



# Deborah Levy's Writing on Trauma, Masculinity and Walls: Chronotope and Symbols in *The Man Who Saw Everything* (2019)

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**Abstract** - Writing trauma, despite its complexity due to limits of language, unrepresentable psyche fragmentation and sociocultural issues, fundamentally revives an aesthetic substratum supported by narratological devices that deeply influence characters and favour imagery. To corroborate it, the analysis of Deborah Levy's fiction entitled *The Man Who Saw Everything* (2019), at first, mirrors a narrative, which, in addition to literalism, is stamped with magical realism rendering a disruptive, historical, cultural and postmodern metafictional plot. Secondly, it contributes to diagnose, in patriarchal and communist societies impacted by the Cold War and Berlin Wall, the representations of memory and identity through gendered and psychological constructions and archetypes. Thirdly, with the merging of reality and fiction, this incursion into trauma provides psychoanalytical sources of interpretation of traumatic imagery and experience through chronotope and analogies confirming the abundance of tropes like myths and symbols capable of rendering the psyche of the traumatised subject through metaphors of containment, wall, healing, flotation, mirror, among others.

**Key words:** magical realism, archetype, wall, literalism, chronotope.

**Résumé** - L'écriture sur le traumatisme, malgré sa complexité due aux limites linguistiques, à la fragmentation psychique irreprésentable et aux questions socioculturelles, ravive fondamentalement un substrat esthétique soutenu par des dispositifs narratologiques qui influencent profondément les personnages et favorisent l'imagerie. Pour le corroborer, l'analyse de la fiction de Deborah Levy intitulée *The Man Who Saw Everything* (2019) reflète, d'abord, un récit qui, en plus du littéralisme, est empreint d'un réalisme magique générant une intrigue métafictionnelle non-linéaire, historique, culturelle et postmoderne. Deuxièmement, il contribue à diagnostiquer, dans les sociétés patriarcales et communistes marquées par la guerre froide et le Mur de Berlin, les représentations de la mémoire et de l'identité à travers des constructions et des archétypes genrés et psychologiques. Troisièmement, avec la fusion de la réalité et de la fiction, cette incursion dans le traumatisme apporte des sources psychanalytiques d'interprétation d'images et d'expériences traumatiques à travers le chronotope et les analogies confirmant l'abondance de tropes comme les mythes et les symboles capables de restituer la



psyché du sujet traumatisé à travers des métaphores liées au confinement, au mur, à la guérison, au flottement, au miroir, etc.

**Mots clef** : réalisme magique, archétype, mur, littéralisme, chronotope.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between literature and trauma is centuries-old. Despite the propensity of literary critiques to recur to trauma theorists or psychologists for justification of postulates, literature has also served as site for sociocultural and psychological representations as Marinella Rodi-Risberg confirms: "*Today theorists (re)turn to literature in trying to formulate the effects and consequences of trauma as well as to understand the phenomenon culturally. Both Caruth and Felman emphasize in their writings that literature is a nonpareil realm for representing traumatic experience.*" (RODI-RISBERG, 2010). Therefore, being the predilection site to cope better with the merging of reality and fiction, literature recurs to magic realism with its cultural representation and aesthetic devices capable of rendering trauma experience.

With the attempt at describing the unrepresentable or irrational experience set in a socio-political climate of violence, war, spying, separation, etc., tropes or symbols become the axes for research in Deborah Levy's fiction, entitled *The Man Who Saw Everything* (2019). Its analysis as corpus aims at reflecting the intersection between trauma, culture and multiple realities. The novel describes the memory of the traumatized main character, Saul Adler, who experiences two car crashes that mark out his traumatic mind. With a setting characterised by the Cold War and the Berlin Wall, symbol of historical trauma, *MWSE* as a postmodern novel offers a site for our study and reflects the aesthetic merging of real and fictional representations.

The importance of this article resides in hypotheses that it posits. Firstly, it exists a fictional attempt at representing the psychological mind of the traumatized person despite its complexity. Secondly, such an investigation imposes the need to address trauma issues through historical and cultural constructions that particularly generate images of gender and barriers. Thirdly, trauma narrative must reflect a certain power on the narrative that manipulates the spatiotemporal couple and plot and influences characters. Through an analytical approach, the study will generate results in terms of psychological, aesthetic and sociocultural representations that could contribute in better understanding and rendering traumatic experience.

Consequently, this work is divided into three parts. The first one will perform an analysis of the narratological style and substrata of a magic realist narrative. The second part represents a psychological diagnosis of characters. Thirdly, it will be



the place to explore chronotopic and symbolic representations in a highly metaphorical writing.

