how history written by the victors glosses over countless horrors of war. Marie Laure is not born blind, but gradually turns blind by the age of six. Campbell discusses this gradual transition from being sighted to blind as the writer's way of reflecting on how history inevitably turns a blind eye to innumerable individual narratives of suffering and events that happen in towns such as Saint-Malo. Consequently, the article discusses both figurative and literal blindness as symbolic of imperceptibility. The current project, however, challenges the connotation and works with the premise of exploring blindness as an ability to perceive differently in an alternate worldview rather than an obstruction to the development of a keener, more aware perception. Additionally, the literal blindness of Marie Laure has been explored as an ability which sharpens her navigational skills and allows her to manage herself and survive the events of World War.

Hossain (2023) pursues a similar thread of researching the cognitive and linguistic development of blind children with reference to the novel *All The Light We Cannot See*. The article delves deeply into how multiple factors play a role in shaping the cognitive awareness of a child with blindness and their worldviews. It delineates the significance of adopting distinct pedagogical methods, ways of parental dedication, and the role of other sensory cues, such as auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory signals, in the construction of a world without sight. It discusses in great length different instances from the novel to describe how Marie Laure grows as a child with blindness and adopts a uniquely distinct linguistic pattern to identify her surroundings through the knowledge she acquires from her father, the museum he works in, and her own ingenuity of a hyperactive imagination. With such a cognitive awareness, her appraisal of the stresses of war is heightened, and as such, her keenness to its effects is also increased. Even so, she manages herself and her stresses by the aforementioned set of skills when she is alone without her father in Saint-Malo. the article is thus closely connected to this research as it describes in detail the uniqueness of the psychosocial growth of a person with blindness. Nevertheless, it does not elaborate on the perceptual process through which their sensory experiences coalesce into the psychosocial awareness, which renders the person with blindness cognizant of their alternate reality. In addition to this, with reference to the growth of Marie Laure in the novel *All The Light We Cannot See*, this thesis focuses on the psychological and emotional effects that the geographical environment creates on a person with blindness and how it contributes to their spatial cognition and conception of city experience. the research further works with the premise that while inclusivity and social

acceptance from society are crucial factors that play a role in the psychosocial growth of a person with blindness, the acquisition of navigational skills exercised via sensory perception itself transforms blindness into perceptive ability, which effectively becomes a perceptual vision to see the world by.

A discussion relevant to the idea of perceptual relativity as pursued in this project can be found in an article by Igekoglu (2003) where a detailed discussion on how the novel *My Name Is Red* is structured with multiple points of view can be found and how it depicts visual representations of Eastern and Western ideals concerning the preserving or dismissing of the individuality of the artist. It discusses multiple themes from the novel with respect to the fluidity between twenty-one points of view in the novel's narration, along with their implications in terms of such versatility in filmmaking and cinematic art. In addition to the different Eastern and Western ideals concerning the portrayal of facial structures in the art of illumination and the development of filmmaking, the article also elaborates on how *My Name Is Red* is a novel that offers diverse insights into the concept of sight and blindness. One of the two implications that are relevant to this research is the variety of images created by the structure of multiple points of view, as discussed in this article. It reflects how individual realities are conceived through perspective and thus are uniquely distinct from each other in their respective conceptions, as is the reality of people with blindness. The other implication concerns the parallels drawn in the article between the blindness of Master Usman and the antagonist who is the murderer and gets blinded as a punishment. The comparison reinforces the idea of perceptual relativity even in the ability of sight itself. Master Usman willingly blinds himself as an honour to follow the miniaturist tradition and preserve his memory from being corrupted, whereas the antagonist is blinded for the crime of the murder he commits and for harbouring aspirations for the Western way of depicting art. With reference to the novel *My Name Is Red* and the discussion it generates on blindness, the current research pursues the question of whether the acquisition of the ability to perceive through blindness is a vision or the loss experienced in the inability of sight makes it a lifetime's worth of disability.

Additionally, in another article titled "A Pedagogy of Two Ways of Seeing: A Confrontation of 'Word and Image' in *My Name Is Red*," the same Author, Feride Igekoglu, discusses the novel as an artistic commentary on the Eastern and Western evolution of visual representation in art. Although a historical fiction, *My Name Is Red* is an allegorical tale in which the Sultan secretly commissions four of his miniaturists to create an illustration of his face, which depicts him as he sees himself in the mirror, like the Western Venetian painters do, and not as the plain, flat-featured faces that were the Ottoman tradition of painting. The controversial command

sets in motion a chain of events that begins with the murder of one of the four miniaturists, and thus the controversy is discussed throughout the novel in a multifaceted structure. Igekoglu discusses in the article how great painters from both Eastern and Western traditions initially illustrated biblical parables or depicted thematic images from indigenous folklore and cultural myths or legends. She further elaborates on the religious prohibition as well as the secularisation of images in Western arts and generates a discussion on how the novel debates on themes such as "Word or image" (9), "Naturalism or Meaning" (11), "From Narration to Description" (15). Moreover, by expounding on various instances from the novel, the article also explores the contention between form and essence. For example, the character of Master Osman is symbolic of the Ottoman traditional point of view in favour of essence, while the Uncle's character is a representative voice in favour of form as per Western tradition. With reference to current research, this discussion is highly relevant as it brings to focus how experiential knowledge manifests in varying modes of narrative expressions, such as through words and descriptive expressions, such as through images. The article describes a debate between the 2 ideologies. However, with respect to blindness, the current research explores the intersectionality between words and images; for a person with blindness conceives images through the words they hear and, as such, employs the purity of their sensory perception to imagine the picture they perceive in their mind's eye. For example, while commenting on the form versus essence issue (Igekoglu 2003), quotes from the novel a discussion between two blind miniaturists about how it would have been, had they been born blind. How would they have been able to perceive colours? Their answer to the question is that colour is not to be seen but felt. As a result, the esoteric conception can be perceived as a perceptual image that consists of sensory experiences.

Pariyar 2024 explains that blindness is "one of the central themes in My Name is Red", showing how Pamuk associates both artistic achievement and the ultimate fate of the miniaturists. Drawing from the Ottoman tradition, Pariyar states that miniaturists are believed to reach proficiency of the highest degree when they go blind, representing a state where "the artists become blind upon the completion of their masterpieces". The article argues that blindness stands for both artistic and spiritual transcendence, as "the idea of blindness is also at the core of the artistic formation of the miniaturists," and becomes the emblem of devotion, legacy, and the limits of human creativity. While the article deeply resonates with the subject matter of this dissertation, it only discusses blindness as a theme of my name is red and does not adequately describe the experience itself as a distinctly unique phenomenon. This project examines blindness as portrayed in *My Name Is Red* to not only examine the experience itself but also how its content is retained

and made part of individual consciousness, to be imbibed and rejoiced in as the essence of all beauty attained in the culmination of artistic prowess.

2.2 Psychogeography, phenomenology and blindness in literary representation

Leigh, 2023 focuses on how Merleau-Ponty approaches blindness, going against the norm of an “ocular centric” perspective in philosophy and showing how perception can be affected by other senses and tools. The article analyzes Ponty’s statement: ““The blind man’s cane has ceased to be an object for him... it increases the scope and the radius of the act of touching and has become analogous to a gaze,” illustrating how sight is not the only way to perceive and interact with the world. The article also discusses “body schema”, referring to how for the blind, the cane “literally becomes an extension of the body”, shifting the meaning of vision and challenging abled-bodied assumptions of perception. The article uses this analysis to argue that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology “reshapes what we consider ability and disability, showing that embodied experience is always adaptive and situational.” The article concurs and reaffirms the premise of this research. However, it does not delineate the perceptual precepts of Marie’s Marlowe Ponty in detail; thereby excluding Ponty’s core assumption that perception is an ongoing process. As a result, the situational context with reference to the lived experience of blindness has multiple other socio-psycho elements which contribute to creating an alternative perceptual vision to the ocular experience of sight. These elements have been taken into consideration while applying Ponty’s assertions concerning the acquisition of this perceptual vision to examine the experiences of blindness in the selected literally works.

In another article, Maran (2019) evaluates how sudden blindness changes characters' lifestyles, relationships, and ways of interpreting the world by applying Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception to Jose Saramago's novel, *Blindness*. Saramago states, "the transformation of the characters' world is not only visual, but also existential and interrelational," reflecting Merleau-Ponty's view that meaning stems from embodied and lived experience. The article further explains how the loss of one's sense of sight coerces characters to "seek a new sense of self and others through physical proximity and reliance on non-visual senses" and demonstrates "the process of meaning-making through the body and its senses, even (and especially) when those senses are disrupted." In conclusion, it is pointed out how Blindness "illuminates the flexible, adaptive, and dialogic nature of perception," in direct resonance with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. Ostensibly, the article describes how individuals experiencing the inability of sight are compelled to reinterpret their surroundings and subsequently create an alternative worldview. However, this

literary application of Ponty's philosophy confines itself to examining only how this reinterpretation occurs, but does not reconcile the loss and misfortune paradigm present in the novel to the empowering enablement reflected in other precepts of the philosophy. This research employs those precepts in a literary application to identify the social and psychological elements experienced as content of blindness in creating an equally valid perceptual vision to the experience of sight.

In a critique by Taylor W. Rey (2017), Merleau-Ponty's use of the "blind man's cane" in Phenomenology of Perception is examined, stating that while it is foundational for theorizing embodied perception, it largely overlooks the social and political realities of blindness. Rey elaborates that "Merleau-Ponty's famous reading of the blind man's cane is problematic insofar as it omits the social dimensions of disabled experiences". Rather than being a simple abstract philosophical example, Rey argues that "the experience of being blind is not just a perceptual modification, but is also a socially and politically mediated phenomenon." The article suggests a non-normate phenomenology that centers the lived, embodied perspectives of disabled individuals: "if phenomenology is to become 'non-philosophy', as Merleau-Ponty once hoped, it must better heed the insights and correctives of non-normate phenomenology and philosophy i.e., inquiry grounded in disabled or non-normate experiences." Rey reinforces re-reading Merleau-Ponty's work by emphasizing both the richness and the limits of his famous example, ultimately pushing us for an interdisciplinary approach between phenomenology and disability studies.

Thus, the current project makes use of psychogeography as the theoretical prop to mitigate this gap between phenomenology and disability studies. Its literary application enables the researcher to simultaneously examine both the social space of disability and Ponty's perceptual precepts concerning the lived experience of blindness.

Ever since its conception in the 1950s, Guy Debord's psychogeography has been used by different scholars with multiple interpretations. One of such scholars is James D. Sidaway. He, in his article "Psychogeography: Walking Through Strategy, Nature And Narrative", describes psychogeography as a way to re-engage with nature through nature writing inspired by taking walks in the countryside (8). He further validates his assertions by noting how poets such as Wordsworth and William Blake depict a psychogeographical mapping of their respective native areas in their poetry (9). Consequently, he suggests that psychogeography has an unbound scale of creating multiple narratives, especially nature narratives, in contrast to urban experiences, as nature allows much more scope for exploring and creating psychogeographical contours that are palpable with life and energy that can be felt through sensory experience, which psychogeography entails.

Thus, while concurring with Guy Debord's definition of psychogeography, he simultaneously describes it as an indefinable phenomenon that is as diverse in its scope as the number of individuals inhabiting this earth. As a result, Sidaway's article substantiates this project's premise that whether nature or urban experience, psychogeography of a person without sight is not merely informed by the presence or images of buildings and monuments, trees and mountains: instead, their psychogeographical mapping involves sounds and smells, tastes and what they perceive through their skin. The interaction with the chirping of birds or honking of car horns, the hardness of a paved road, or the softness of a grassy mound becomes an identifying marker in their psychogeography. As such, their respective experiences contribute to their emotional and behavioral cognition and subsequent growth, which this study aims to discover from literary writings concerning a world created by such sensory experiences.

A literary application of psychogeography as a method of analysis has been employed by Kent Chapin Ross in his dissertation titled Developing a Method of Literary Psychogeography in Postmodern Fictions of Detection: Paul Auster's The New York Trilogy and Martin Amis' London Fields. The article explores how the human brain and its cognitive abilities cannot be overlooked in understanding literature. The article defines psychogeography "broadly as the nexus of consciousness and the physical environment as 'read' by the senses, which illustrates the importance of "spatiality as the ground for events and character" (Ross 5). It further elucidates how a fictional point of view brings into focus the construction, dissemination, fragmentation, and simulation of human observation regarding what constitutes space and how it is defined in terms of interactive experience. Consequently, the article establishes perceptual relativity with reference to the viewpoints of different characters to glean insight into their individual realities. However, while the article substantiates the significance of using psychogeography as the theoretical framework to understand literature and its impact in creating new knowledge, it does not elaborate on the process of perception and how different viewpoints are informed by their sensory experiences which eventually constitute alternate realities. This research incorporates precepts from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception to examine how existence, as perceived by people without sight, consists of lived experiences through their other sensory modalities.

The absence of sight is not merely a loss but a transformational experience in terms of physiological, psychological, and social awareness. For instance, the human experience is multimodal; each sense contributes to our understanding of the outside world. Many studies have been conducted on the effects of blindness on human awareness and how other senses can make

up for it by improving the overall sensory experience. The following review of different research articles looks at the variety of studies and points of view that show how much of an impact blindness has on improving sensory perception and how that impact eventually affects a person's consciousness.

Blindness causes a remarkable reorganization of sensory processing that leads to increased acuity in the non-visual senses. People who are blind often have better hearing and touch because of neuroplastic changes in the brain (Sedato et al., 2002). The brain's capacity to adapt and allocate resources to modalities beyond vision highlights the dynamic nature of sensory compensation.

According to this, the occipital cortex of blind individuals - just typically associated with vision - becomes repurposed for processing auditory and tactile information as discovered by Röder et al. (1999) through neuroimaging experiments. This adaptive reorganization suggests that blindness initiates a fundamental organization of brain circuits in addition to intensifying residual sensations; thereby giving evidence of how the human brain physiologically adapts to allow a person with blindness to create a cognizant perceptual interaction with their respective socio-psycho environment. In addition to this evidence, the current research is conducted with the premise of exploring whether blindness falls under the category of disability or not.

