

Diaspora, Trauma, and Unconsciousness: A Deep Dive Into Souvankham Thammavongsa's *How to Pronounce Knife*

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Abstract—This research highlights the psychological experience of the characters in the collection of short stories *How to Pronounce Knife* (2020), by Souvankham Thammavongsa. Souvankham Thammavongsa is a contemporary writer from Canada. She was born in a Lao refugee camp. She won notable awards like the Giller Prize for her works which include *How to Pronounce Knife*, a collection of short stories. This book talks about several experiences of the Diaspora people. This paper examines, by using Freud's Psychoanalytical theory, the characters in the collection of short stories *How to Pronounce Knife*. It is crucial to identify and examine specific instances from the short story collection that illustrate the psychoanalytical theory, which explores the intricacies of human desires and dreams, their inherent presence in human nature. The characters in this short story collection have certain features that showcase their personalities as diasporic people. By using some of the major themes of Diaspora, this paper explores the psychological pain and suffering of the diaspora characters in this short story collection *How to Pronounce Knife*.

Index Terms—psychoanalytical, diaspora, trauma, racism, alienation

I. INTRODUCTION

Ground Insights on Psychoanalytical Thammavongsa

Thammavongsa was born in a Lao refugee camp in Thailand. She and her parents were sponsored by a family in Canada. Thammavongsa is a Laotian-Canadian poet and short story writer. She received notable awards such as Giller Prize for her short story collection *How to pronounce Knife* and O' Henry Award for her short story "Slingshot" and Trillium Book award for her poetry collection *Light*. Thammavongsa migrated from Laos due to the civil war in her country. Laos is one of the most heavily bombed countries, and it is also among the poorest and least developed nations around the world (Bite, 2024). This led to a lot of sorrow, pain and suffering for the Laotian people. This pain and suffering have had an impact on Thammavongsa's life. She expressed her psychological suffering through the characters in the short story collection *How to Pronounce Knife*. In her short story collection *How to Pronounce Knife*, Thammavongsa showcases many diasporic themes. Some of the major themes focused in this short story collection are racism, linguistic racism, alienation, trauma, nostalgia, displacement, cultural clash. This short story collection has an autobiographical element. Throughout the short story collection one can observe the major hardships of the Lao immigrants. In this short story collection, the first story was inspired by certain parts of her life and the kind of person she grew up to be. When she was a child, she was exposed to a number of embarrassments; amongst which was the fact that she used to be mocked for eating her country's traditional food, and she had difficulty pronouncing the word "Knife". This study applies Freud's psychoanalytical theory in Thammavongsa's *How to Pronounce Knife*. It highlights instances from the short story collection. It is a theory about studying the human mind, emotions, desires, and dreams.

Psychoanalytical theory was coined by Sigmund Freud, and it deals with the study of treating the mental and emotional disorders. It focuses on the functioning of the unconscious mind and it highlights psychological depth

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(Ekstrom, 2004). Also, this theory deals with analyzing the dreams, the mind of the author, and the psychological makeup of the fictional characters within the work. Freud proposed that conflicts among the three components of personality are repressed, resulting in anxiety. The major concept of psychoanalysis is the belief that all individuals possess unconscious thoughts, emotions, desires, and repressed memories (MSED, 2023). Although many studies have been conducted on this theme, none have examined the short story collection, *How to Pronounce Knife* (Thammavongsa, 2020), from a Psychoanalytical perspective. However, the current study addresses the Psychoanalytical approach and various kinds of pain and suffering experienced by the immigrants in the host land. This study serves as a strong example, such as societal issues like the true conditions many people face, how they become ensnared in an illusory earthly paradise, and how this impacts their education and jobs, ultimately causing them to lose their sense of self due to the external world's traps. This analysis is associated with Freud's hypothesis of Id, Ego and the Superego (MSED, 2023). This study reveals how the characters feel confined in the host land due to the cultural differences they encounter.

The Psychoanalytical theory asserts that behavior is predominantly shaped by an unconscious framework. It is divided into three stages: Id, Ego, and Super- ego. Id is a primitive, unconscious part of the human personality. It is illogical, irrational, and it is motivated by desire for immediate gratification. It is an emotion and it is a part of the human personality. The Super- ego features values and morals. It represents the conscious aspect of the mind, with its primary role being to uphold moral standards. Ego is the reality check. Ego acts as a reality check. It strikes the balance between both Id and super-ego. It operates according to the realistic principle. Ego is preventing the Id from gratifying its impulses in socially inappropriate ways. According to Freud (1923), Id means instincts, super- ego means morality, and ego means reality. So, this Freudian analysis is the core focus of this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous studies on the subject of psychoanalytical criticism.