## 1. Re-Reading *MWSE* Through Trauma and Literalism

Magic realism offers different ways of reading a text. In the perspective that *MWSE* offers other possibilities to be read, this part analyses Deborah Levy's novel through the representation of trauma and literalism. This will be the opportunity to revisit trauma narratological techniques and the narrative substrata related to translation or interpretation and art criticism.

### 1.1. *MWSE as a Trauma Narrative*

In her fiction recounting the traumatic experience of the main character who underwent two car crashes, Deborah Levy tapped into trauma narrative which *"is a psychological technique used to help survivors of trauma make sense of their experiences, while also acting as a form of exposure to painful memories"* (Therapist Aid, 2020). Thus, the analysis of the narrative will reflect a set of narratological devices which give the novel all its complexity and originality.

The novel deals with Saul Adler who tries to recall his traumatic 28 years. After crashes, he experiences a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). His memory has difficulties in decoding what he is living. Memory fragmentation is an impediment for the ordering of certain parts of his past. Thus, Deborah Levy engages the reader in complexities of the novel with a structure and thematic approach intricately linked to remembrance and characters inferences. Subsequently, duality allows an alternative decryption of actions, discourses, characters' involvement and history. This enables the author to render an ambivalent narrative retracing the memory of the traumatized character. Consequently, Levy's story is divided into two parts. The first one, having 14 chapters, is seen from a context that is marked by a country ruled by the hardship of the socialist government, impacting characters' behaviours and psychology. The second, twenty-five chapters, places the reader in a distorted or multiple reality.

Shifts in focalization are frequent. As in the psyche of a traumatized patient, the main character and auto-diegetic narrator shifts between discourses and scenes using analogies. Levy frequently moves out of a discussion to relate another action in the past before coming back. Therefore, in such a fragmented narrative, repetition is recurrent. In some sections of the novel, a passage related to an entanglement is repeated. The beginning of the two parts of the narrative can illustrate it with the repeated scene of the crash on the zebra crossing despite some changes. To a certain extent, it represents the rehearsal of the memory after remembrances.



Predictions in the first part of the novel raise questions for the reader. In fact, the reader tries to analyse certain passages as belonging to a travel in the past or as a gift from the author to allow the narrator to predict the future. They are often referring to the fall of the Berlin Wall or events Saul tries to recollect in disruptive sequences. They relate to Saul's feeling of *déjà vu* through a situation he is experiencing or objects he has seen before as on page 56 when he says:

There were new images in my mind that resembled Jennifer's photographs, images from another geography, another time. I was convinced that Jennifer had not yet taken those photographs, which I saw like slides in a carousel. A cherry tree in Massachusetts, America. Someone standing under the tree. That person might be myself. Jennifer was there, too. Her hair had turned white.

This reflects an indicator for the severity of dissociation and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. He is unable to know if the man in the pictures was himself. The feeling of *déjà vu* is also a metafictional device that characterizes trauma narrative. In fact, metafiction is a commonly used genre for trauma due to aesthetic devices that cope with its nonlinear structure. The narrator indulges in announcing events that will come in the course of the novel. It contributes to the fragmented chronotopic narrative which characters are aware of, particularly Saul who talks about the fusion of time and space. On page 38, Saul, like a historian, gives the cause of the fall of the wall which has not yet happened. In addition, Deborah Levy uses parentheses as narrative device. They give additional information conveying repetition and feelings.

In Levy's magical realism, the motif of the spectre is present. With the past suggesting fear, past things are designated through the spectre. With historical trauma, the spectre is conveyed through the psychological impact of the World War or the history of communism embodied by Marx. For Saul, objects like the train, which reminds him his father are perceived as spectres. In terms of photography, Jennifer sees "*a spectre inside every photograph.*" (109).

Culture is a key issue in magical realism and the representation of the Berlin wall. It is used by Levy as a means of subversion of the political regime. The theme of culture is mainly depicted through Saul's research subject "*Cultural opposition to the rise of fascism in the 1930s*" in a context of communist propaganda. He relates the existence of an anti-Nazi youth movement which engages in cultural opposition through Western fashion by wearing "*bohemian checked shirts*" (41) and jeans which inspire people a "*man from the West*" (50). They also sing parodies of the Hitler Youth anthem and are keen on jazz and blues.