For example, another research suggests that sensory experience in the absence of sight is not limited to specific sensory improvements, but also involves intricate interactions among senses. Calvert posits the ability of the brain to exhibit cross-modal plasticity and suggests that it plays a pivotal role in the way blind individuals interpret their surroundings (2001). For example, auditory cues become more salient and tactile information becomes more significant in the absence of sensory input through sight. Thus, the article gives an insight into how people with blindness acquire the perceptive ability to manage themselves and maneuver through their respective surroundings. As such, it reflects the keenness of the sensory experience of people with blindness and indicates how they orient themselves in their psychosocial awareness. It contributes to the direction of this project by highlighting the accuracy of the cognitive ability developed in people with blindness in being aware of their geographical environment and subsequently in developing methods for navigating their surroundings.

For instance, Amedi et al.'s 2003 study demonstrated that blind individuals outperform even sighted individuals on cross-modal tasks such as tactile discrimination using auditory cues. This demonstrates how different sensory modalities are interdependent and how the absence of one sense can lead to a recalibration that enhances the perception of other senses.

In addition to this, the following articles illustrate how being blind produces an enhanced sensory experience that extends beyond perception and impacts people's consciousness entirely. Merabet and Pascual-Leone (2010) proposed a model of sensory-driven neuroplasticity in which they explain how blindness causes the brain to reorganize, improving sensory processing and producing a more complex and rich subjective experience. In furtherance of the same line of argument, Auvray et al. (2007) argued that blind individuals experience a unique kind of consciousness characterized by increased reliance on and attention to non-visual cues as a result of their sensory compensation. Thus, rather than being merely an adaptation, the conscious experience of the blind subject is a transformation reflecting the intricate relationship between sensory compensation and cognitive processes.

Rather than being a disability, being blind serves as a stimulus for enhanced sensory awareness, neuroplasticity, and unique forms of awareness. Through the process of cross-modal plasticity and sensory compensation, the remaining senses that blind individuals rely on to navigate the environment are sharpened. The literature reviewed here suggests that our comprehension of the relationship between consciousness and sensory experience in the absence of sight has implications for our knowledge of human cognition and the flexibility of the brain. However, these studies do not address the perceptual process that is triggered by the phenomenon of blindness. As such they leave room for this project to research how people with blindness employ their inability to create a socio-psycho awareness of their own selves and their respective surroundings, inherently constituting a perceptual vision in its own right. For this purpose, the current project makes use of the field of phenomenology to determine how sensory perception via lived experience creates, shapes, and sustains individual realities.

Researchers have been paying more and more attention to the study of literary texts that depict the psychogeography and spatial constructs of visually impaired people. Creating inclusive and accessible workplaces requires an understanding of how people with visual impairments perceive and navigate their surroundings.

The emotional and behavioural impact of an environment on people is known as psychogeography, and has been studied in relation to visual impairment. Gilmartin and Pajevic's (2018) study explores the effective relation of visually impaired people to various urban settings, demonstrating the relationship between spatial design and emotional health.

Research has highlighted how important spatial awareness is for the visually impaired (Carmien et al., 2017). When creating mental maps for locations, the lack of vision increases the

dependence on other sensory modalities, such as touch and audition (Burgess et al., 2019). Loomis and Klatzky's (2018) study emphasizes the significance of tactile information in creating the sense of place and the function that non-visual signals play in assisting in navigation.

The way that the architectural design shapes the spatial experiences of people with visual impairments is crucial. Pallasmaa (2016) presents research that supports multisensory architecture by highlighting the need to create designs that appeal to all senses. Furthermore, Steinfeld and Maisel's (2020) study delves into the ways that inclusive designs might improve visually impaired people's spatial autonomy by fostering a feeling of space and belonging.

Technological developments have brought new kinds of intervention to improve the way the bling navigates space. The study conducted by Smith and colleagues (2021) investigates how wearable technology and smartphone applications can enhance psychogeographical experiences, highlighting the potential of technology to lessen spatial difficulties.

To sum up, the above literature review highlights the complex interplay of spatial construction, psychogeography and the experiences of people with visual impairments. Encouraging surroundings that support autonomy and wellbeing for this population can be created by technological interventions, architectural designs and a better understanding of emotional reactions.

2.3 Research Gap

In essence, these studies do a fantastic job of describing the architectural and other geographic factors related to blind individuals, yet they do not discuss that the definition of blindness as it is still widely accepted is based on a loss and misfortune mindset. Because of this, social behavior combined in a way blind people interact with their environment develops psychological boundaries between the natural world and artificial spaces. It then influences their emotional conduct, which has the effect of socially discrediting their experience. By elaborating on how spatial cognition obtained through other sensory modalities creates a social space that is equally dynamic in its conception and substantial in terms of its socio-psycho existence, this research takes on the challenge of highlighting the equal validity of the worldview conceived in blindness.

In addition to this, the above-mentioned review of literature reveals that although there have been abundant research on blindness from multiple aspects, they do not describe the perceptual process of experiencing the phenomenon of blindness itself as a unique experience.

Research that makes use of phenomenology to describe this uniqueness with reference to blindness as an example of meaningful reinterpretation of experience does not adequately describe an alternate perceptual process which would challenge mainstream assumptions concerning blindness as an imperceptibility incurred by the anatomical deficiency of sight. Where Ponty's assertions about the blind man's cane being an extension of his sensory modality are discussed, the social positioning of the individual as a person with disability has been overlooked. As a result, the current project addresses these gaps with the premise that the cognitive space conceived in experiencing blindness and the social space of disability together create a perceptual vision as an alternative to the experience of sight, thereby challenging the mainstream assumption. Also, psychogeography in conjunction with precepts from Marlowe Ponty's phenomenology of perception, elucidates the conception of this unique perceptibility by examining the phenomenon of blindness as experienced in the selected literary works.

2.4 Significance of the Research

The significance of this research can be judged by the fact that it is an attempt to study literary representations and create an academic position of people who come to view their inability to see as a disability instead of owning the uniqueness of their lifestyles. This representation helps counter the stereotypes associated with the worldview of people without sight and provides them with an opportunity to re-evaluate the extent of their abilities and, in effect, the scope of their achievements. People with immense potential are weighed down by a deeply rooted belief in the 'abnormality' of their inabilities, not recognising that this seemingly unassailable fact of their existence is only a systematically sustained narrative that can be pushed back and re-examined to take ownership of their disabilities as a unique way of life. Consequently, this project brings into focus alternate realities in mainstream literature with the intent of reconciling the worldviews of differently abled people and those with normative sensory abilities. Furthermore, the academic and literary representation of psychogeography as experienced by those without sight gives psychologists and sociologists insight into the psychosocial dynamics of reality as perceived by people without sight. As such, it provides them with an opportunity to devise strategies to engage with different world views in a more inclusive manner. Inclusion in terms of acknowledging another perspective of things and establishing a connection of empathy rather than sympathy to correct a wrong or to solve a problem. Finally, it creates a framework that can grow into a niche for future artistic productions and literary works to depict blindness as a distinct way of life instead of portraying it as damage to an otherwise able person. The dimensions of ability, inability and

disability require a re-examination since, theoretically, many things have indeed been acknowledged regarding various aspects of disability. However, this research specifically brings to focus how such ideas are not adequately presented in mainstream literature. The contribution of this project to the existing body of knowledge is in terms of highlighting that producers of arts and literature can play a pivotal role in influencing the inclusivity of differently-abled people by influencing the thought processes of their respective societies and challenging the stereotypes that are inadvertently being perpetuated in the name of inclusivity.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Generically, the term phenomenology refers to the study of how lived experiences of our daily lives constitute our individual spectrums of reality. As such, it is the field of knowledge that examines structures of consciousness by exploring in detail all concepts associated with the human mind and how it gathers, formulates and sustains experiential knowledge of individual existence and the surrounding world. These concepts include perception and memory, desire and imagination, thought and emotion, volition to bodily awareness, and embodied action, et cetera. Literally, the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines phenomenology as "the study of 'phenomena': appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first-person point of view" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Keeping in view this definition, the two key components of phenomenology as described by Edmund Husserl are thus, intentionality and its representation in the object that has been experienced. Intentionality refers to the particular intent, a concept that constitutes the content of our experiences and renders them meaningful. As such, phenomenology distinguishes between the created content of the experience from the represented object of the world that has been experienced. The second component, then, is the phenomena that are experienced and that are separate from the content of our experiences. For example, in a rudimentary phenomenological linguistic model, the following sentence can be taken as a sample: "I hear the Army helicopter going to the parade rehearsal for the 23rd March parade." The personal pronoun "I" symbolises the first person perspective, which holds the intent, and the verb here is the action that transports the intent to the perceived object, which is the Army helicopter. The temporal connection of the 23rd March and parade rehearsal adds to the intent and contributes to creating a perception. For the purposes of this research, precepts from the field of phenomenology have been employed to explore the phenomenon of blindness as it creates a consciousness that is operated with an intentionality of perceiving one's surroundings by interacting through other sensory modalities. The consequent conception is therefore unique to the perceptual intent of the person experiencing blindness. For instance, concepts of size, shape, distance, facial features, colours, etc., are all subject to the perceptual intent of the perceiver and the sensory modality with

which the perceiver creates their consciousness of these phenomena. The primary working concept deployed from this field can be expanded upon as follows.

3.2 Phenomenological Reduction

Edmund Husserl, regarded as the father of phenomenology, established the foundation for the field of perception studies with his influential book *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913). His theory of intentional consciousness stresses the directedness of awareness toward objects, providing a framework for comprehending the fundamental relationship between consciousness and perception. The concept of "phenomenological reduction" offers a methodological framework that has impacted later research by encouraging scientists to set aside judgment and concentrate on the accurate description of occurrences. This project makes use of Husserl's idea of intentionality to understand the perceptual intent that governs the acquisition of experiential knowledge gained in blindness. However, Maurice Merleau Ponty critiqued Husserl's idea that every constituent of reality is a matter of idealistic perceptual consciousness independent of any relationship to an external representation of the perceived object. As a result, although Merleau-Ponty's 1945 essay "Phenomenology of Perception" elaborated on Husserl's concepts, Merleau Ponty highlighted the embodied aspect of perception, contending that the body is an essential component of perception rather than merely a tool. He presented the idea of the "lived body" and examined the relationship between perception and physical sensations. The transition from an exclusively cognitive comprehension to an embodied knowledge has significantly influenced later phenomenological investigations and has also been used in this dissertation to examine the relationship between perceptual intent and the experiential knowledge acquired through sensory experience. Merleau Ponty's embodied experience from his book *The Phenomenology of Perception* is still a dynamic and developing field that keeps expanding our understanding of the complex interactions between consciousness, perception, and lived experience as researchers continue to build upon these fundamental concepts.

Consequently, this research makes use of some core assumptions from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception as it reflects perception as an ongoing dynamic process that centers on the relationship between embodied engagement, situational context, and a continuous influx of perceptual appraisal of one's surroundings, which renders the experience meaningful. This conception helps illustrate how people with blindness experience their psychogeography and are influenced by their experiences of the urban landscape they inhabit and move across, thereby

constructing a socio-psycho environment that plays a vital role in their spatial cognition and subsequent emotional behavior.

Practically speaking, researchers have been paying more and more attention to the study of literature on the psychogeography and spatial constructs of visually impaired people. Creating inclusive and accessible workplaces requires an understanding of how people with visual impairments perceive and navigate their surroundings.

3.3 Proprioception: Blindness and Phenomenology

When a person experiencing blindness interacts with their surroundings, they are compelled to respond to the needs of their environment by embodying their perceptual awareness (their consciousness) in the acquisition of a wide range of sensory skills. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the human body is not a mere object but a form of consciousness. Activities associated with this consciousness are all those which we call mental, such as beliefs, desires, dreads, regrets, etc. As such, it adapts and re-orients itself in response to the demands of different situations. For instance, if one limb sustains some injury, the body begins to adapt to the need for two limbs by using one limb more dexterously to perform the functions of two. For this to happen, Merleau-Ponty gives the idea of motor skills, which suggests the acquisition of different skills as a practical solution and source of self-knowledge. He also describes a person's spatial orientation deeply in connection with their perception of the world as requiring certain actions from them. For example, a person is aware of the objects surrounding them by considering them reachable or unreachable as per the knowledge they acquire within the field of their sensory experience. Consequently, this awareness of the objects being reachable performs two functions; firstly, it allows the person to orient themselves, and secondly, it compels them to perform the necessary action to reach that object. As a result, they can make sense of their surroundings via their motor skills (Romdenh-Romluc, 84).

However, they are only a conduit for sensory input to be gathered from the surroundings, while acting on the sensory data requires an innate principle of 'proprioception.' Proprioception enables a person's consciousness to make the sensory data meaningful to determine the body's positioning in space. Sensory experiences are a combination of three elements, namely: sensation, perception, and proprioception. Sensation is the cognitive appraisal of the objects being interacted with, while perception carries the intent to perceive. For instance, a toy figurine of a cow viewed up close would appear just as small as a real cow would from a great distance. Their appearances

are products of retinal images captured via the sense of sight. However, one is perceived as a toy while the other is perceived as a live animal. Proprioception is the process by which different sensory inputs are integrally connected in an interdependent, cohesive perceptual awareness. It allows the person to make a meaningful interpretation of people, places, and objects being perceived by unifying the data collected via all available sensory modalities, such as sight and smell, touch and taste, and hearing (Romdenh-Romluc, 68). Proprioception thus explains how people without sight are cognizant of their surroundings in a unique and meaningful way.

When a person without sight experiences perception or awareness of their surroundings, the proprioceptive awareness they acquire of their surroundings creates a geography of sounds and tactile sensations. As such, by the use of orientational methods like echolocation, white cane, and guide dogs, they create a vision of their own, which brings the above-mentioned perceptual dynamics in play. For example, Chamberlain describes echolocation as a method of orientation that centers on creating and carefully listening to echoes. She discusses how loudness and low pitch of echoes are received by blind persons to determine the distance and density of the objects in their vicinity (Chamberlain, Merry-Noel). It can be understood thus that blinds direct their intentionality towards the object they wish to perceive through either auditory or tactile sensation. The use of a white cane extends the tactile field and allows the blind perceiver to determine a functional space for the size and shape of the encountered object, and even the features of the people interacted with appear in the perceptual vision of a person without sight, which is entirely different from what a sighted person perceives. Nevertheless, they coalesce into the proprioceptive appraisal and creates the perception which plays a role in allowing the perceiver to act on the desire to see in terms of accessibility and the will to look in terms of participation, motor skills of echolocation and the use of a white cane produce the required practical knowledge, which affectively enables the blind perceiver to act upon the knowledge and interact with their surroundings via the vision created by their proprioceptive awareness.