The thesis "A literary theoretical exploration of silenced African women from a psychoanalytic and feminist perspective" analyzes gender relations in sub-Saharan Africa through three novels: *Nervous Conditions*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Parched Earth*, emphasizing the importance of raising public awareness on gender equality and empowering silenced African women. Using feminist and psychoanalytic frameworks, the research examines the discourses surrounding the lives of African women and employs auto ethnography to link personal experiences to broader cultural and social meanings. The results of textual analysis indicate that these works challenge male-dominated narratives, revealing women's hidden sufferings and critiquing traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity, while acknowledging regional differences. The study emphasizes women's significant contributions to African literature in articulating their experiences and deconstructing patriarchal hegemony, ultimately advocating critical engagement with gender issues to promote equal representation and treatment of women in contemporary African society (Kisweka, 2022).

According to Obidič (2017), the mythic and psychological roles of Atwood have victimized female protagonists, who actively pursue their identities and professional self-realization within the patriarchal framework of twentieth-century North America. Unlike the passive female characters of nineteenth-century colonial literature, Atwood's heroines embody agency and complexity. The analysis also notes Atwood's innovative use of folk tales, legends, and a diverse array of literary genres, ranging from detective stories to gothic romance, often blending and subverting conventions within her narratives. A key example is *The Penelopiad*, where Atwood parodies the myth of Odysseus and Penelope, transforming a classical epic into a satirical exploration of gender roles. Furthermore, the paper engages with Joseph Campbell's and Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism in its analysis of *Surfacing*, illustrating how Atwood revises the biblical hero's quest and medieval grail romances through a postmodern, ironic lens, thereby enriching contemporary feminist discourse.

This study "Autobiographies: Psychoanalysis and the graphic novel" investigates the intersection of graphic novels and life-writing through psychoanalytic frameworks, particularly Freudian and post-Freudian theories, to illuminate how the graphic medium reconstructs the unconscious's function via language. It emphasizes the visual language's representational richness, which vividly depicts unconscious processes and the psyche. By analyzing contemporary autobiographical and biographical graphic novels that address trauma and identity formation, the research highlights how these narratives utilize the medium's unique features to explore internal selves. The selected texts serve as case studies of individuals navigating significant trauma rooted in familial and social contexts, illustrating the journey of incorporating such experiences into personal identity development. This examination not only reveals the characters' childhoods as a reconstruction of family histories but also contributes to understanding identity formation in late modernity, showcasing the potential of graphic novels to render the unconscious accessible and transparent (Lykou, 2014).

According to Meena (2016), Anita Desai has had a significant influence on Indian English Literature, highlighting how her depiction of troubled psyches mirrors the modern Indian experience. By shifting the narrative emphasis from external events to the inner lives of her characters, Desai introduces depth to the genre, employing symbols with significant psychoanalytic implications. Her works reflect a nuanced interplay of thoughts and emotions, which is evident in her use of language, imagery, and symbolic representation. Drawing inspiration from literary figures like D.H.

Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and Henry James, Desai effectively utilizes techniques such as flashbacks and stream-of-consciousness, particularly in her debut novel *Cry, the Peacock*, which signifies a crucial turning point in the development of psychological fiction within Indian English Literature. The themes explored in her novels resonate universally, warranting a thorough analysis of her symbolic techniques to uncover the inner realities of her characters and contribute to the psychological discourse surrounding them in the contemporary context.

Giordano (2020) investigates how Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories are applied to the analysis of these two Victorian novels, *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. It analyzes main characters through Freud's concepts of the tripartite mind (Id, Ego, and Super-Ego), the Oedipus complex, and dream analysis, highlighting significant passages. The emphasis is on Heathcliff and Catherine, as well as Jane and Mr. Rochester, highlighting how psychoanalysis can reveal deeper, often hidden elements within literature.