Through its various forms, culture has been subjected to different barriers in their access and consumption in the German Democratic Republic. Musically, the choice of the Beatles is important in terms of narrative and cultural perspectives. In fact, it allows the writer to create scenes, particularly the first one in which Saul Adler reproduces the photograph of the Beatles and which is determinant



in the entanglement of the following actions, notably with the first crash. The restriction of the cultural productions is suggested through music and literature. With the message conveyed through productions, the GDR fears the birth of a revolution that is today suggesting research about the role of The Beatles in bringing down the Wall.

### ***1.2. Literalism: Between Translation and Artistic Realism***

Literalism constitutes an important narrative device in *MWSE*. The rediscovery of its meaning represents a basic step for its analysis through the text. Thus, it is defined as the “*adherence to the exact letter or to the literal sense, as in translation or interpretation; exact representation or portrayal, without idealization, as in art or literature.*”<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the study, on the one hand, of translation or interpretation and, on the other hand, of the representation of art, particularly photography, remains a key issue.

Firstly, translation and interpretation are introduced through the character of Walter Müller who is able to “*speak all the Eastern European languages*” (117). Deborah Levy tackles obstacles or walls that people, particularly professionals, face. Thus, through cross-language interference, the trilingual processing is revealed through its difficulty of approach.

Considering the languages L1 (Czech), L2 (German) and L3 (English), Walter wants to translate a sentence of the work of the Czech artist, Eva Švankmajerová, from L1 to L3. Levy shows that another language might intrude. “*He would try and translate it for me now. He shut his eyes – ‘Here goes’ and frowned for a long time as he tried to gather the words across three languages, Czech, German, English, then he opened his eyes, punched my arm and shook back his hair. ‘It’s not possible to translate.’*” (33). Walter Müller in his attempt to translate the sentence from L1 to L3 has chosen to go through L2 before the target language. He ultimately failed. Therefore, the concept of activation and inhibition intervenes in the process in which Walter must inhibit his native language before translating it in L3.

Many references to the difficulties in translation are related to the ability to depart from the source language. “*While he laughed I realized I was thinking my message in English but saying it out loud in German, so I switched to English: ‘Sweet Jennifer, good luck for the show, from the careless man who loves you.’ After confirming that careless was not two words, as in care less, we were home and dry.*” (22). Also, through lexical-semantic problems, one notices the closeness of English words through pronunciation illustrated by “*careless*” and “*care less*”.

The analysis of the translator or interpreter’s psychology is pivotal. Walter’s personality is linked to the two professions he performs for Saul. He embodies the stereotypical myth in being an introvert translator and an extrovert



interpreter. J. A. Henderson highlights the epitome of both personalities: "Moreover, the results debunked the stereotypical myth about translators being mostly introverts and interpreters mostly extraverts, and pacified the worries about "split personalities" expressed by those who combine the two professions." (HENDERSON, 1987).

As an introvert translator, Walter is portrayed as "distinguished and clever" (116). He also displays Theodore H. Savory's "sympathy, insight, diligence and conscientiousness" (SAVORY, 1968). In conformity with Henderson's profile of the reserved, Walter states: "I have to speak English in a way that does not give it my personality," he replied. 'All translation is like that. The personality of the translator has to hide.'" As an extrovert interpreter, he is "kind and unjudging" (34) and humble, carrying Saul's bag and tying his shoelaces.

When Walter is struck by emotion, he switches to German. This is the case when he got drunk and when, in an authoritative voice, intimidated Saul to hide his Western marks. Thus, *Emotionality*, one of the six factors of HEXACO Personality Inventory<sup>2</sup>, affects the *language choice*. Saul's bilingual schematic approach is to think at first in his native language and then express it in the second one. "It was a question I had not directly asked myself. Not even in English. Now I was required to answer it in German. Was I sad to lose Jennifer? How did I know if I was sad?" (51). He is emotionally disrupted and cannot answer.

The quality of translation depends on the skill, context and perspective: "Personality traits as related to the quality of the translation product" "the agent of translation – a human being capable of linguistic, cultural and interpersonal mediation, a professional whose competences should embrace the whole complexity of tasks." (LEHKA-PAUL & WHYATT, 2016). Saul fosters that translating and interpreting require cultural cognition. Through Luna singing in German a song of The Beatles, Levy introduces rhetorical difficulties from English as second language to German as native language: "I did not tell Luna that a remembrance poppy was made from paper and that the poppies in the tray the nurse was holding symbolized the blood shed by wounded and dying soldiers on the fields of Flanders." (63). Besides sensuality conveyed by the German accent, the author shows that Luna had to be conscious of the symbol suggested by the context of war. Luna's translation is literal and shows she lacks intercultural competence to decipher cultural references.