This perceptual process is initialised with a sensory appraisal of the external world's objects. The sensory data is then collected in what Merleau-Ponty calls the phenomenal field, wherein these vague, indistinct, half-formed sensory impressions exist as phenomena and eventually, with various intents, emerge as fully formed perceptions (Romdenh-Romluc, 18). The methodology with which these phenomena are studied is called transcendental ph, which refers to the bracketing out of all preconceived notions concerning the existence of people, places and objects and focuses purely on the experiential content itself. However, contrary to Husserl's belief about transcendental phenomenological reduction, Ponty states that complete transcendental

reduction is not possible as it requires a complete dismissal of one's position in the experiential content itself (Romdenh-Romluc, 22). Instead, he describes the human body as the manifestation of the consciousness that culminates as a result of perceptual awareness, which is a continuous process. In relation to different buildings, places, and objects, it is the body as subject that becomes a converging point for all perceptual data being perceived and processed. As such, the subsequent lived experience renders meaning to the spaces, places, buildings, and objects being perceived by creating familiarity through habitually practicing the required motor skills (Seamon, 53, 54).

3.4 Psychogeography

People who experience blindness are simultaneously experiencing a continuous state of transcendental phenomenological reduction as the inability of their sight requires them to bracket out the mainstream understanding of things, while the acquisition of their respective motor skills enables them to interact with and live in their environments. By interpreting the content of their experiences, they create a proprioceptive vision of their own. It is because of this seemingly perpetual reductive and interpretive perceptual state in experiencing blindness that the emotional response to the sensory input of all the sensations combined becomes a directive element in interpreting the phenomena being perceived and experienced. For example, Guy Debord's definition of psychogeography illustrates how the geographical environment is deeply connected to the emotional and subsequently behavioural patterns of individuals and, as such, constitutes a vital component of their experiential knowledge with which they shape their personalities.

He defines psychogeography as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (qtd. in Geronta 2). The definition describes three generic features of psychogeography. Firstly, it is the study of the precise laws and effects of the geographical landscape on a person's psyche. Secondly, these effects may or may not be consciously organized, and finally, the subject of these effects is a person's emotional cognition and subsequent behavioral patterns. On the one hand, it expresses the diversity of such laws and effects. For instance, different landscapes have different topological features, which determine the architectural structure of the area as well as the design of its communal places, such as parks, malls, picnic spots, hotels, places of worship, academic institutes, offices, and all other commercial and private sites. The terrain of the local area greatly influences the design of these structures; some areas are plain, while others are rugged, and others still are mountainous, and each holds a distinct effect on its respective architectural structures and urban spaces. Consequently, it establishes the significance of both

natural and man-made structures in contributing to the creation of the psychosocial environment of any area. However, the diversity of these laws and effects is confined to their respective areas, and all other structures may differ from area to area, even from within the same city. As such, the subsequent experience of the city's inhabitants would be unique to the areas they traverse in their daily commute. Features of Debord's definition describe how these laws and effects of the geographical landscapes can be organised both consciously and subconsciously to influence the emotional and behavioural interaction of a person with their surroundings. This brings into focus the role of perception in creating and sustaining the reality of any psychosocial environment as experienced by an individual. In experiencing blindness, this cognitive image is created by perceiving one's surroundings via other sensory modalities in conjunction with the emotional response to the geographical environment being experienced. Nicholas A. Giudice, highlights that the spatial cognition of people without sight requires them to be informed about the spatial properties via other senses, such as auditory and tactile sensations (16). Keeping in view his assertions about this requirement, it should be noted that the consequent cognitive image visualized by a person without sight determines the landmarks of their surroundings and substantiates the boundaries of their psychosocial environment through auditory and olfactory, gustatory and tactile signals. Navigating such a cognitive map with the vision acquired by senses other than sight appropriates the following principles of psychogeography, and thus, creates an emotional and behavioural impact that is uniquely diverse in its conception.

"Psychogeography is directly related to the practice of the derive in the city, the various interpretations of the urban landscape and the detournement of facts, the definition of our identity through the exploration of otherness, and finally the articulation of moments which will produce the constructed situations" (Geronta, 1). The derive is a walking technique that involves rapidly moving through a variety of ambiences. As such, it is not a random stroll and requires a person to allow the ambiences of their surrounding atmosphere to wash over them as they walk and become immersed in what they perceive through their sensory experiences. In the experience of the blind, the dérive does not remain just a walking technique to exercise nonconventional ways of interacting with one's surroundings. It becomes an intuitive, daily life habit, a way to ensure one's survival and necessary navigation through the existing light-dependent, socio-psycho structures of the traversed area. The imbibed ambiences have an entirely different manifestation in the lightless perception of a person without sight. For example, Helen Keller, in her autobiography *The Story of My Life*, describes how she employed her olfactory senses to create navigational cues from the distinct scents of a great variety of flowers present in her family garden. The consequent olfactory

map that she thus conceived of her family garden did not perceive the shape and colour of flowers or other scenic images from the area. In her sensory spatial cognition, direction was determined by the distinct scents she smelled of different flowers from their respective locations (Keller, 14). Likewise, people without sight employ all their other senses to create sensory cues for marking different pathways, locations, directions, and routes to specific areas. As a result, instead of merely being a walking technique, the *dérive* becomes a vital medium of interaction for the creation of such a perceptual vision.

"Detournement is the integration of past or present artistic production into a superior environmental construction" (Geronta, 3). Consequently, the term refers to the artistic unification of the intentionality of various symbols, which previously had one meaning but now acquire new meanings in new contexts. Thus, it describes how architecture is constructed, interacted with, and interpreted differently by different individuals in their respective psychogeography. Detournement of facts is yet another crucial constituent of the perceptual vision of the blind. It is the integration of past and present artistic production that refers to the political reappropriation and interpretation of the symbolic significance of urban architecture. As such, people without sight exercise this reappropriation of meaning when they explore the architecture via other sensory modalities, and the perceived image of the architecture is reinterpreted as per their intentionality. In Husserl's philosophy, as described by Spear, A. D. (2011), intentionality consists of three key elements. The intentional act, which refers to the state or mode of mental events such as perceiving, evaluating, believing etc. The intentional object is the person, place, thing, or idea(s) to which the mental event is directed, and the intentional contents are the supplementary factors that help shape the mental event into a coherent thought (Spear, Andrew). With reference to the architecture being perceived by a person without sight; the intentional act is of perceiving through auditory or tactile sensation, the intentional object is the architecture itself or more specifically, the area of the architecture being perceived, and the intentional content is the pre-existing knowledge about or in connection to the architecture such as the subject's perceptual vantage point, the type of architecture, and its social placement whether it is a monument, an office building, or a museum. Each would have its distinct conception and associative attributes in the resultant image perceived by a person without sight.

The constructed situation is the point where the events, actions, and other experiences imbibed through dérive are integrated to create a blend wherein the experience is rendered unique and meaningful as perceived by an individual through their sensory interaction with the encountered elements of their atmosphere to favour unitary urbanism. Unitary urbanism refers to an

amalgamation of art and technology for the creation of an environment that is diversely but deeply connected to behavioral patterns of individuals and masses alike.

Unitary urbanism, as practiced in an existence without sight, is an amalgamation of assistive technology and arts which allows a person without sight to interact with their respective psychosocial environment; thereby creating and sustaining a diverse range of emotional and behavioural patterns in response to what they experience in their respective interactions. Societal response to assistive technology and other facilitating measures set the tone of the experience and interaction within the urban landscape. White-cane, Braille typewriters or embossers, guide dogs, and especially black tinted glasses are all mostly considered as identity-markers for people without sight. As such, the behavioural response to these markers/assistive devices allows the adjustment or maladjustment of the person in society. These responses range from overprotection, nonchalant dismissal, sympathy or pity, to a superfluous, mythological placement of being mystical based on the mystery of blindness. These attitudes shape the spatial-temporal setting and thus, the otherness experienced defines the authenticity of the constructed situation which has personal criteria and differs from individual to individual. For example, the otherness experienced as a person with disability has its basis in the respective inability they experience. As such, a person who experiences the inability of sight repeatedly reaffirms and acknowledges the fact that it is a core part of their identity and is inseparable from the personhood of their individual selves. Consequently, psychogeography as practiced by people without sight expresses the uniqueness of their reality and is a way to claim their space in the urban fabric of their respective societies. As such, it explicates the role of emotional behaviour and intensifies the experiential content with which people with blindness substantiate their identities in a world that predominantly remains ocular-centric in its structures.

3.5 Research Methodology

In order to study psychogeography as experienced by people with blindness, this project employs hermeneutic phenomenology as the tool with which to examine the experiences of character/persons without sight, as depicted in the selected literature. Lorraine Godden and Benjamin Kutsyuruba explain Hermeneutic phenomenology as an inductive methodology that centers on the interpretations of lived experiences. The hermeneutic phenomenological research approach seeks an in-depth understanding of people's experiences and what meaning they hold for them in their everyday lives. Its intended purpose is to create detailed descriptions of phenomena that resonate with collective human experiences in the best possible scenario. Exploring how

individuals interpret their experiences and how these interpretations intersect with others to be reinterpreted and create new meanings with a shared empathetic understanding of these experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology embraces the nuanced facets of language, and as a result, it is particularly suited for investigating complex issues concerning those fields of knowledge where understanding human experiences is crucial. This approach helps uncover the richness and complexity of human experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the world around us (Okoko, Tunison, and Walker, 226-227).

As such, hermeneutic phenomenology has been employed to explore the phenomenon of psychogeography as experienced by people without sight in an attempt to redirect the stereotypical presumptions prevalent in mainstream society about the meaning of blindness and disability. The works being examined extensively discuss various aspects of blindness as experienced by individuals without sight. The interpretive nature of this approach enables the researcher to study the construction and consolidation of the phenomenon of blindness as experienced via psychogeography.

Using the close reading method, the texts that have been analysed offer a first-hand account of experiencing blindness. Owing to the interpretive nature of this research, a hermeneutical method has been employed to examine the phenomenon of blindness as it is lived through psychogeography by studying the personas of real and fictitious blind characters in the above-mentioned literary works. Persona, as described by Barry S. Brummett, is "a recurring kind of character or role that is taken up in connection with texts"(Brummett, 66). According to the works of James Arnt Aune and Edwin Black, every time a person reads a text, they experience three distinct personas, namely, the first, second and third personas. The first persona is the image, role and/or character of the person or entity who has created the text as "a text will project an image or role that something or someone might take in order to produce the text" (Brummett, 67). The second persona is the role of a character assumed by the reader who is studying the text, as is indicated by the response to the subject matter of the text. Finally, the third persona is the role/character of the other, which comes into being in connection with the first and second personas. For example, with reference to this project, all three texts being examined reflect the image of blindness and people with blindness as conceived or experienced by their respective authors. *Thunder Dog* by Hingson reflects real-life experiences, while *All the Light We Cannot See* and *My Name Is Red* feature blind protagonists, which convey the persona of people with blindness as conceived in the observations of their respective authors. Consequently, all three kinds of persona come into the study through a close examination of the language used in these texts.

Employing the above-mentioned theoretical framework, the following chapters bring into focus the key elements present in the novels: *All the Light We Can Not See* by Anthony Doerr, *Thunder Dog* by Michael Hingson and Susie Flory, and *My Name is Red* by Orhan Pamuk to illustrate the dynamics of psychogeography as experienced by people without sight. By examining instances from these texts concerning blindness and its subsequent implications, along with how the sensory experience informs the spatial cognition of blind characters, the next chapter will discuss how they construct a unique city imaginary, involving various elements from their respective socio-psycho environment. It will further elaborate on the consciousness conceived through the experience of blindness and how its perceptual awareness grants them the ability to visualize the phenomena of their experiences with their respective sensory interaction, creating a vision in its own right with various socio-psycho implications.

CHAPTER 4

BLINDNESS AS A RETURN TO THE PURITY OF EXPERIENCE: ANALYSIS OF ORHAN PAMUK'S *MY NAME IS RED*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Orhan Pamuk's novel *My Name is Red* as an illustrative literary work, and describes the socio-psycho implications of blindness as a means of returning to the purity of experience. The chapter begins with the author's introduction, followed by a summary of the novel, and is concluded by a detailed analysis that delineates how blindness constitutes an alternative vision to the experience of sight, providing a means to perceive the world.

4.2 Introduction to the Author

Ferit Orhan Pamuk is a novelist, academic, and screenwriter. He is originally from Turkey and is an honoree of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature. Currently, he is serving as a professor of Humanities and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. In 2018, Pamuk was selected as a member of the American Philosophical Society. He exhibits the depth of his philosophical understanding and the individuality of thought by writing detailed commentaries on Eastern and Western ideals of art in his critically acclaimed novel *My Name is Red*.

4.3 Summary of the Text

Although a work of historical fiction, *My Name Is Red* is an allegorical tale in which an Ottoman Sultan secretly commissions four of his miniaturists to create an illustration of his face which depicts him as he sees himself in the mirror, as the Western Venetian painters do, and not as the plain featured and identical faces which were the Ottoman tradition of miniature painting. The controversial command sets in motion a chain of events which begins with the murder of one of the four miniaturists, and thus the controversy is plotted throughout the novel in a multifaceted

structure. During the novel's progress, the meaning of blindness as the epitome of artistic sensibility capturing the beauty of existence has been discussed by various characters.

4.4 Proprioceptive Vision of the Blind Seeing Beauty in its Essence

The mainstream global society, as we experience it, is mostly governed by an ocular-centric worldview. As such, it considers the ability of sight as one of the core constituents of accessibility to the prevalent normative standards established in its sociopolitical and economic structures. As a consequence, societal behavior toward the inability of sight and people who experience blindness is set in patterns that reinforce the inequality created by the ability or inability of the sense of sight and which inadvertently becomes detrimental to the cause of creating an equitable environment for all members of society. As a result, when people with blindness are unable to conform to the set standards of normality because of their inability but still manage to navigate the light-dependent social and psychological structures of mainstream society, they acquire a skill set that appears to mainstream society as extraordinary. In their pursuit of ordinariness and normalcy, people with blindness strife to attain a recognized position in the familiar patterns of society but effectively transcend those patterns and attain an individuality governed by a proprioceptive awareness of their socio-psycho environs, creating a unique worldview of their own. The attainment of this individuality thus marks a departure from the normal, and is identified as an uncommon feat, an extraordinary achievement which does not confine its scope to the normative understanding of equality and discrimination based on the ability of sight.