According to Tanu and Anju (2014), confessional poetry is inherently tied to a poet's personality. This kind of poetry focuses on individual experiences during psychological crises, including themes of sex, family, and humiliation. It is characterized by the expression of personal pain and addresses trauma, depression, and relational dynamics through unique rhythms and styles. Psychoanalysis serves as both a tool for self-reflection and a literary lens, facilitating a deeper understanding of the poet's life and creative process. Therefore, a psychoanalytic approach is crucial for studying confessional poetry comprehensively.

Emerging research indicates the idea of a "restricted view" as a novel approach to understanding literary focalization, comparing it with omniscient viewpoints. By examining Ian McEwan's body of work, the author explores his evolving narrative techniques and their implications. While critics often celebrate McEwan's transition to broader narratives, the paper argues for a Nietzschean perspectivism in his earlier novels, suggesting a depiction of narrative as a deceptive glimpse. This approach aligns with psychoanalytic and Derridean interpretations of subjectivity, highlighting themes of self-blindness. The author also discusses McEwan's recent work, *Sweet Tooth* (2012), which reflects on the pleasures of literature intertwined with surveillance and ideological concerns. Ultimately, it presents writing as a complex endeavor influenced by politics, suggesting that all writers operate under a restricted view (Booth, 2015).

According to Kyungun and Tayol (2021), Migration has long been a reality in Africa, driven by social, economic and political ecological factors. Chika Unigwe's works, *On Black Sisters' Street* and *Better Never than Late*, explore the complex causes and effects of migration across transnational boundaries. This paper examines the hybrid spaces created by migration, highlighting both segregated and integrated social worlds and their impact on the African continent. It reveals the psychological conflicts faced by migrants, including issues of gender, exploitation, and cultural dissonance. Ultimately, the analysis suggests that migration poses challenges to African identity, calling for a focus on reforming the continent rather than seeking escape.

According to Abussamen and Neimneh (2016), Achebe's ego ideal reflects the ideals he internalized in childhood, shaped by repression and wish-fulfillment. The analysis highlights how Achebe's literary and didactic efforts to guide African art reveal his narcissistic repression rooted in a colonial context. His use of the English language and engagement with Christianity further support this notion of an ego ideal. Additionally, the article explores the theme of ambivalence in Achebe's treatment of language and religion, suggesting a link between the concept of the "intellectual ego" and the ideals that authors and scholars pursue in their work.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research work uses a theoretical, descriptive, and qualitative research methodology. The theoretical framework, which includes Freud's Psychoanalytical theory, is applied in this research. This study examines the Freudian concept of the Id, Ego and the Superego. Thammavongsa is a contemporary author, and only limited studies have been done on her works, specifically on *How to Pronounce Knife*. However, there is no such study done by analyzing the Freudian concept of the unconscious mind and the psychoanalytical method.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Psychoanalytic Takes on *How to Pronounce Knife*

The short story collection titled *How to Pronounce Knife* consists of 14 stories, and each stories shows various elements of immigrant life. These stories focus on some of the themes like, racism, linguistic racism, alienation, displacement, cultural clash etc. Most of the stories have female characters as protagonists. So, the characters themselves admit that they share the personal immigrant experience of the author. Some of the characters in the text recall their memories of their home land, and this has a toll on their psychological well-being. Numerous studies have focused on Psychoanalytical criticism. This section connects and analyzes these studies relation to Souvankham Thammavongsa's *How to Pronounce Knife* from a psychoanalytic perspective. At the end of the day, these traumatic instances are observed by various scholars because the human experience is the same, no matter the place or the time. The only difference is that scholars will observe things in a way that is different from other scholars and that makes it unique for a researcher to read these psychoanalytical approaches and then project his own analysis into the matter. Sometimes perspectives may differ, but the human experience ultimately boils into one thing which is common by all, and that is, suffers. When a collection like *How to Pronounce Knife* presents issues of trauma, it becomes easy for

readers to relate on that. A part of the reason that makes applying psychoanalytical theory best applicable in literature is because it gives readers the impression that no matter what happens to a person, he is not alone in what happened to him.