Secondly, with its way of portraying art as literally and accurately as possible, characters venture in judging works of art. With the novel set in a context of Cold war, Deborah Levy exploits the path of post-expressionism to project Saul's subjectivity imprinted of a distorted or multiple reality and symbolism. The relationship between Jennifer Moreau and Saul is marked by artistic realism. For



her art, Saul “*was important and I was just one part of it.*” (23). She considers Saul as his “*mule*” always looking at him “*through the lens of her camera*” (98).

She represents the artistic eye that faithfully depicts the subject of art without emotions or idealization. The picture on the wall of their apartment reveals this unloving relationship. Moreau draws in red Saul's lips and wrote “*DON'T KISS ME*” banning any sensuality. This has so much marked their relation that Jennifer forbids Saul to describe her. Moreau doesn't want him to describe her through his “*old words*” since realism depicts the real, the present. During Jennifer's exhibition, she shows one of her works in which she portrays the dismemberment of Saul's body. “*A triptych on the left wall was titled A Man in Pieces. His armpits, nipples, fingers, penis, feet, lips, ears.*” (108). Levy exploits this realistic representation to illustrate Saul's *angst*, his fragmented *self*. This collage-like photograph reminds us Dadaism illustrating the blending of reality and art. It highlights Saul's alienation, his inner torment.

This part has shown, on the one hand, that literature, particularly fiction, is a predilection site for trauma through the complexity of memory disruption represented through literary techniques which take up the principles of fragmentation, duality, discourse, metafiction and cultural representations. On the other hand, it unveiled narrative substrata worth of linguistic and artistic analyses confirming multi-readability levels.

## 2. Walling Gender and the Self

Besides exposing social and political dichotomies, the Berlin Wall has often suggested in fiction gendered and psychological constructions. Thus, in addressing urban complexity, British and American fictions have raised thematic issues like the search of the mother, the *other self*, heterotopia and sexuality. This perception is reinforced by Svetlana Boym who confirms that the Wall “*both divided the two Berlins and defined their codependence, each side's psychic investment in the other that was either evil or a potentially utopian mirror image of the self*” (BOYM, 2001). Thus, this section will treat images that reproduce masculinity and duality.

### 2.1. The Wall of Masculinity

Through the theme of the wall, gender representations in *MWSE* focus on beauty, sexuality and violence. Physical appearance, which constitutes a basis for gendering, particularly affects Saul. He has an effeminate body and is endowed with beauty with high cheekbones, blue eyes and wearing a pearl necklace. His father considered him as “*the Marie Antoinette of the family*” (18). Contrarily to Saul's frailty, his father and brother are often portrayed through their imposing bodies. They are sturdily built and appreciate their kind in terms of physical



appearance as Saul confides it to Walter: "*They were big men. They would have liked you.*" (34). Consequently, his beauty represents a burden. Saul's description as having a '*sublime beauty*' (19) was an offense to his father, especially when Jennifer pronounced it. As treatment from his "*predators, the men who were mortified by my freakish beauty*" (92), Saul underwent ill-treatment. To reinforce the predatory aspect, his father used phrases like "*Beat him, beat him*" or "*Jump. Jump*" to encourage Matt to inflict him physical injuries.

With his father's patriarchal and communist ideals, Saul considered him as erecting a wall between them. Saul explains "*the wall was his masculinity*" (61). Consequently, Saul's father and brother embody masculinity, which represses Saul's femininity. Through an oxymoron, Levy portrays the father as legitimizing the bullying of the elder brother: "*He was not vigilant on my behalf, but he was aggressive in his passivity amongst the pots of geraniums and daffodils. My father stared into the distance while my brother kicked and pushed me at the same time.*" (92). Extolling socialist solidarity as a family, he acts differently by encouraging fraternal violence and giving "*his accomplice*" (19), *carte blanche* when he was in bad mood.

Saul's father considered Matthew as his "*Bolshevik hero*" (18) since he "*paid tribute*" to his father by perpetuating the family's tradition as belonging to the working class whereas Saul was seen as the "*bourgeois in the family*" (93) due to his education. Therefore, their vision about socialist rules represented a difference between them and Saul. The latter explains it through the fact that "*people had to be convinced and not coerced.*" (19). Voices are key issues in narratives and the analysis of characters. On page 38, through Walter, "*ventriloquizing the voice of the state*", Saul identifies in him his "*authoritarian*" father and, by the way, the socialist state.