Pamuk encapsulates the idea by beginning his novel *My Name Is Red* with a quotation from the Quran: "The blind and the seeing are not equal." (1). Under the influence of the prevalent discourse, these words from the Quran are often interpreted as the blind in a position of loss and misfortune while those with sight are in a position of a fortunate blessing in terms of their ability to see. The resultant inequality between the two positions has often been employed as an analogy of the sighted being guided and the blind being misguided. However, notwithstanding the theological discourse on the matter, Pamuk challenges this seemingly inevitable interpretation to write a historical fiction which centers on artists who not only viewed blindness as God's ultimate blessing but also waited their entire lives to be granted the privilege of blindness. In this reinterpretation of blindness, the inability of sight may be considered as the beginning of blindness but blindness per se is more than a mere inability. It is an experience that becomes meaningful for its subjects as they evolve their consciousness and learn to see without their eyes through their experiences of blindness.

It should also be acknowledged that the inequality here does not refer to the validity of perceptual paradigms of the two experiences; rather, it can be taken as alluding to how people with blindness are much more aware of the content of their experiences than those who perceive their surroundings with their sight. The gift of sight therefore, has its own merit and validity which is duly celebrated and cherished as the pleasures of ocular experiences. Pamuk delineates the difference between the purity and vigour of memories created in experiencing both sight and blindness in Master Usman's words in the following passage.

> "These two volumes of Nizami were the legendary books that Master Sheikh Ali of Tabriz had made, one for the Khan of the Blacksheep, Jihan Shah, and the other for the Khan of the Whitesheep, Tall Hasan. After he was blinded by the Blacksheep shah to prevent him from making another version of the first volume, the great master artist took refuge with the Whitesheep khan and created a superior copy from memory. To see that the pictures in the second of the legendary books, made when he was blind, were simpler and purer, while the colors in the first volume were more lively and invigorating, reminded me that the memory of the blind exposes the merciless simplicity of life but also deadens its vigor." (255)

The quotation above is indicative of how the seeing experience the vitality and vigour of the colours present in the ocular experience, but which lie in a muted shade in the memory of the blind. Nevertheless, this invigorating pleasure of the overt beauty of colours is the element of the ocular experience which eclipses the spirit of the essential beauty of these colours as they are envisioned, recollected, and relived in the memory of the blind. It is the replacement of this pleasure by the all-eclipsing blackness of blindness that enables the individual to have a keener awareness of the content of their experiences, thereby granting them the ability to acquire simpler and purer knowledge of their surroundings in their interactions. If a person seeing with their eyes come across a red rose in a flower garden, its colours coupled with the fragrance may create an ambience they appreciate as a pleasing sight to behold. A person seeing in the blackness of their blindness would however, take note of the softness of the petals with their touch, the sweetness of the fragrance with their smell, the sharpness of the thorns on the stem, and put them in contrast to all the other scents and sounds in the garden in a simpler yet purer experience to create a conception of the flower. These Master miniaturists would retain such ocular images in their memory and examine them deeply and more consciously in the blackness of their blindness to create a rendition of what they now experienced as a simpler yet profoundly purer and more detailed version of the same beauty.

In experiential terms, Rod Michalko describes the experience of sight as a combination of a "desire to see", which entails an instinctive urge to capture a general image of one's surroundings, and "the will to look", which refers to a more heightened and focused awareness of any object of attention. As such, the desire to see is an intent for accessibility to one's environment, which subsequently leads to a more focused will to look, effectively creating participation in one's perceived surroundings. This mutually inclusive relationship between accessibility and participation is what we experience as our sight (39). Keeping in view this premise, a person with blindness exercises their desire to see by capturing their surroundings via all other senses put together, and their will to look by examining the content of their experiences with a more heightened focus and awareness than a sighted person. Merleau-Ponty further explains this by suggesting that when a person first experiences anything in their surroundings, the content of the experience first manifests unconsciously in unnamed, vague, half-formed conceptions in the phenomenal field. These conceptions are what he terms phenomena. The intent to perceive later shapes these phenomena into distinct, recognizable objects within the phenomenal field. When a person with blindness experiences their surroundings, the experience inherently carries an emotional impact which marks the nature of the object and its location in association with the person him/herself. As a result, it creates an intersubjective connection with the people, places and objects being perceived. The individual projects their intentionality onto the objects of their experiences via their sensory modalities, and the objects themselves are marked in association with the emotion they create in the person's memory. In this way, the sensory interaction yields an emotional response, creates accessibility, and grants the person with blindness an awareness of their surroundings, constituting their participation in the environment and an alternative, proprioceptive vision to the experience of sight. For example, while exploring questions concerning the form and style of art, how and why miniaturists of the old in Eastern culture considered blindness as the epitome of their artist's character, Pamuk comments thus on the nature of blindness in connection to its significance in arts.

> Before the art of illumination, there was blackness, and afterwards, there will also be blackness. Through our colors, paints, art and love, we remember that Allah had commanded us to "See"! To know is to remember that you've seen. To see is to know without remembering. Thus, painting is remembering the blackness. The great masters, who shared a love of painting and perceived that color and sight arose from darkness, longed to return to Allah's blackness by means of color. Artists without memory neither

> remember Allah nor his blackness. All great masters, in their work, seek that profound void within color and outside time. (58)

These words describe the blackness of blindness as an all-absorbing color of divinity and the originality of all thought and memory. As such, it suggests an innate connection between the purity of experience and conceiving a consciousness in remembering divinity by expressing the emotion of love through arts, paints and colors, and the essence of the beauty that the experience itself leaves in its wake in the artist's memory. The association of blackness and blindness with divinity is indicative of how thoroughly experiencing blindness allows a person to approach reality with thoughts that are unhindered in the conception of their ideas by the spectacle apparent to those who perceive through the ability of sight. Such thoughts were the subjects of the intent that fueled the emotion expressed by these miniaturists in their art. As a consequence, they perceive blindness as a return to the purity of beauty and color they experienced through their art, perfection of their skill rather than a deprivation of any ability.

In addition to this, it should also be noted that the depiction of blackness of blindness as "Allah's blackness" creates an intimately symbolic connection between the ever-present, omniscient being of Allah and the omnipresent colour black. It is the colour of the dark which resides in the hidden depths of the earth and the seas and presumably is the shade of the emptiness which dwells in the heights of outer space, between stars and other celestial bodies. It is the colour of all shadows and as such is a part of all creatures dead or alive; Indeed, a colour perhaps of nonexistence as it lingers on even when all other colours turn colourless and ebb into the dark recesses of nothingness. As a result, in the perceptual paradigm of an artist whose keen sensibility to perceive distinct colours of everything they interacted with, this intimate connection manifested in their belief that the hue of divinity which was before time and will still be after everything will have faded into a timeless void, is the all-encompassing blackness experienced in blindness.

When an individual experiencing blindness interacts with people, places and objects through this blackness they subconsciously exercise transcendental phenomenological reduction to examine the phenomena of their experiences. This intuitive reductive experience enables such individuals to be more aware of the content of their experiences, as these artists were of their emotional responses in their interactions. Subsumed in the blackness of their blindness, the world appeared to them when they experienced it as a devout act of worship; "through colors, paints, art and love, we remember that Allah had commanded us to "See"!" Their devotion in obeying this command from divinity constitute the perceptual intent which gave meaning to the phenomena of

their sensory experiences and which they believed to be their sight. Their recollection of these sensations in memory granted them accessibility to their surroundings, and there ardent desire to paint those remembered images through their arts allowed them participation in these surroundings, thereby creating the experience of sight, uh proprioceptive vision to see the world by.

The quotation also equates knowledge with sight as an interdependent source of imbibing the essence of experience in memory, "to know is to remember that you've seen. To see is to know without remembering." As such, blindness to these artists was not an absence of sight, rather it can be understood as an acquisition of a cognitive space wherein the essence of their experiences consolidated into the same certainty of knowledge of their surroundings as experienced by the sighted in their ocular interactions. Secure in the conviction of this knowledge, for these artists the experience of its blackness was thus an alternative medium of seeing and appreciating more vividly the beauty of the vibrant shades of images they preserved in their thoughts and memory. They considered the endowment of this clarity as an evolved version of their experiences of sight instead of a barrier to the mere appearances of the objects they interacted with while they were seeing through their eyes. Ponty termed this cognitive space the phenomenal field wherein every individual unconsciously gathers sensations to be made meaningful by various perceptual intents. It is the heightened awareness of this phenomenal field that allows people experiencing blindness to lace their sensory experiences with the perceptual intent of certainty and create the required knowledge with as much conviction as experienced by the sighted.

Commenting on the conviction and clarity of knowledge such as this, Pamuk describes how, in the cognitive space of blindness, every aspect of existence is alive with a wealth of its individual knowledge and awareness which usually alludes people of lesser insight as compared to those possessing the artistic sensibility epitomised by experiencing blindness. he devotes entire chapters to stories of how existence was experienced by inanimate painted objects such as a tree, a dog, and the colour red itself, et cetera. Consider one of such narrations as follows from the colour Red. Initially, the narrator which is the colour Red, describes itself as the colour that adorns all master paintings and the colour of lovers' intimate passions and the spilled blood of fallen warriors in battle. It speaks for itself is not merely a colour apparent in ocular images but a colour of elegantly experiencing life with volition and determination.

> I'm so fortunate to be red! I'm fiery. I'm strong. I know men take notice of me and that I cannot be resisted. I do not conceal myself: For me, delicacy manifests itself neither in

> weakness nor in subtlety, but through determination and will. So, I draw attention to myself. I'm not afraid of other colors, shadows, crowds or even of loneliness. How wonderful it is to cover a surface that awaits me with my own victorious being! Wherever I'm spread, I see eyes shine, passions increase, eyebrows rise and heartbeats quicken. Behold how wonderful it is to live! Behold how wonderful to see. Behold: Living is seeing. I am everywhere. Life begins with and returns to me. Have faith in what I tell you. (153)

These words illustrate how the vibrancy of the colour red is experienced when life itself is experienced with the vitality of a strong volition and the firmness of determination. By implication These lines suggest how a person possessing an epitomised artistic sensibility in experiencing blindness experience life and its objects as an existence in a broad spectrum of colours in their varying shades. Each colour is felt and experienced in accordance to the shade of emotion and aura they create and/or inspire in the artist. The red of love and rage, the yellow of hope and happiness, the blue of calm and peace, and the green of life and vitality, are all colors felt in varying emotions. It thus goes to show how living is indeed seeing.

The idea that “Living is seeing” is further explicated by the same narrator as it describes a conversation between two late blind master painters about the meaning of colour to a person born blind. They begin by discussing how their blindness was a latent experience and they had the privilege of perceiving the colour red through their eyes.

> “Naturally, we, who have now gone blind, know red and remember what kind of color and what kind of feeling it is," said the one who'd made the horse drawing from memory.
>
> "But, what if we'd been born blind? How would we have been truly able to comprehend this red that our handsome apprentice is using?"
>
> "An excellent issue," the other said. "But do not forget that colors are not known, but felt."”
> "What is the meaning of red?" the blind miniaturist who'd drawn the horse from memory asked again.
>
> "The meaning of color is that it is there before us and we see it," said the other. "Red cannot be explained to he who cannot see."
>
> "To deny God's existence, victims of Satan maintain that God is not visible to us," said the blind miniaturist who'd rendered the horse.

"Yet, He appears to those who can see," said the other master. "It is for this reason that the Koran states that the blind and the seeing are not equal."" (153-154)

Colours are thus products of acutely felt emotions and not merely of knowledge. As such, what is seen as colours in the ocular experience of the sighted is merely their comprehension of the appearances of people, places, and things. What truly constitute colours are the emotions they inspire coupled with the acuteness of sensibility with which they are felt and lived as experiences. Additionally, the two blind miniaturists comment on those who contend that the idea of seeing colours by feeling the substance of their emotions is a valid one. They liken them to those who plead the invisibility of God as a reason justified enough to merit his denial. The conversation ends with this analogous connection between the handicapped ability of people who cannot feel colours and the disbelievers who cannot see Allah. It reiterates the idea that seeing something which exists beyond the usual scope of sight requires faith as a faculty with which to live it in experience such as the true beauty of colours in their essence and the sublimity of divinity itself.

Experiencing Allah and His omnipresent being has been described by these two blind master painters as the fundamental source of believing in His existence with as much certitude as experienced in any ocular interaction performed by the naked eye. Those who can neither experience his presence nor feel the colours of His creation are effectively handicapped in their ability to see through experience and can be understood as the blind referred to in the Quran. Accordingly, these masters describe the inequality between the sighted and the blind in the Quran, alluded to as experiential sight and blindness with which to experience Allah and his creation. The inequality is then not in terms of the ability or inability of any sensory modality, but whether or not they acquire the consciousness with which to experience hidden knowledge of His truth, to which every creature is a sign, the essence of all things. The Quran elaborates this notion in different places as follows: "So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts"(Chapter 22, verse 46). This verse delineates how in the Quranic concept, the subject of both experiences of blindness and sight is a person's heart and its ability to acquire a vision based on experiencing Allah by pondering over His creation; people, places, objects and things as they are interacted with in traveling the lands of His earth. If a person fails to listen to the rhythm of the world as they experience it in their interactions and do not cultivate the maturity of their understanding to perceive the unseen reality through these experiences, so they are the ones whose imperceptibility is referred to as the blindness of their hearts. The same belief is further reinforced in the following verses: "And whoever turns away

from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind." He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?" [Allah] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten"(Chapter 20, versus 124, 125, 126). These verses further elucidate the imperceptibility of a character who does not remember Allah nor see Him by experiencing His signs in his creation. As a result, their hearts are constricted and their understanding narrowed so that they are unable to interact with a deeper layer of reality and partake in its essential beauty and acquire the peace of heart that comes with experiencing the sublimity of His presence. In the hereafter they would be burdened by true imperceptibility/blindness and denied the privilege of experiencing His mercy.