TABLE 1
FREUDIAN THEORY IN THAMMAVONGSA'S *HOW TO PRONOUNCE KNIFE*

Scholar/Study	Literary Work Analyzed	Freudian Concepts Applied	Characters Analyzed	Key Psychological Insights	Parallel in <i>How to Pronounce Knife</i>
Raman Kumar (2015)	<i>The Vendor of Sweets</i> by R.K. Narayan	Id, Ego, Superego	Mali (Id), Jagan (Superego), Cousin (Ego)	Conflict between desire, moral duty, and rational mediation	Characters show Id-driven actions (e.g., discriminatory classmate)
Sajib Miah (2020)	Shakespeare's plays	Unconscious, Repression, Neurosis	Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello	Inner conflict from repressed desires and trauma	Protagonist's mother in "Edge of the World" suffers from unconscious trauma
Shanbaz (2023)	General Study on Development	Id, Ego, Superego; Child's development	Unnamed Child Characters	Struggle between personal identity and parental control	Protagonist in "You Are So Embarrassing" hides identity due to mockery
Wahyuni et al.	<i>You and Hidden Bodies</i>	Id, Ego, Superego	Joe Goldberg	Impulsivity (Id), moral justification (Superego), social control (Ego)	Protagonist in "Picking Worms" torn between desire and cultural values

Table 1 shows how the study of Freudian Theory is applicable in the studies of Raman Kumar, Sajib Miah, Shanbaz and others, all of these researchers contributed to the analysis of the conflicted characters in Thammavongsa's *How to Pronounce Knife*.

Raman (2015) employs Freud's Psychoanalytical theory to analyze characters in R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*. Raman Kumar evaluates Id, Ego and the Superego in the characters of this novel in many aspects. The character Mali illustrates Freud's Id with his unchecked pursuit of pleasure and disregard for societal norms, while Jagan represents the superego through his rigid adherence to moral and traditional values, leading to neurotic behavior. The cousin represents Freud's ego, balancing rationality with societal expectations and acting as an intermediary between Mali and Jagan (Raman, 2015). Likewise, in the short story collection *How to Pronounce Knife* the character discriminates the refugee classmate with their Id for their immediate gratification. Another character from the "Edge of the World" the neighbor children with the Freudian concept Id, they pushed the immigrant protagonist with a racial discrimination mindset, but the protagonist she tolerated and balanced her emotions through Ego and tried to play with them. These things have been shown in this short story collection.

The study of Sajib Miah explores by applying the Freudian concepts of the unconscious mind and analyzes the characters and themes in Shakespeare's plays, including Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello. It explores how Freudian concepts of repression and neurosis reveal the psychological complexities and inner conflicts within Shakespeare's characters, demonstrating the impact of Freud's psychoanalytic concept (Miah, 2020). In the same way, in the story "Edge of the World" the protagonist mother's unconscious mind was deeply affected and traumatized due to her past memories. She faces psychological complexities throughout her life and always remains unconscious due to the nightmares which she has regularly had. The study of Shanbaz (2023) focuses on the psychological tensions and child's development of person's individuality and how they face difficulties with the balance between their id and ego. How their growth affected by their patriarchal father will be showcased in this study. Similarly, in this short story collection titled "You are so embarrassing" the protagonist hates her native culture due to mockery of her friends. She hides her real name lives with her fake identity to overcome this pain through her Id she satisfies herself by scolding her mother to hide her identity. She feels difficult to balance between her homeland culture and host land culture. In summary, Joe Goldberg, the protagonist of Caroline Kepnes' *Hidden Bodies* and *You*, is analyzed through Freud's framework of id, ego, and superego. The protagonist Joe's id is described by his impulsive behavior, his ego by his efforts to present himself favorably to a woman he likes, and his superego by his belief in his own moral integrity, as he considers his actions to righteous (Giordano, 2020). The protagonist's actions and behaviors reflect the basic human instincts and urge to seek pleasure and avoid pain as a means of self-protection. The psychological condition of Id, Ego, and Superego is clearly illustrated through the character's actions and thoughts (Kyungun & Tayol, 2021). In the same way, the short story titled "Picking worms" represents that the unnamed protagonist was drawn to experience for white man James, driven by her desire for pleasure, which represents the Id, but however she tried to control her Id. Also, protagonist mother warned and advised her not to love the white boy James. This inner conflict illustrates how her superego imposes moral constraints on her. The discussion part highlights how the psychic level varies from person to person. The study compares the similitude and dissimilitude among the characters, demonstrating the importance of the superego in human life. It shows that many characters struggle because they prioritize the Id principle over moral considerations. Since the ego represents the conscious mind, adhering to a moralistic approach helps individuals navigate the external world more effectively, thereby reducing pain and suffering in their lives. The characters in this short story collection suffered a lot due to their immigration to a new country. The Freudian concepts of Id, Ego, and Superego are observed through the lens of the characters in this short story collection in the next section.