With his alienation, Saul tried to develop reactions to oppressions particularly from masculinity. He decides to travel to the East of the wall. The choice of Germany in this context of Cold War is not fortuitous. It bears gender representation as it is illustrated in the following lines: "*East German fictions, is an implicit gendering of the East-West moral divide: in almost all cases the East is feminized and the West masculinized*" (MAJOR, 2010). Thus, the Berlin Wall constitutes the psychological barrier, which is perceived by the main character, Saul, as a protection against masculinity. Saul flees his "*masculinized*" family and Britain to express his feminine side in the East. There, he is allowed to live his bisexuality with Walter and Luna.

Saul decided to flee from his father. "*I jumped the wall and landed safely with a thump on the other side, having avoided his dogs, his mines, his guards, his barbed wire and everything else he put in my way to keep me under his thumb.*" (61). This psychological attempt at freeing himself from masculinity is linked to the representation of the Berlin Wall. He enumerates the disposal put in place by the authority to prevent





exodus of the population to GFR. Saul defied his father's authority by making the jump. After returning to Britain, he longed "to get to another world. To Walter. To Luna, ..." (123). Better, he "wanted to leave earth and join the astronaut on his mission to walk across the surface of the moon." (120). Saul aspires social alienation "I wanted to untie all my ties." (135).

This escape from the dominance of his father culminates in Freud's archetypal Oedipus complex. To live his bisexuality, Saul psychologically kills his father: "It's an unconscious thought crime,' I said. 'Stalin knew about those and wanted to assassinate anyone who had them, which is all of us.'" (132). This killing represents Saul's need to depart from his father's censorship. He avows that this killing intervened several times. In terms of protection against the violence exerted on Saul, the mother acts as a wall against his father and brother. The fall of the wall, corresponding to her death, "made her absence even more of a catastrophe." (18).

Levy highlights the gendering of objects like the pearl necklace that Saul wears. With cultural standards, Saul questions the feminization of the pearl necklace given by his father after his mother's death: "I had never given much thought to a pearl belonging to a gender." (47).

## 2.2. Duality or the Fragmented Self

In the analysis of trauma narrative, the study of the characters' psychological state is central. To better identify their personality, it would be enlightening to read this passage:

Survivors of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic experiences often report functioning better as a result of their compartmentalization but then suffer from feelings of fraudulence or "pretending." Not realizing that each side of the personality is equally "real" and necessary from an evolutionary stand-point, clients easily misinterpret the intense, palpable feeling memories of the "not me" child as more "real" than the experience of the "going on with normal life self," doggedly "putting one foot in front of the other," or "keeping on keeping on" even in the face of overwhelming pain. (FISHER, 2017).

The compartmentalization reflects character's mind, which is particularly marked by duality. Deborah Levy exploits the narrative events of the two car crashes to create a binary representation of Saul. Through the effect of reflection reminding the mirror effect, Saul sees in Luna's eyes his other self: "Luna's green eyes were like mirrors. I could see myself smiling in both her eyes, as if I had become a double self, which in a sense was right. I was learning to not be myself in the GDR." (50). Saul adopts a psychological emancipation from the dominant West to live his sexuality and flee imposing masculinity.

With the change of environment or displacement, duality can be analysed through Jungian archetypes. In Britain, he partially embodies the *persona*<sup>3</sup> known as wearing the social masks of a man following traditional and rigid gender roles.



Therefore, his appearance through an effeminate body and his pearl necklace does not help. Consequently, Saul's father embodies the superego and represses it with his accomplice, Matthew. Saul lives in his *shadow* and is ruled by sex and his instinct. Therefore, Jennifer's assimilation of Saul to a snake for his betrayal suggests one form of the *shadow*<sup>4</sup>. By getting over the wall, the action represents a leap of the moral barrier. His duality is portrayed through the wall dividing his personality into a self that is imposed by traditional conception of masculinity and another one marked by a freed self. Saul has the opportunity to live his *anima*<sup>5</sup> with "a feminine image in the male psyche".

Saul's acknowledgement of his fragmented *Self* is the peak of his duality portrayal: "I was a man in pieces." (107). To reinforce the idea of fragmentation, Jennifer makes a triptych titled "A Man in Pieces" illustrating his inner mind. "The image stopped at his narrow waist and the start of his pubic hair. A triptych on the left wall was titled A Man in Pieces. His armpits, nipples, fingers, penis, feet, lips, ears. Floating in space and time." (108). Jennifer portrays a dismemberment to reinforce the figurative disruption.

Depicted in a situation of trauma, the patient is impacted by multiplicity and complexity. The traumatic *Self* comes to be confronted with the fraudulence or the "false self" conveyed by "not me" or "old me". Saul refers to himself through "old me", "new me" and even the third person "He" after looking at the mirror for the first time after his second crash. Not remembering his ageing, the sudden discovery of his old age and lost beauty causes him self-alienation. Saul rejects his body when he remarked "All that beauty blown to bits" (115).