These verses reflect the basis for the faith-inspired religious ardor with which these miniaturists painted throughout their lives as a form of glorification of Allah's creation in His worship. when they experience the eventuality of blindness, they drew upon these memories with the belief that the source of the purity of colours in their memory is directly from Allah Himself. This belief echoes the themes of one of the verses of the Quran where the believers proclaim that "(We take our) colour from Allah, and who is better than Allah at colouring. We are His worshippers"(138). So colours are also experienced in innumerable shades of feelings. In experiencing their blindness, these miniaturists envisaged those feelings in the colours of their paintings and illustrations. As a result, it should be acknowledged that religious zeal is one of the more powerful manifestations of emotional devotion; as such, the deeper the sentimentality is, deeper still is the acuteness with which a person examines the content of their experiences. The following excerpt shows how and why these miniaturists, in consonance with their religious beliefs, embraced experiencing blindness as an evolution of their consciousness, as a divine gift and a profound privilege.

> According to master miniaturist Mirek, blindness wasn't a scourge, but rather the crowning reward bestowed by Allah upon the illuminator who had devoted an entire life to His glories; for illustrating was the miniaturist's search for Allah's vision of the earthly realm, and this unique perspective could only be attained through recollection after blindness descended, only after a lifetime of hard work and only after the miniaturist's eyes tired and he had expended himself. Thus, Allah's vision of His world only becomes manifest through the memory of blind miniaturists. When this image comes to the aging miniaturist, that is, when he sees the world as Allah sees it through the darkness of memory and blindness, the

> illustrator will have spent his lifetime training his hands so it might transfer this splendid revelation to the page. (61)

This excerpt not only further elaborates the idea of the privilege of blindness being a gift from Allah but also gives an insight into the psychological dynamics behind the ability to paint and remember colours in the blackness of blindness. Fueled by their religious passion to remember Allah by painting the colours of His creation in their artwork, these miniaturists spent their entire lives acquiring a habitual familiarity in their subconscious with the colours and images they worked with. As a consequence, their bodies became a conduit for their consciousness to manifest itself on paper when they experienced the blackness of their blindness and enabled them to recollect the familiar patterns of experiencing colours in varying structures, patterns that they had imbibed through repeated practice over the years.

It should also be noted that Michalko's assertion concerning disability as a social space over and against which individuals strive to achieve their individuality is reflected in these excerpts. They give an insight into how these miniaturists embraced the otherness of an altered existence experienced in blindness in an ocular-centric mainstream society is not only a privilege but the height of individuality they attained by their prowess as artists. As a result, this attainment was revered in consequence of this otherness but far from being a condemnation from society or alienation on the basis of the inability of site, it was a merited mark of distinction among honoured artists. This shows the role of societal behaviour both as a propellant and an obstacle in an individual's strive to navigate their disability. It was a societal structure that inspired traditionalist artists to wait for blindness as a "glorious eventuality" rather than a deprivation of any ability.

The interplay of intensely experienced emotions, memory and imagination, acquisition of appropriate skill sets to interpret and reinterpret the purity of lived experience of blindness was not only relevant for the 16th century miniaturists. These seemingly esoteric assertions about acquiring a proprioceptive vision to experience a purer version of all experiences are further backed by evidence collected in the research of Oliver Sacks. He described John Hull's experience of blindness from Hull's autobiographical account which he wrote under the title *Touching the Rock: an Experience of Blindness.* It depicts blindness in a similar manner to returning to the purity of experiencing nature and its wonders in their essence to cultivate a deeper, more intimate bond with oneself and one's surroundings. Hull became completely blind at the age of 48. In his explanation of the gradual attenuation of his sight into blindness, he expresses not only a complete absence of ocular images from his memory but also how the very idea of sight itself had been altered to be

replaced by a more enriched sensory experience of his surroundings. He alludes to this as a state of “deep blindness” and becoming a “whole-body seer”, by which he means channeling his desire to see and subsequently shifting his intent to perceive through his entire body. This enabled him to interact with his environment more vividly than in the days of his sight, effectively making him “a whole-body seer”. For him, the experience of listening to the rain was no longer the same. It’s pattering on the grass, on the fence and on the hard surface of the garden path was now uniquely different from each other and held a distinct beauty by delineating each sound as an interconnected blanket of acoustics in colors (1-2). Hull manifested his desire to see by becoming a whole-body seer and channeled his will to look by evolving his consciousness to be more aware of the essential content of his experiences of blindness; and coupled with his other sensory experiences, his surroundings became visible for him.

The dynamics behind this phenomenon can be explained as a form of transcendental phenomenological reduction since it involves bracketing out presuppositions about the causal relationship of objects to each other which Ponty terms the objective thought. These artists who painted the images they perceived believed in the preservation of the essence they imbibed from their experiences and waited for blindness as “this most glorious of approaching eventualities” (Pamuk, 62). They saw blindness as a natural means of bracketing out all unnecessary thoughts and sights and would retain the beauty of what they had experienced. In this way, they preserved the meaning of what they considered sacred beauty in terms of their art in memory without any external contamination. In another description of why a master artist would want to be blinded in an attempt to preserve the purity of his experience as an artist, the character describes his reason “Since my eyes will no longer be distracted by the filth of this world, I’ll be able to depict all the glories of Allah from memory, in their purest form" (59). The meaning of blindness thus changed into “a realm of bliss from which the Devil and guilt are barred" (62). For these traditionalist artists who prefer the traditional way of art, blindness, as George Borges describes it, is a transition into another way of life.

Hull’s blindness as a way of life exhibits the above-mentioned reductive state and the consequent freedom to explore one’s own consciousness which comes with blindness as an all-absorbing phenomenon. Hull's emotional response to his blindness was one of acquiescence and acceptance since he began acquiring blindness at age thirteen and became completely blind in his forties. Two years after he became completely blind, he achieved the mental state he called deep blindness. Contrary to Hull's experiences, however, Sacks discusses another case of an Australian psychologist, Zoltan Torey. Torey became blind at age 20 in an accident and was told that he

would have to relinquish his reliance on ocular senses to manage his affairs and develop other sensory modalities. While he accepted the latter half of this encouragement, he simply refused to let go of his memories of his experiences as a sighted person. Consequently, unlike Hull, Torey capitalized upon the reduction acquired by blindness to retain his visual memory and purify their content to employ his creativity in harnessing the ability to visualize ocular images of places and things he visited and interacted with. He acquired an ability to create and control mental images, building an imagined visual world that felt as vivid and real as the physical one he had lost, sometimes even more so, like a controlled dream or hallucination. This newly developed skill allowed him to achieve things that seemed almost impossible for someone who was blind, like single-handedly replacing the roof guttering on his intricate, multi-gabled house and solely on the strength of the accurate and well-focused manipulation of his "totally pliable and responsive mental space." Torey later shared more details about this incident, recalling how his neighbors were deeply alarmed when they saw him, a blind man, working alone on his roof. What made it even more unsettling for them was that he was doing it at night, in total darkness (3).

Although these two stories of Hull and Tory are unique to their respective subjects, they do give insight into some shared elements. Such as both Hull and Tory demonstrated that even in the inability to see, the experiences of manifesting a desire to see and the will to look could be accomplished by evolving one's consciousness via acute sensory experiences and by cultivating a pliable faculty of imagination, which is firmly rooted in past memories. The two stories also reflect how the diversity of emotional responses can be a catalyst in experiencing blindness and perceiving one's surroundings, and responding to them proprioceptively. The religious devotion of 16th century blind miniaturists, similar to Hull's acquiescence and Tory's defiance, is an amalgamation of powerful emotions which exhibit the essence of beauty that Pamuk has depicted in *My Name Is Red*.

4.5 Conclusion

As a result, it can be estimated that the high esteem that Pamuk's characters hold blindness in, and people who experience its gifts, is because of how, in its blackness, the consciousness conceived is able to hold onto the essence of all experiences. It captures their distinct natures in the colors of the emotions they simultaneously incur and sustain. The natural reductive state of blindness enables its subjects to examine their experiences closely by barring the world of the spectacle from their consciousness. It allows them to explore the diverse conceptions of people, places and things with their respective colors, sizes and shapes as conceived in its blackness via their experiences.

CHAPTER 5

PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF THE BLIND: A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN FAMILIARTY AND ESTRANGEMENT IN THE NOVEL *ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores in detail how Anthony Doerr employs the character of Marie Laure to depict the socio–psycho skillset acquired by people with blindness to mitigate the familiarity of mainstream structures and the estrangement inherent in experiencing blindness. This chapter opens with a brief introduction of Anthony Doerr followed by a description of the novel and is concluded by a detailed analysis discussing the intentional constituents of cognitive mapping as experienced by the blind.

5.2 Introduction to the Author

An American short story writer and novelist, Anthony Doerr gained immense recognition and popularity for his novel *All the Light We Cannot See* (2014). He is a columnist for the Boston Globe and a regular contributor to The Morning News. His novel *All the Light We Cannot See* (2014) is an insightful literary work that centers on a blind protagonist and how she employs her way of life as a blind person to resist the German occupation of Saint Malo. Doerr describes in detail her journey of reclaiming her identity as a productive member of society by acquiring various skill sets to navigate her surroundings which subsequently has a profound impact on the evolution of her personality.

5.3 Summary of the Novel

All the Light We Cannot See (2014) centers around the events of World War II and concerns individual narratives of a variety of characters, mainly Marie-Laure LeBlanc, a French blind girl who lives with her father near the National Museum and a German orphan named Werner Pfening. The novel unfolds in a parallel timeline, exploring the impact of war on their lives and the eventual intersection of their paths. Marie-Laure and her father flee from Paris carrying the most valuable jewel while Werner Pfening becomes entangled in the German military. Multiple themes have

been woven into the story; however, the following is a discussion mainly centered on the theme of blindness.

5.4 Sight blindness Dichotomy: A continuous Journey from the Familiar to the Estranged

The phenomenon of blindness is a product of the social world of experience and interaction wherein a person with blindness exercises their faculty of imagination and desire to forge abilities as a means of accessibility and participation in their respective psychosocial environment. In this endeavor, they are constantly interpreting and reinterpreting their lived experiences to mediate the estrangement that intrinsically becomes a part of their consciousness as people without sight in an ocular-centric world with the familiarity of societal norms and structures. It should be noted that to function as productive members of mainstream society, adopting this familiarity becomes a social necessity. Hence Michalko's assertion that experiencing blindness is like living a story of reconciliation between estrangement and familiarity. When a person first experiences blindness they find themselves in an existence where the sizes, shapes, and colors of people, places and objects transform into unresolved, unfamiliar entities. Appearance of these entities is no longer marked by their visibility in an ocular image but resolves itself into a myriad of multiple sensations. A person experiencing blindness understands that the existence of sensory experiences is inherently estranged from the world they were born into. People around them are known to the familiarity they experience in the conception of existence based on an ocular-centric understanding. As a result, experiencing blindness is to engage in efforts of acquiring skills and strategies to reconcile the estranged existence of sensory experiences and perceptions to the more familiar, mainstream structures of an ocular-centric existence

The title of Anthony Doerr's novel *All the Light We Canno*t See (2014) captures the subtlety of this reconciliatory connection in its phrasing. The prevalent norm in all societies is the idea of light's visibility through the naked eye. Every person functions in their respective socio-psycho environment with an innate knowledge of a virtually inseparable connection between light and our ability to see it with our sense of sight. This normative understanding works on the presumption that in order to see the world clearly and manage your affairs properly, the key component is the visibility of light. The greater the light is to see the world, the more effectively a person can navigate its ways. The lesser the light is, the more confused and hazy is a person's functionality in the light-dependent structures of their respective societies. In such a scenario by juxtaposing light with the idea of our inability to see it, Doerr effectively creates an estrangement to the familiar

idea of light's inevitable connection to sight. This estrangement thereby implies an experience of imperceptibility by the sight of something which is widely presumed a part of human existence. The phrase "all the light" further intensifies the mystery of this estrangement by indicating that there exists an invisible light beyond what can be seen through the usual means of seeing. The mystery that the title thus entails and which is explored in the novel is how to perceive and experience the light which cannot be seen.

The invisibility of such a light is indeed a mysterious idea for the sighted as it brings into question the presumptuous disposition of mainstream narrative concerning blindness as an inevitability following the inability of sight. The embedded question in the title which challenges this presumption is How can light; something presumably intimate and its connection to sight and visibility be inaccessible and invisible to the seeing? This estrangement to the familiar idea of light's visibility to the naked eye is further consolidated in the chapter titled 'The Professor.' "Children, the voice adds, the brain is trapped in a complete darkness, of course. It is never in the light; instead, it floats inside the skull in a clear liquid. Despite this, the mental landscape it creates is bright and vibrant. It is bursting with vibrancy and color. So how does the brain, which is devoid of all light, create a world that is bright for us?" (Doerr 39). In the same chapter, the professor who is broadcasting his lessons for children on radio ends this lesson about light by urging them to open their eyes and see what they can before the eyes are closed forever. The opening of eyes to see something which has been established as invisible with brains that are trapped in a darkness we all carry in our heads suggests that the professor believes that merely capturing an image of what is generally believed as light is not enough. In order to truly see light and everything else, an awareness of their existence and an understanding of how they exist are required. As such, in another place, the professor explains how, mathematically, light is indeed invisible. He states that what people refer to as visible light is color to us. However, as the electromagnetic spectrum extends to infinity in one direction and zero in the other, all light is actually invisible from a mathematical standpoint. It goes to show that the visibility and invisibility of light and other phenomena are subject to the extent of what we can sense and experience through our available sensory modalities. In this quote mentioned above, the emphasis is on the consideration that the existence of light goes beyond what is visible to the human eye, and what we believe to be colors is actually the extent to which our brains can process light's visibility through the ability of sight. It thus reinforces the idea that the visibility of light and colour are essentially matters of experience as diverse in their conception as the sensory modalities with which they are experienced and perceived.

In addition to the professor's assertion, Forrester describes how the light we see is a small part of an electromagnetic spectrum that ranges from thousands of miles of wavelengths to gamma rays of nanometers. As such, these wavelengths are what constitute the visible light that we perceive as colors. Longer wavelengths are reds and oranges, while shorter wavelengths are greens and blues. She further elaborates that different animals have different perceptions of this electromagnetic radiation as per their sensory modalities and the structure of their brains. For example, pythons and rattlesnakes can only see the red ends of the spectrum, as well as colours which cannot be seen through human eyes, while other snakes can see both ends of the spectrum, which effectively means they can see the entire spectrum. This indicates how, in the absence of sensory modalities such as sight, the human perception of light and other such phenomena is subject to the experiential knowledge and awareness gained through sensory experience via other modalities such as olfactory, auditory, tactile, and gustatory senses. As a result, the consequent environment perceived through such sensory experiences alters the neurological processes in the brain, and the neurons employed for the ability of sight or any other underused sensory modality begin to die. Under the light of this argument from Forester, it can be understood that the perceptual processes alter the brain structure of people without sight, and those who employ their other abilities to explore their surroundings develop their distinctly unique worldviews. So blindness does not remain a physiological deficiency but becomes a cause of anatomical changes within the brain structure owing to the acquisition of different abilities to interact with their surroundings via sensory experiences.

It shows how, parallel to an ocular-centric worldview, a reality thus conceived through the experiential knowledge acquired via other sensory modalities than sight constitutes an altogether different but equally valid worldview. The struggle of reconciling between the familiarity of predominantly prevalent light-dependent societal structures and the estrangement of such unique worldviews creates a consciousness that manifests itself as practical knowledge through different skill sets. These skill sets are developed as attempts for reconciliation between the estrangement of certain sensory inabilities, such as sight, and the familiarity of sociopolitical realities of an ocular-centric world. The strife for these reconciliatory efforts and the subsequent conception of an alternate worldview via the acquisition of different skill sets constitutes what people without sight experience as blindness.

The dynamics of these acquired skills can be understood by the following principles of psychogeography. It involves exploring and interpreting urban landscapes through practices like the *dérive* (exploring the city in a playful, experimental way), *détournement* of facts (subverting

or recontextualizing established meanings), and defining identity via otherness (exploring differences to shape one's identity), leading to constructed situations (creating moments or experiences that engage with the urban environment) that shape emotional experiences. In experiencing blindness, people without sight reappropriate their lived experiences as per their proprioceptive vision by directing their imagination and intentionality through their acquisition of various skills for interactive navigational purposes. They invest their emotional responses to the area and its people to create cognitive images that are informed by their sensory experiences and are made meaningful via their memory and imagination. They consolidate these sizes, shapes, colors, and structures by constructing habitual pathways in their mental landscape; where heights are repeatedly heard, and depths are experienced through touch, and where sounds and echoes signal some breakage, twist or turn in your path, while the tones of people coupled with their choice of words become their personalities.

Marie Laure, one of the protagonists of *All the Light We Cannot See* exemplifies such blindness. At age six, she loses her sight to congenital cataracts and experiences the stereotypical prejudice of society in the treatment of her blindness as a curse on her and her father. She describes the initial experience of blindness as something that has radically and inexplicably changed her world. “Places she used to know as familiar, like the small plaza with trees at the end of their streets and the four-room flat she shares with her father, have transformed into dangerous mazes.” Marie Laure’s initial appraisal of her blindness is a consciousness being conceived in an overwhelming disorientation of her surroundings and confusion about losing the familiarity of everything she knew so well. She struggles to orient herself and fathom these sudden and completely life-altering changes. She tries to make sense of her own body. Her fingers always appear to her as “too big”, which reflects not only her disorientation of her own body but the sharpened sense of her tactile experience as well that she is unable to comprehend. Her spatial cognition undergoes similar changes as does the experience of her own body. The flat she lived in with her father no longer remains a familiar place but becomes an estranged area where she runs into walls, finds empty places where the door should be, and the experience of bumping into furniture begins to leave physical marks. In addition to the estrangement of her own residence, her developing consciousness of blindness begins to associate auditory experiences from her neighbourhood outside her house with reference to the emotional impact they have on her. Loud noises from the cars appear to her as animalistic “growling”, and whispering of leaves from the “sky” are indicative of how her daily life experiences are constantly shifting and transforming her previous worldview into an alternate understanding with which she can navigate her completely

reshaped psychosocial environment. This also reflects how she is re-examining the phenomena of her experiences and subsequently deconstructing her perception of the objects she interacts with regularly in her day-to-day routine and reconstructing their perception under the light of her experiential knowledge about their existence, which she acquires through her sensory interaction with them (25).

Yet, it should be noted how even as she struggles to reorient herself and rediscover her once familiar psychosocial environs with her experience of blindness, what coerces her into perceiving despair in her situation is not so much of her own disorientation and confusion as it is the attitude she encounters in the grown-ups around her. They associate her condition with a series of misfortunes experienced by her father "Such a hard life. Lost his father in the war, his wife in childbirth, and now this?". It subconsciously impacts her into feeling not only estranged and confused by her familiar surroundings but also deeply despairing of her new worldview, and she begins to fear it as a "curse" (25). It should thus be acknowledged that the inability of sight and its subsequent implications may appear as the beginning of the social space of disability, but should be differentiated from disability itself. In this example, the societal attitude of pity caused Marie Lore to view her inability and different way of experiencing life as not only inadequate but a misfortune to be perceived as a loss or an ailment that requires healing remedies.

Another aspect of societal attitude and its role in shaping the experience of blindness is depicted in Marie Laure's father. Rejecting these notions of loss and misfortune, her father, who is a locksmith at the museum, blatantly refuses to believe in curses and goes on to teach her the necessary skills to navigate her surroundings in the otherness that is an inherent part of experiencing blindness. She is taught to read through Braille, and on every birthday, her father makes her an intricately designed puzzle box, which challenges her cognitive abilities as they are meant to be opened by herself. Every year, her abilities get sharpened to the point where she employs her tactile sensory abilities and her cognitive abilities to explore everything around her. He teaches her how to structure her perception by habitually practicing a routine that consolidates her reliance on her senses and allows her to construct a spatial awareness by developing an intuitive sense of direction to locate everything in her immediate vicinity. For this purpose, she employs her understanding of time and distance, by combining all the sensory data that she gathers through her interaction with her surroundings. For example, "At home, in the evenings, her father stows their shoes in the same cubby, hangs their coats on the same hooks. Marie-Laure crosses six evenly spaced friction strips on the kitchen tiles to reach the table; she follows a strand of twine he has

threaded from the table to the toilet. He serves dinner on a round plate and describes the locations of different foods by the hands of a clock.

> Potatoes at six o'clock, *ma cherie*. Mushrooms at three. Then, he lights a cigarette and goes to work on his miniatures at a workbench in the corner of the kitchen. He is building a scale model of their entire neighbourhoods, the tall-windowed houses, the rain gutters, the laverie and boulangerie and the little place at the end of the street with its four benches and ten trees. (27).

This excerpt shows how Marie Laure learns to manoeuvre her surroundings by using objects from her environment to develop not only a proprioceptive sense of direction for navigational purposes but also to create a mental map by perceiving objects as markers and indicators to orient herself. Following of the string from one place to another in her home and memorizing the location of real-world objects through the miniature model her father makes for her, Marie Laure acquires the ability to enrich her perceptual awareness by extending her field of tactile sensation by the use of assistive devices. In this case, the string and the miniature model are the assistive devices that extend her tactile sensory experience.

Further enhancing her ability is the acquisition of another skill, reflected towards the end of the passage in the following lines: "On warm nights Marie-Laure opens her bedroom window and listens to the evening as it settles over the balconies and gables and chimneys, languid and peaceful, until the real neighbourhoods and the miniature one get mixed up in her mind" (27). Her auditory experience of listening to the quiet of peaceful evenings coupled with her tactile experience of the miniature model of her neighborhood contributes to the growth of her perceptual awareness. She begins to invest her faculty of imagination to explore the reality of her psychosocial environment; illustrating the difference between sensation and perception as described by Maurice Merleau Ponty. Sensations are the sensory data we experience via our sensory modalities. For example, hearing engages with different auditory signals. Sight processes images of surrounding objects of various sizes, shapes and colors over different distances. Feelings of high and low temperatures, soft and hard surfaces, dryness or wetness, etc., are experienced by the sense of touch through our skin. Sensations of taste and smell capture for us the bitterness or sweetness of different tastes and a myriad of scents from our surroundings respectively. Mere sensory interaction with the environment, however, does not constitute what Merleau-Ponty terms as perception. Any kind of perception requires an intent to perceive and interpret the sensory data. Everything experienced through our senses culminates in creating a cognitive awareness through

a process Merleau-Ponty terms as proprioception. All the sensory experience put together makes a coherent perception.

Marie Laure uses her sensory experience coupled with her memory to employ her imagination with the intent to perceive and create a proprioceptive awareness of the museum where her father works.

> Sixteen strides to reach the water feature, sixteen steps back. Forty-two forward to the stairwell and forty-two back. In her mind, Marie-Laure creates maps, unwinds a hundred yards of fictional twine, then turns and coils it back. Botany has an aroma reminiscent of squeezed flowers, glue, and blotting paper. Paleontology has an earthy, mineral scent. Biology is filled with heavy, cool jars filled with things she has only ever been able to describe to her, like the pale, coiled ropes of rattlesnakes and the severed hands of gorillas. It smells like formalin and rotting fruit. According to Dr. Geffard, entomology has an odour similar to that of oil and mothballs due to a preservative known as naphthalene. Offices can smell like perfume, alcohol, cigar smoke, or carbon paper or all four. (37)

This excerpt is a depiction of what constitutes a museum in Marie Laure's reality of sensory experiences. Each department is marked by a distinct olfactory cue, such as the scents of objects belonging to the department. For example, botany is a space containing a set of scents, namely, of "glue, blotter paper and pressed flowers". The areas of paleontology, biology, and entomology are marked by their own unique sets of smells: rock and bone dust, old fruit, mothballs, and naphthalene respectively. The offices are a myriad of olfactory cues. Sometimes, individual scents of carbon paper, cigar smoke, brandy or perfume, and sometimes all these scents put together are what Marie Laure perceives as the office area. Along with olfactory cues, she also interacts with the people she encounters in the building. They also become an associative factor in her conception of the museum. Her navigational skills which allow her to maneuver through these areas, consist of her memory and imagination. She counts her steps while walking through an area and determines and memorizes her direction by spooling and unspooling an imaginary string which enables her to remember her location and mark it on her imaginary map. With her experiential knowledge, the image of a museum is reappropriated to how Marie Laure interacted with the architecture of the Museum and its subsequent interpretation in her perception. The perceived factual state of the architecture is reappropriated as per Marie Laure's intentionality behind her conception such as the interpretation of the smells she experiences in different areas of the building. She exercises the same *detournement* of facts as per her intentionality when she navigates

her neighbourhood by employing her memory of its miniature model built by her father. Consequently, the *dérive* becomes more than a mere walk through various ambiences and becomes a purposeful exploratory walking technique to employ her memory of the miniature model with her intentionality to interact with and subsequently perceive her real-world neighbourhood.

The construction of the miniature model and its subsequent memorisation by Marie Laure is yet another example of how her father teaches her the 'detournemening' of facts to reorient herself and her surroundings as a person with blindness. When he teaches her how to apply her experience with the miniature model of their neighbourhood by walking in its real-world counterpart, it is then that she acquires the knowledge of how to make her walks into techniques of enhancing her cognitive awareness with regard to the orientation of her spatial environment. She finds his model of their neighbourhood confusing, in contrast to his puzzle boxes. It differs from the actual world. For example,

> [T]he little crossroads of Rue de Mirbel and Rue Monge, which is only a block away from their flat, is nothing like the actual crossroads. In the autumn, the actual one smells like an amphitheater of traffic, castor oil, bread from the bakery, camphor from Avent's pharmacy and roses, sweet peas and delphiniums from the flower stand. It smells of roasting chestnuts on winter days; on summer evenings it gets languid and lethargic, with heavy iron chairs grinding against each other and sleepy discussions. The only scents in her father's model of the same crossroads, though, are sawdust and dried glue. To her fingers, it's hardly more than a meagre replica; its pavements are immobile, its streets empty. Marie Laure is persistently asked to run her fingertips over it to identify different buildings and street angles. (30)

The above excerpt shows that Marie Laure marks the miniature models' exploration as empty of all the sensory experiences that she lives through in the real world. However, once she has memorised the model completely, her father takes her six blocks away from their residence, spins her around three times to disorient her from her existing awareness of their surroundings and asks her to use her memory of the miniature model to guide both of them back to their apartment. This deliberate disorientation teaches her how to navigate the experience of otherness that a person with blindness always experiences while exercising their different abilities to explore their surroundings in the ocular-centric structures of society. As a result, every Tuesday, Marie Laure draws upon her memory of the miniature model to imagine the geography of her residential area and subsequently creates sensory markers to interpret her experience of her neighbourhood. In

these practicing trips of reorienting herself independently in her psychosocial environment, Marie Laure also exhibits emotional responses to her sensory experiences. Initially, these responses are of panic and confusion.

> "Here, *ma cherie*, is the path we take every morning. Through the cedars up ahead is the Grand Gallery."
>
> "I know, Papa."
>
> He picks her up and spins her around three times. "Now," he says, "you're going to take us home."
>
> Her mouth drops open.
>
> "I want you to think of the model, Marie."
>
> "But I can't possibly!"
>
> "I'm one step behind you. I won't let anything happen. You have your cane. You know where you are."
>
> "I do not!"
>
> "You do."
>
> Exasperation. She cannot even say if the gardens are ahead or behind.
>
> "Calm yourself, Marie. One centimeter at a time."
>
> "It's far, Papa. Six blocks, at least."
>
> "Six blocks is exactly right. Use logic. Which way should we go first?"
>
> The world pivots and rumbles. Crows shout, brakes hiss, someone to her left bangs something metal with what might be a hammer. She shuffles forward until the tip of her cane floats in space. The edge of a curb? A pond, a staircase, a cliff? She turns ninety degrees. Three steps forward."
>
> Now her cane finds the base of a wall. "Papa?"
>
> "I'm here."