In a psychoanalysis of the characters impacted by Stasi spying, the theme of paranoia cannot be eluded. The author mentions the difficult state in which the suspicious individual is. "Yet the fact that I was searching for someone who might be there, as if their absence were more threatening than their presence, as if lack of surveillance were more peculiar than constant surveillance, reminded me of how I felt after my father died." (40). In his situation as foreigner and confronted with the spying in a GDR where walls have ears, the invisible spy or absence of visible threat in permanent Nazi surveillance is more difficult to apprehend. Saul even confesses his paranoia, which he imported to GDR. It is reflected through his "eyes and ears as advanced surveillance technologies". (40).

Like the internal voice speaking to the traumatized, the sound of a typewriter recurs in the narrative. The typewriter is Saul's psychological representation of the spying, hence of the authoritarian presence. "It infuriated me, so I added a thought crime to my thoughts for the typewriter to record. Okay, I said to the typewriter, let me help you file your report." (61). Saul developed an emancipation from the imaginary typewriter and resolved to a suicidal attitude.



### 3. Chronotope and Analogies in Traumatic Imagery

The writing of *MWSE* abounds with tropes that inspire chronotopic and analogical representations. This imagery is unavoidable in such an attempt at reproducing the loss of memory or referentiality through time and space and also the need to tackle issues of trauma in a magical realist narrative. Therefore, this part will address the disruptive depiction of time and space and the sites for metaphorical representations.

#### 3.1. A Chronotopic Trauma Narrative

The time-space chronotope is an important issue of narratology in trauma narrative. In fact, with the influence of magic realism, the traditional referentiality comes to be disrupted. This can be understood on the one hand, by the postmodern narrative, and, on the other hand, by the belated and intrusive resurgence of memory and geographical references. Therefore, revisiting the definition of the chronotope will give us enough guidelines:

[...] It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). [...] In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. [...]. The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic. (BAKHTIN, 1981)

With its highly metaphorical and fusional representations of time and space, chronotope is an aesthetic device that authors use to describe patients' psyche. Consequently, *MWSE* is itself a historical trauma with cumulative emotional events that affect Saul's life through ill-treatment in his childhood, a car accident that took away his mother, two personal crashes and imposing masculinity and Cold War.

With Saul's memory running like a multidirectional spotlight, time and space are blended, thus, reflecting his lack of reference. Saul asserts "*Time and place all mixed up. Now. Then. There. Here.*" (65). This temporal and spatial fusion can be reinforced when Saul was psychologically burying his father in GDR: "*I felt raw, as if I had just been disembowelled by a jaguar. A light breeze blew into the GDR, I knew it came from America. A wind from another time. It brought with it the salt scent of weed and oysters. And wool. A child's knitted blanket.*" (65). He exploits the limitless dimension of a blowing wind through time and space. While being in East Berlin, he assumes that the wind carried scents of a place that the reader discovers in final chapters with his child's birth.



Levy symbolically represents time through a statute of an astronaut called "*Man Overcomes Space and Time*", portrayed in the following lines: "*He was young, noble and determined. If he set his mind to it he could orbit the earth and trick gravity, yet at the same time he was frozen, fixed in the past. Time was passing very slowly. Time was crawling*". (116). Similar to speed on the moon, the author draws inspiration from the spatial gravity with adjectives like "*frozen*", "*crawling*" or "*fixed*" to depict his eagerness to see time pass.

Confirming the image of man as being chronotopic, Levy portrays the personification of history. "*I had lost my job. I was no longer officially a minor historian. Perhaps I was history itself, flailing around in a number of directions, sometimes all of them at the same time.*" (131). This representation reflects Saul's multidirectional memory as conveying past, present and future. The main character's propensity to visit the statute *Man Overcomes Space and Time* shows to a certain extent his desire to recover his blurred memory. "*Yes,' I said, linking my arm with his, 'that's what I have been struggling with while I have been in the GDR. Space and time. But no way have I conquered it. In fact, it has conquered me.*" (67). His inability to recover from his loss of reference and his alienation makes him acknowledge his defeat.

This depiction of history overlaps Saul's chronotopic sexuality: "*I have sex all the time but I don't know if it's the sex I had thirty years ago or three months ago. I think I have extended my sexual history across all the time zones, but I did have a lot of sex before the collapse of the Berlin Wall. After that it's a blur but I think I had less sex in social democracies than I did in authoritarian regimes.*" (132). Time zones stretching between Britain, Germany and The United States are a means to measure the development of his sexuality. Similarly, with the impact of the Berlin Wall and the authoritarian regime, Saul found a sexual stimulus.