> Six paces seven paces eight. A roar of noise—an exterminator just leaving a house, pump bellowing—overtakes them. Twelve paces farther on, the bell tied around the handle of a shop door rings, and two women come out, jostling her as they pass.
>
> Marie-Laure drops her cane; she begins to cry. (30-31)

With a repetitive structure of weekly practice however, Marie Laure begins to develop not only a behavioural response to her growing awareness of her neighbourhood but also discovers new details to be incorporated in her experiential knowledge. This brings stability in her growing consciousness as a person with blindness and allows her to rely on the validity of her explorations. In these practice walks, her initial emotions associated with the area were anger and frustration. Gradually however, she begins to create a connection between the miniature model and the real neighborhood, to the effect that she is able to guide her father successfully to their residential block from her mere memory. The following lines indicate the mental map she creates of her neighborhood with her memory and imagination:

> "Six blocks, forty buildings, ten tiny trees in a square. This street intersects this street intersects this street. One centimeter at a time."
>
> "Approaching on the left will be the open ironwork fence of the Jardin des Plantes, its thin spars like the bars of a great birdcage.
>
> Across from her now: the bakery, the butcher, the delicatessen."
>
> "Marie-Laure finds the trunk of the chestnut tree that grows past her third-floor window, its bark beneath her fingers.
>
> Old friend." (34)

With every experience that Marie Laure has of her surroundings she also develops an ability to create and explore the psychological contours of her residential area and use them as navigational devices along with her emotional responses to sustain and explore the psychogeography of her neighbourhood. In these initial years of her blindness, Marie Laure acquires the skills necessary to interact with her surroundings by relying on her cognitive awareness of her surroundings. She learns to effectively manage her intentionality of perceiving her psychosocial environment by interpreting her sensory experience of the streets and pathways she walks on for commuting purposes. These experiences contribute in the growth of her

consciousness as a person with blindness and help her to explore and adjust in a new city of Saint-Malo when she and her father evacuate their home in Paris to flee from German soldiers.

She employs her knowledge from past experiences to explore her uncle's home in Saint-Malo, and as an assistive device for her to navigate their neighbourhood with, her father yet again creates a miniature model for her to memorise. Her ability to integrate her memory of the miniature model with her imagination is sharpened to the point that it enables her to navigate her surroundings independently. For example, after her father's capture by Germans her uncle's housekeeper, Madame Manec, takes to the Saint-Malo beach as a coping strategy to manage her stress. After the first few times, Marie Laure assures her that she can find her own way; she says the fifth time they step out, "You don't have to lead" (160). In addition to this, the following excerpt shows how Marie Laure perceives the ocean and navigates the surrounding area by counting her paces.

> Twenty-two paces to the intersection with the rue d'Estrees. Forty more to the little gate. Nine steps down, and she's on the sand, and the twenty thousand sounds of the ocean engulf her. With occasional discoveries of a variety of objects such as "Thick hanks of rope", "Slick globules of stranded polyps", and "drowned sparrow", she creates an emotional connection to the ocean, marking it as a place where she forgets her father's imprisonment and continuous absence. (160)

With time, her cognitive mapping ability is enhanced to the extent that "Marie-Laure's mind gradually transforms into a three-dimensional map with glowing landmarks", such as the Place aux Herbes' big plane tree, the Hotel Continental's nine potted topiaries, and the six stairs leading up to the rue du Connetable. These glowing landmarks are yet again marked by moments of significant experiences (160). Marie Laure forms a habit of joining Madame Manec in her morning rounds to different people. These rounds allow Marie Laure to map out all these locations in her psychogeography. As a result, when Madame Manec dies, Marie Laure uses her understanding of Saint-Malo streets to navigate them independently as a messenger for resistance efforts against German occupation.

5.5 Conclusion

This close reading of the text illustrates how a person with blindness develops a consciousness via a perceptual process. It involves not only a subconscious examination of the phenomena of their own experiences but also emotional responses to the areas they visit, the people they interact with, and the subsequent skills they acquire as a form of practical knowledge they

use to exhibit the understanding of their socio-psycho environment. Marie Laure employs her skill set of exploring her surroundings via her sensory experiences, memory, and imagination, and assistive devices such as her white cane and the miniature models of her neighborhood in Paris and Saint-Malo. She projects her intentionality of perceiving her surroundings by these devices and subsequently creates an interdependent connection with the people, places and objects she experiences in her psychogeography. Her emotional responses to each of these elements constitute the growth of her consciousness as a person with blindness. In addition to the acquisition of such skills and abilities to reconcile between the estrangement of blindness and the familiarity of light-dependent structures, societal behaviour towards the acceptance or rejection of an individual's disability and their subsequent means of dealing with them determines their social placement in society. It significantly impacts their emotional responses to how they experience their surroundings and in effect how they view their own personhood and map their cityscapes.

CHAPTER 6

PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF THE BLIND AS A TECHNIQUE OF REAPPROPRIATING SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN MICHAEL HINGSON'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *THUNDER DOG*

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Michael Hingson's autobiography with a focus on disability as a social space with reference to navigational techniques; echolocation and the use of guide dogs, which the blind acquire to reclaim their individual identity in mainstream society. It further elaborates on the empowered position of people with blindness as their techniques extend their abilities to interact with the surroundings in a more effective and meaningful way. This chapter opens with Michael Hingson's introduction, with a subsequent discussion on his autobiography, *Thunder Dog* (2011), and is concluded with a detailed analysis.

6.2 Introduction to the Author

Michael Hingson is an internationally known speaker inspiring diverse groups of people of different ages with his survival story of the 9/11 incident of 2001. He represents the American Humane Association's 2012 Hero Dog Awards in an ambassadorial capacity. His book *Thunder Dog* (2011) describes how he, with his guide dog Roselle, led the evacuation from WTC when the 9/11 attacks took place, walking seventy-eight floors.

6.3 Brief Summary of the Novel

Michael Hingson's autobiography *Thunder Dog: The True Story of a Blind Man, His Guide Dog, and the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero* is a first-person narration about how he experienced his blindness throughout his life by acquiring different skill sets, such as the use of assistive technology, white canes, guide dogs, and echolocation. He describes in detail how these techniques enabled him to experience people, places, and objects in a distinctly unique manner creating multiple social implications in terms of reclaiming social spaces with these techniques as identity markers.

6.4. Reclamation of Social Identity by Experiencing Blindness

Titchkosky and Michalko assert that disability is neither a problem to be solved nor is it a physical or anatomical deficiency to be fulfilled; it is a social space over and against which an

individual strives to create their own identity. As such, the exploration of disability as a marker for creating and sustaining a distinct social space is relative to the individual experiencing their respective disabilities and their corresponding set of abilities they acquire to manage their surroundings. Societal responses to the abilities acquired for exploring the experiences of blindness play a vital role in shaping the consequent consciousness of an individual with blindness and the appraisal of their urban spaces. The white canes and other assistive devices, such as Marie Laure's miniature model of her neighbourhood, are often considered distinct markers of their social identity as people with blindness. However, along with the use of a white cane, Michael Hingson describes other modalities of exploring the identity of a person with blindness. Abilities such as the use of echolocation and guide dogs generate a variety of different societal responses and, subsequently, a different proprioceptive awareness of their surroundings.

For example, Michael Hingson, in his book *Thunder Dog*, describes how he learned to ride a bike and avoid obstacles by detecting objects via echolocation, a skill he acquired himself. "I learned how to hear parked cars so I could avoid them while riding down the street.

> You would click your mouth just like a bat, kick it out there, and listen for the returns," my older brother, Ellery, says now. Also, the rubbery echo of the bicycle tires rolling down the street provided me with invaluable information including sound changes as I approached parked cars and other objects. No one taught me echolocation; I just figured it out on my own. (26)

Employing the skill of echolocation Hingson rode his bike for hours and enjoyed a feeling of "freedom and control" (26). The exploration of his environment via echolocation generated the emotional response of these feelings and subsequently allowed him to navigate and create a mental map of his entire neighbourhood.

> As I mastered the art of bike riding via echolocation, I ventured farther afield in Palmdale, a town of about two thousand. I can still conjure up a map of our part of town. At the center of the grid in my mind is our house at 38710 Stanridge Avenue. Our house was between Third Street and Glenraven Street. Between the streets ran the avenues, each named with a letter of the alphabet, along with a number. The avenues were one mile apart. Our house was between Avenue Q and Avenue Q3, although it was closer to Q. So we were between Q and Q3 on the north and south, and between Third and Glenraven on the east and west. (26-27)

Along with employing *dérive* a walking technique to explore his surroundings, Michael Hingson uses echolocation to learn to ride a bike and subsequently to experience the neighborhood via auditory inputs generated by the echoes he created. He projected his intentionality of perceiving and mapping out his neighbourhood in Palmdale not only by effectively using echolocation and the consequent auditory signals he received but also by re-appropriating the social construct that since people with blindness have the inability to sight so it follows naturally that they cannot acquire skills such as riding a bicycle for the simple reason of not being able to see where they're going. In learning to ride a bicycle and making a habit of hours-long riding sessions, Hingson not only challenged the set social construct but also exhibited the relationship of accessibility and participation, effectively creating the experience of sight as well. Hingson's employment of echolocation and subsequently exploring his neighbourhood through the experience of cycling illustrates this relationship of accessibility and participation. Thus, reflecting how people without sight acquire different abilities to exercise their desire to see and create accessibility to their environment with the intent of looking through their proprioceptive awareness and participating in their respective surroundings.

Nevertheless, conformity to set standards of normalcy does not often allow societal behaviour to acknowledge and comprehend an equally valid alternative experience of blindness to the experience of sight. As a result, the emotional response of a person with blindness to such a societal behaviour is a powerful factor in shaping their psychosocial environment and how they perceive their own personhood with respect to their disability. Michael Hingson's parents repeatedly received indignant calls from their neighbours about how they allowed a blind child to ride a bicycle. His parents did not heed their indignation and kept on supporting Michael Hingson to continue cycling to his heart's content. Their persistence not only shaped Hingson but also challenged perceptions of what blind individuals can achieve. "I spring from stubborn and self-reliant stock. I also can only hope that my parents' persistence served to educate my neighbors a little about what blind people can do. My father's can-do attitude was a huge influence on me" (27).

This attitude contributed to Hingson's growth as a person with blindness and his subsequent experience with society when he started using a guide dog to not only navigate his neighbourhood independently but other areas as well. For example, once, Hingson visited a restaurant with a friend and his wife. The management saw Hingson's guide dog and refused entry to the restaurant. The following day, Hingson took printouts of the law concerning guide dogs and their blind owners, called a few friends, and in the evening, seven to eight people with blindness

and their guide dogs went to the same restaurant. They were not only allowed entry but were also well received with food for their dog (49). This instance reflects that social behaviour towards blindness is one of the major elements which shapes the psychogeography of people with blindness and how they orient themselves in their psychosocial environs. Hingson's productive response to the event of refusal of entry from management culminated in a triumphant experience of subverting a social prejudice and contributed in enhancing Hingson's confidence in navigating his surroundings. It also marked the restaurant in Hingson's memory and his mental map as a place of a subverted social prejudice against blindness and how it is experienced with the help of guide dogs.

It should also be noted that unlike assistive devices such as the white cane and GPS applications in cell phones, there is an emotional connection with the guide dog, which adds another dimension to navigating any area and exploring its geography. The bond between a guide dog and its blind owner is not merely that of a pet and its master. Hingson describes this relationship in the following words: "It takes at least a year to forge a good relationship with a guide dog. It's like a marriage. Both sides have to get to know each other. I study my dog and my dog studies me, and over time we learn to read each other's thoughts and feelings. Trust begins to develop, and we become interdependent, much like a surgical team or police partners who put their lives in each other's hands. I trust Roselle with my life every day. She trusts me to direct her" (17). The use of guide dogs also requires proper training in which people with blindness are taught verbal commands and hand gestures, especially footwork, to simultaneously manage their guide dogs and understand their dog's gestures for navigation. Dogs typically don't give much thought to what could be above their heads. They have a keen sense of smell and often go nose-to-the-ground, interpreting both old and new scents to interpret the world. Dogs trained as guide dogs are trained to search high and alert for objects that could inadvertently injure a blind person's upper body, such as tree branches, scaffolding, mailboxes, signs, and protrusions from cars and buildings. As Michael Hingson describes his training, where he first mastered fundamental footwork, aligning his left foot with the dog's right front paw—a task made challenging without sight. He learned to use the collar, leash, vocal commands, and hand signals effectively, as well as how to reward and discipline the dog. Classroom lectures provided pedagogy on obedience, training techniques, and maintaining the dogs' health and happiness. This suggests how the interdependent relationship of trust between a guide dog and its blind owner is, in effect, a proprioceptive extension of the field of sensory modalities of a person with blindness, as both the dog and its owner undergo special training to develop a consciousness of recognising each other's gestures. The operative element in the growth of such consciousness

is of trust and reliability. The dog trusts its owner for accurate directions and the owner relies on the dog's sensory modalities to experience and interact with his/her surroundings. As a result, it can be surmised from this that such a relationship of mutual trust is one of the fundamental constituents of a worldview which centers on seeing one's surroundings without sight with one's proprioceptive vision and the acquisition of a variety of different skills. One of these skills is to recognize that different dogs have different personalities, and as such, an ability of logical deduction and behavioural management is also required in using guide dogs. Hingson describes one of his guide dogs Holland, and how he managed his behaviour. "Dogs, just like people, tend to lapse into old habits and instincts," and to break their behaviors and develop new ones, logical deductions concerning their behavior are required. Hingson demonstrates this by sharing his experiences with his guide dogs. When his guide dog occasionally leads him into a bush or mailbox, he simply pauses, loops back, and asks the dog to try again. Usually, the dog corrects the mistake on the second attempt, understanding the need to focus. However, one guide dog, a golden retriever named Holland, had a playful streak. While walking with his parents, Holland repeatedly led him into the same mailbox that jutted over the sidewalk. After three failed attempts, it became clear that Holland was doing it deliberately. On the fourth try, just as his hand was about to hit the mailbox again, he dropped the harness and redirected Holland with a leash tug, causing the dog to bump his head on the mailbox. From then on, Holland guided him around it perfectly (20).

Recognising these behavioural changes in the guide dog also adds to the awareness of a person with blindness by allowing him/her to perceive the reason for those changes. For example, Hingson describes Roselle one of his guide dogs behaviour as polite and attentive when she had the guiding harness on and relaxed and mischievous when she was out of the harness. His confidence in her alertness and in her ability to guide him efficiently was such that he used her to lead the evacuation out of the WTC where he worked and had been present at the time of the 9/11 incident. The following lines describe how Hingson managed not to cloud Roselle's sensory appraisal of their surroundings by keeping in check his own fear and nervousness.

> I know I have to stay calm for Roselle. If I show fear or begin to panic, she will pick up on it and might get scared too. It's important that Roselle doesn't sense that I am afraid. If that happened, it would make it harder for us to get out. So far, we are staying calm and focused, and I'm able to control my fear. But Roselle does not react; she is in the moment, secure in herself and her work. (45)

These words also depict the intimate connection that a guide animal shares with the person without sight. The animal's emotions and instincts occupy a shared space in the consciousness conceived in experiencing blindness. Hingson transmitted his calmness to Roselle and drew his confidence from her surety in her instinctive guidance.

It is important to acknowledge that the sensory modalities of guide dogs essentially function as extensions to the field of the sensory data being gathered by the person experiencing blindness through engaging other modalities. This becomes apparent when Hingson, in explaining his confidence in Roselle's guidance, describes her sensory abilities.

> They don't exactly smell the emotion of fear, but they can smell the result: an olfactory fear signal inadvertently produced by the body. Dogs are not as visual as people, and their primary sense is smell, said to be a thousand times more sensitive than that of humans. Such Roselle has more than 200 million olfactory receptors in her nose, while I only have about 5 million.- These receptors feed information to the highly developed olfactory lobe in Roselle's brain, making her a scent machine. She lives in a world of smell, not sight, and thus is not light-dependent, either. We have that in common. (46)

Hingson highlights his guide dog's exceptional senses, noting her ability to hear sounds at four times the distance humans can. If he hears something twenty steps away, she can detect it eighty steps away. Her sense of touch is equally remarkable—she responds to subtle signals transmitted through the harness handle and gathers information through sensitive nerve endings across her body, including specialized hairs, called vibrissae, around her eyes, muzzle, and jaws. He also acknowledges dogs' almost supernatural abilities, such as predicting earthquakes, navigating long distances, sensing changes in the earth's magnetic field, and detecting shifts in barometric pressure, like an approaching storm. Roselle as an extension to Hingson's sensory modalities, transmits to him her own surety as he himself describes as: "Thinking about Roselle's special abilities gives me confidence" (46-47).

This extension to Hingson's experience enhances his proprioceptive vision. He employs this vision to perceive the emergency exit out of WTC through his tactile sensation via Roselle's guidance and continuously allows his auditory experience to shape his awareness about the group he was leading out of the building. It bears emphasizing that by choosing to trust Roselle in such conditions Hingson in effect projected his intentionality to interact with his surroundings; to navigate and subsequently orient himself in the constructed situation of his psychogeography.

Michael Hingson's experience as a person with blindness developed his consciousness to the point that he led the evacuation in a catastrophe of global proportions by walking with his guide dog down 78 floors and helping others whenever they came across a blackout due to no electricity. His experience of blindness allowed him to project his intentionality and ingenuity of thought via his guide dogs and manage their emotional and behavioral responses to the environment in a way that informed his own proprioceptive awareness of the people, places, and objects he encountered. His ability of echolocation allowed him to ascribe sounds to even inanimate objects such as coffee tables, parked cars, buildings, etc. With these abilities, he deploys and experiences psychogeography to develop personality traits that contribute to his management of crises. By an amalgamation of assistive technology and methods of navigation with his intention to subvert society's presumptions concerning blindness, Hingson constructed situations that shaped his consciousness as a person with blindness and allowed him to create and sustain independent social spaces wherever he went.

The following excerpt is a list of courtesy rules to interact with the blind that Hinson provides towards the end of his autobiographical account.

> When you meet me don't be ill at ease. It will help both of us if you remember these simple points of courtesy: 1. I'm an ordinary person, just blind. You don't need to raise your voice or address me as if I were a child. Don't ask my spouse what I want—"Cream in the coffee?"— ask me. 2. I may use a long white cane or a guide dog to walk independently; or I may ask to take your arm. Let me decide, and please don't grab my arm; let me take yours. I'll keep a half-step behind to anticipate curbs and steps. 3. I want to know who's in the room with me. Speak when you enter. Introduce me to the others. Include children, and tell me if there's a cat or dog. 4. The door to a room or cabinet or to a car left partially open is a hazard to me. 5. At dinner I will not have trouble with ordinary table skills. 6. Don't avoid words like "see." I use them, too. I'm always glad to see you. 7. I don't want pity. But don't talk about the "wonderful compensations" of blindness. My sense of smell, touch, or hearing did not improve when I became blind. I rely on them more and, therefore, may get more information through those senses than you do—that's all. 8. If I'm your houseguest, show me the bathroom, closet, dresser, window—the light switch too. I like to know whether the lights are on. 9. I'll discuss blindness with you if you're curious, but it's an old story to me. I have as many other interests as you do. 10. Don't think of me as just a blind person. I'm just a person who happens to be blind.

> In all fifty states, the law requires drivers to yield the right of way when they see my extended white cane. Only the blind may carry white canes. You see more blind persons today walking alone, not because there are more of us, but because we have learned to make our own way. (95)

These rules are an attempt to directly deconstruct mainstream presumptions concerning blindness and to bridge the gap between the social space of disability and the mainstream sociopolitical plane. They are illustrative of how Hinson experienced his society and subsequently navigated its behaviours. He shares these insights to foster a growth mindset to broaden the horizons of mainstream social consciousness.

Keeping in view these examples, it can be said that psychogeography as experienced by people with blindness is not merely a paradigm which explicates its contribution to the cognitive mapping done with the experiential knowledge gathered through sensory experiences. It also illustrates how the inability of sight augments the intensity of thought and intent to cultivate emotional connections with people, places, and objects and subsequently conceive their existence in a reality constructed and sustained by faculties of memory and imagination. The richer the experience is in terms of emotion, the more vivid and intense is its conception in the consciousness of a person with blindness. It can thus be asserted that the otherness inherently experienced in blindness can be employed to project the intentionality of perceiving the prejudiced social constructs concerning blindness as products of imperceptibility synonymous with the inability of sight, since it does not allow them to see beyond their prejudice and acknowledge an alternate reality created and sustained by varying sets of different abilities. As such, the character of Marie Laure in *All the Light We Cannot See* and the person of Michael Hingson both demonstrate how a part of experiencing blindness is to possess an intent to challenge and deconstruct such inadvertently oppressive behavioral patterns. Depending on how a person with blindness manages their inability, people with blindness can either fall in society's criteria of abnormality by succumbing to their prejudices or can be acknowledged as extraordinary by developing different abilities to navigate and interact with their surroundings in a way unique to their own worldview.

In essence, normalcy as expected by the mainstream society is perhaps an improbability for a person experiencing blindness, as the consciousness it creates is inherently unique to their experiences of its subject and the subsequent proprioceptive vision that their intent entails. The aim, therefore, is not equality with the sighted in an ocular-centric world since abnormality or extraordinariness can be interpreted as most likely the two inevitabilities in experiencing

blindness; rather, every disability should be acknowledged as an individual's social place, which commands equally valid socio-economic and political status as other productive members of society. Any inability of sensory modality does not naturally constitute an inadequacy of productive potential in terms of experiencing the world and its objects, constructing an alternative but equally valid worldview to navigate our individual realities.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The project aimed to explore the dynamics of psychogeography as experienced by people without sight. As such, the data analysed suggests that the emotional connection created by the sensory interaction with the geographical environment plays a vital role in constituting the interpretation of psychosocial elements of the geographical effects encountered in experiencing them with blindness. Characters of Marie Laure and Michael Hingson practice *dérive* in ways that were unique to their personalities and the skills they acquired in their respective experiences of blindness. Both employed different techniques to extend the fields of their sensory modalities to experience the people, places and objects they encountered with reference to the nature of emotions those experiences created in their respective areas. Their emotional responses to these experiences formed their intent to perceive and mark their locations in the cognitive maps they conceived through their memory and imagination. Their imagination does not allude to something non-existent; rather, it implies a sharpening of perceptual relevance with respect to how their personalities imbibe multiple effects from the areas they explore to enhance their cognitive awareness of their surroundings. The consciousness conceived from this awareness involves a *detournement* of facts as per uniquely individual interpretations of the resultant socio-psycho environs they simultaneously explore and create through their emotional responses as people with blindness. This 'detournemening' of facts culminates in creating a reliance on the experiences of their individual cityscapes to own and acknowledge the social spaces they inhabit and subsequently navigate through as people with disability.

To manage the otherness of people with blindness inherently embedded in experiencing their respective psychogeography, they adopt a double-layered strategy. On the one hand, it requires an acceptance of the fact that in the light-dependent structures prevalent in global society, standards of normalcy do not accept people with blindness as normal members of the community. Acceptance of this otherness requires a cooperative familial environment that Marie Laure found in her father and Michael Hingson in his own parents. On the other hand, the amalgamation of assistive technology such as the use of the white cane, echolocation, and guide dogs with practising of the consequent skills acquired, perpetuates this otherness and consolidate into a means of forming a distinctly individual identity. Sustaining this identity does not only require a constant

reaffirmation of the otherness is being experienced as a differently abled person with blindness but also the ability to maintain a balance between the individuality of one's own personhood and managing the necessity of incorporating the interdependent structures of human existence. Both Marie Laure and Michael Hingson exhibit the maintenance of this balance by preserving their individuality in being consistent with their independent attitudes towards their affairs while accepting offers of assistance when made without condescension as per the demands of necessity. Additionally, depending on the intent with which a person with blindness manages their otherness, they either experience abnormality in the exclusion from society's light-dependent behavioral structures or attain recognition for possessing extraordinary merit in subverting such behaviours to be accepted and respected for their differently abled worldviews. The roles of Michael Hingson in leading the evacuation out of the World Trade Centre crisis and Marie Laure in assisting the resistance against Nazi occupation of Saint-Malo can be considered as examples.

The project also delineates psychological as well as sociological perceptual processes that constitute the experience of blindness. Sensory experience of people, places, and objects that an individual with blindness interacts with, holds meaning as per their intentionality with which they are perceived. The perceptual intent is projected onto these objects of experience via the different abilities acquired to interact with the surrounding environment. It subsequently requires a person with blindness to continuously make inferential deductions from the sensory input they acquire from the auditory, gustatory, olfactory, and tactile signals they receive about the objects of their experiences. This sensory input culminates in a proprioceptive awareness that coalesces into a coherent image as per the projected intent of the individual. Michael Hingson and Marie Laure's appraisal of their residential neighbourhoods in their respective cities via their proprioceptive awareness is evidence of the psychological aspect of the perceptual processes as illustrated by Merleau-Ponty. However, experiencing blindness is a two-fold process that also entails sociological elements, as asserted by Michalko. He describes the experience of sight as a process that consists of two functions of the desire to see, which necessitates accessibility, and the will to look, which narrows down the focus to participation in the social order of experience and interaction. As such, it indicates that if a person with blindness manages accessibility to their respective environment and subsequently participates in its affairs, they are effectively performing the function of seeing without their sight to create a proprioceptive vision of their surroundings, as can be studied in how both Michael Hingson and Marie Laure found accessibility with their respective skill sets and participated in the management of their respective crisis of their different

eras. This illustrates how sensory experience, as well as different sociological elements, inform cognitive awareness and constitute different levels of experiencing the consciousness of blindness.

Finally, the extracts examined from all three novels, especially *My Name Is Red* describe how experiencing blindness creates a vision in its own right of the experiential content with reference to its emotional significance to the individual. Michael Hingson, Marie Laure, and different characters of Master miniaturists subconsciously practiced phenomenological reduction when their blindness causes them to bracket out the presupposed causal connections of objects, which lends them purity of thought and expression as shaped by their lived experiences in perceiving their surroundings and interacting with the world. In this way, blindness becomes a way of life that enables people without sight to preserve the purity of their emotions and heightens their perceptual sensibility to the content of their lived experiences.

Imperceptibility is the handicap that this research contributes to highlighting with reference to socio-economic and political structures concerning stereotypical attitudes towards people with blindness, as reflected in Michael Hingson's autobiographical account of his experiences as a person with blindness. Arguably, if the inability of one sensory modality bars access to complete reality and is the basis of prejudiced societal behavior, the imperceptibility of an entire reality qualifies as a much more problematic inability to be prejudiced against. In essence, this project is an attempt to deconstruct the stereotypical patterns of representation in contemporary literature and contributes in presenting an alternative perceptual paradigm to view the world from the experiential viewpoint of a person with blindness.

7.1 Future Recommendations

Sensory experience is one of the core constituents of experiencing blindness. As such, it is a multi-layered phenomenon that can be explored from a plethora of perspectives with reference to a diverse scope of dimensions. The social space of disability is a significant element of the cultural consciousness of any society. It is thus influenced by many other powerful institutions such as family and religion. It is suggested that a study be made of the conception of blindness/disability in the major religions and traditional spiritual ideologies by examining core scriptural texts such as Quran, Bible, Vedas, Torah etc. The role that these beliefs and practices play can be researched in autobiographical accounts of different blind individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds such as: *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller, *Thunder Dog* by Micheal Hingson and Susy Flory, *One of the Lucky Ones* by Lucy Ching, *The Journey from Sight to Vision* by Shawaz Baloch. Such a study would give insight into how influences inspired by various

religious and spiritual traditions often significantly impact the emotional responses to sensory experiences gathered in blindness.

Another dimension of experiencing blindness can be considered by doing a study of how people with blindness employ their physical fitness to perform in different sports such as cricket, archery, swimming, cycling, etc. Documentaries, interviews, and testimonials can be analyzed to assess the role their physical fitness and sportsmen's reflexes play in informing their awareness of their surroundings.

Finally, a research project can be to examine how contemporary blind artists conceive their ideas of colors, images, shapes, and styles to perform their art in painting and sculpting. For the suggested project, texts authored by blind artists can be studied. For example: *Shouting in the Dark: My Journey Back to the Light* by John Bremblitt; he is an American painter and the world's first blind muralist who uses tactile markers on the canvas and textures of the paint to discern the variety of different colors from his palette while painting. *Painting in the Dark: Esref Armagan, Blind Artist* by Rachelle Burk; he is a Turkish-born blind artist who developed his ability to create and draw and his understanding of color, perspective and shadow in his father's shop without any formal education. Owing to his unique ability to transfer his ideas and concepts from his experience of total blindness via imagination, he is internationally acclaimed as an inspiration for artists across the globe. And *Sargy Mann: Probably the Best Blind Artist in Peckham* by Peter Mann, which is a biography of Sargy Mann and how he became blind by cataract in his thirties, yet continued producing highly acclaimed art.

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