In remembrance of psychological disturbances, references to absentmindedness are often drawn through elevation, flight or flotation: "*Yet here on the Euston Road, I was not in GDR time and space, I was floating somewhere above America.*" (77). Levy gives landmarks to the reader to remind him of the present or past state of the character's memory. In a discussion between Saul and his brother about the death of their father, the narrator installs silence that stretch between forty and fifty years. This passage opens a door situated over time (forty years ago) and space (their house in Britain) reviving Matt and his father's ill-treatment of Saul. This caused Saul traumatism that peaked into a patient's trancelike shaking provoked by the thought of the definitive loss of his "*human wall to protect me from them.*" (34), his mother.

Levy's spatiotemporal travel tends to reproduce H. G. WELL's famous *Time machine* (1895). The zebra crossing is a sort of passage through time. It is at the



beginning of the two parts that divide the narrative into fourteen chapters for the first part and twenty-four for the second. It brings about the crashes that are central to Saul's trauma. At the end of the novel, Saul performed his last crossing: *"I knew as I took a step across the black-and-white stripes that I was walking across deep time, trying to put myself together again."* (145). This represents his last attempt to put together his fragmented self. In addition, in the mind of the trauma patient, illusion or disappearance of objects and human beings are frequent. Thus, the wall bears the description of a traversable portal. *"Jennifer and Rainer disappeared into the wall."* (133).

Despite constant human preoccupation about the search for eternal beauty, time still has the upper hand. With Saul tumbling into reality with the discovery of his ageing, the author brings the effects through Jennifer. *All her beauty that I was not allowed to describe, blown to bits in space and time.*" (96). Her loss of beauty is highly chronotopic.

The analysis of time could not end up without any reference to its symbol: the clock. *"The loud clock ticking on the wall of the hospital on the Euston Road. The clock ticking in the dacha in the GDR. Luna standing on the chair in the dacha with her arms stretched out, trying to tell me she was hopeless. The saddest clock ticking in the clapboard house in Cape Cod. The watch on my dead father's wrist still ticking."* (129). The clocks set in different places serve as reminder and also as symbol of universality. It also conveys emotions such as sadness that memory brings back notably with the death of people Saul knew.

### 3.2. Wall, Trauma and Paranoia as Sites for Metaphors

The physical representation of the wall raises questions about its functions in a cultural, economic and political context. It is often subjected to analogies and symbols. They are related to Jennifer's questioning about the reasons for the building of the Berlin Wall. *"Jennifer did not understand how the people of a whole country could be locked up behind a wall and not be allowed to leave"* (13). Through Saul's enlightening about *"ideologically and physically"* separation of Germany *"into two countries divided by a wall, communist in the East, capitalist in the West, and how the communist authorities called the Wall the 'anti-fascist protection rampart'"*, Saul metaphorically poses the problem in terms of content and crossing.

Therefore, the author recurs to containment metaphors to portray the situation: *"Wall was put up to keep people in, not out"* (18). She denounces the fact that the defensive or protection function of the wall defended by the communist regime and symbolizing the *Iron curtain* is inverted. It rather reflects the wall of imprisonment.

The lack of answer is often conceived as a breach of communication. Thus, the wall intervenes as a means for depiction as in the following lines: *"She did not respond, her face a façade of stone. I suddenly understood that it might be dangerous for her to make contact with Westerners."* (34). This blockage suggests the fear of being considered as a traitor. To reinforce the aesthetical device of the wall, its lexical field, particularly that of Berlin, is used. *"When I asked to speak to another member of staff, she told me, in a voice that resembled two hundred kilometres of barbed wire, that I was being disrespectful."* (40). The assimilation of the voice to a barbed wire understandably imposes limits in the discussion between Saul and the librarian. Besides, with Saul's portrayal of his father as being *"the wall of masculinity"*, the elements of the wall find aesthetical value. *"I jumped the wall and landed safely with a thump on the other side, having avoided his dogs, his mines, his guards, his barbed wire and everything else he put in my way to keep me under his thumb."* (61). With the securitisation of the Berlin Wall, military metaphors allow Levy to describe the looming and dissuasive repression of his father and brother assimilated to his paternal *"tank"* (19).

Culturally, walls have often been represented through personification. In a context of spying created by an atmosphere of ideological and political distrust, suspicion generates metaphors. If walls are said to be bearing eyes and ears, Saul avows his paranoia and converts his eyes and ears into *"advanced surveillance technologies"*. He tapped walls to gauge their hollowness in search for listening devices. Another personification is the analogy of Saul's mother to a *"human wall"*. She represented a source of protection against his family's assaults.

On the same vein, the freedom of the body and feelings faces a wall of censorship. In fact, Saul's sexuality knows this barrier. His description of Jennifer's body has always been forbidden: *"I did not yet know him well enough to tell him I had become used to being censored because Jennifer had forbidden me from describing her in my own old words."* (33). On the other side, his impulses are either repressed or let free depending on the geographical situation as described on page 56. In Britain, Saul walled his sexual body language with his partner erecting a sort of blockage, whereas once in GDR, he was free with his body.

The suggestion of the mirror stage is enough to highlight the role of the mirror in trauma imagery. Deborah Levy analogically convokes the mirror symbol: *"Luna's green eyes were like mirrors."* (50). In Luna's eyes, Saul becomes conscious of his other self he intends to live in GDR.

In the representation of trauma, metaphors for healing are present. The rain acts on Saul's feelings. This is certainly due to Britain's weather of which the solacing virtue is conveyed through trauma treatment and was *"As if it were an opiate, perhaps morphine, as if it could numb some sort of undisclosed suffering."* (45). Trauma



specialists and patients recur to flotation metaphors to describe an evolution of trauma. “*I was floating somewhere above America.*” (77). In fact, imagination, evasion, morphine or depression are sources of such images. However, aggravation of the psychological state is rendered through metaphorical representations tapping into water, particularly the ocean. Thus, Saul’s emotional deception after Jennifer’s refusal of his proposal for marriage carries the image of himself as “*shipwrecked*” (16).

*MWSE* has, on the one hand, proved to be highly chronotopic with the fusion of time and space as identical to a traumatized patient’s psyche. On the other hand, there was a profusion of metaphors that help depict with a touch of reality and postmodernism the voyage in the patient’s mind that Deborah Levy offered us.

## CONCLUSION

This article aimed at reflecting the intersection between trauma, culture and multiple realities by tapping into narratological and aesthetic techniques that shape the psyche, the discourse and images in a trauma fiction. *The Man Who Saw Everything* has largely confirmed our hypotheses.

Deborah Levy has through her novel confirmed that literature is a resource for trauma specialists who could further investigate memory representation techniques to tackle psychological issues. In addition, the narrative substrata related to translation or interpretation and art criticism can hide other rereading of *MWSE*.

The writing techniques of Deborah Levy were worth being rediscovered. They can be considered as a contribution to the research on traumatic imagery thanks to the deployment of aesthetic devices on which trauma specialists could foster to highlight effects and consequences of trauma and its healing process. Additionally, the wall, on the one hand, constitutes a barrier for masculinity in a patriarchal society moulding social psychology. On the other hand, duality or fragmentation affects the mind of the traumatized character through the representation of his paranoia and escapism. Time and space which also are crucial to trauma, perfectly reflect the disrupted psyche and reinforce all the symbols and metaphors that inundate trauma.

## NOTES:

1. « Literalism » in <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/literalism>
2. It consists in measuring such personality factors as Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C) and Openness to Experience (O), each of them comprising four facets or sub-scales (e.g., Organization, Diligence, Perfectionism and Prudence are the facets of the Conscientiousness factor). in <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.degruyter.com/do>



[wnloadpdf/journals/psicl/52/2/article-p317.xml&ved=2ahUKewjD2azGyqjpAhVKzoUKHVluDBsQFjACegQIBRAB&usg=AOvVaw20ZZDuBK0IIVitP4ic\\_Ahv](#). Consulted on 25/05/20.

3. "The persona is how we present ourselves to the world. The word "persona" is derived from a Latin word that literally means "mask". It is not a literal mask, however. The persona represents all of the different social masks that we wear among various groups and situations. It acts to shield the ego from negative images. According to Jung, the persona may appear in dreams and take different forms." in "The 4 Major Jungian Archetypes" in <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-jungs-4-major-archetypes-2795439>, Consulted on 20/05/20.

4. The shadow is an archetype that consists of the sex and life instincts. The shadow exists as part of the unconscious mind and is composed of repressed ideas, weaknesses, desires, instincts, and shortcomings. Ibid., Consulted on 20/05/20.

5. The anima is a feminine image in the male psyche, and the animus is a male image in the female psyche. The anima/animus represents the "true self" rather than the image we present to others and serves as the primary source of communication with the collective unconscious. Ibid., Consulted on 20/05/20.

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