B. Id, Ego, Superego: Cultural Dislocation in Immigrant Lives

Freud (2024), the Unconscious mind is the reservoir of feelings, thoughts, and urges from memories that are outside of conscious awareness but that have influenced every aspect of our day-to-day life.

Every short story in this collection focuses on different problems of immigrant life. In the first short story "How to pronounce Knife", the protagonist experiences the racial discrimination when she brings her native food, Cabbage, and chitterlings to school, her classmates would tease her about the smell of the food. Thammavongsa says, "When she took these dishes to school, other children would tease her about the smell" (Thammavongsa, 2020, p. 4). In that situation the protagonist, Joy she feels isolated from her classmates because of racial discrimination happened towards her. In another story titled "Edge of the world", here also the protagonist experiences the racial discrimination when she tries to play with host land children they push her and tell her she was "it" (Thammavongsa, 2020, p. 98). The conversation between protagonist, her mother, and other kids goes as follows:

I wanted to play with them, but they kept pushing me on my arm telling me it was "me". I didn't know what "I" meant, but every time I tried to get close to one of them, they ran away as if they didn't want to play with me at all. (Thammavongsa, 2020, p. 98)

The above quote shows how she feels isolated from them the rest. In the Story, "Randy Travis," the protagonist experiences racial discrimination. When protagonist went outside from home on the outside wall of the home, he noticed that they had written, "You're ugly. Go back home, Loser" (Thammavongsa, 2020, p. 48). She feels estranged and different from others. The short story collection features Linguistic racism. The characters in this short story collection were discriminated in their job and feel alienated due to the dominance of an alien language and this discrimination can be overt through ridicule or subtle through assertions of incomprehensibility due to accents. In a few stories, characters share their experiences, such as in the short story titled "Edge of the World," where the unnamed protagonist's father talks about how he suffers a lot due to the dominance of host land language. In that story, the protagonist's mother tries to speak in English by learning through Soap operas and she tries to speak English with her husband but as a Lao immigrant, he can only understand Lao and couldn't understand the host land's language English. He suffered a lot in his office due to this land language. His wife continuously used English words at a certain time it burst out of his mind, and he started yelling at his wife. He said how much he suffered in his office. He could not understand their English accent because of their fast talking and they would always scold him in English, which made him look different from them.

In the story "Picking Worms," the unnamed narrator's mother is profoundly frustrated and feels that she is being ill-treated due to the presence of a white boy named James, the rich guy who is promoted to manager because of his good accent in English. The protagonist's mother is a lengthy employee and a hard worker of the Hog farm and she is an expert at picking worms in the hog farm. She is the person who trained James to picking worms from the hog farm. Despite all these things, because of his race and good English pronunciation he got promoted to a managerial position. After James came into a managerial position, he made a lot of changes in the method of picking worms. Due to the new method, it physically harmed lot to the protagonist's mother. She got injured by the splinters in sawdust and got infected by the fertilizers in the soil. Once, she was an expert in picking worms, but now she called as a lazy and unskilled laborer. This unjust circumstance makes the narrator's mother feel betrayed and extremely hurt, and she expresses her rage at someone less worthy taking the job that was rightfully hers. She challenges the justice of the situation, pointing out that James probably has everything supplied for him by his wealthy parents and doesn't really need the money. The mother of the narrator highlights the systematic effects of losing her work, which she relied on to maintain her family. "When the ego endures the pressure of the super-ego or possibly yields to them, it faces a fate similar to protista, which are destroyed by the substances of decay they have generated" (Freud, 1923, p. 41).

In diaspora concept, one of the major themes includes Cultural conflict, which is mostly targeted between the first and second generations of Diaspora people. In this work, second-generation people unknowingly lose their home land culture through their unconscious minds. They transform their cultural behavior into alien land culture, which makes it difficult for parents to keep their own cultural identity when raising their children in a vastly different culture. That becomes a cultural conflict in between the two generations of people. In the story titled "You are so Embarrassing" the protagonist's daughter changed her real Lao name 'Chantakad' into American name 'Celine' whenever her mother tries to call her by her real name, she starts shouting on her mother to stops calling her Lao name. Protagonist's daughter hated her real name.

Thammavongsa says, "I'm searching for Chantakad", the student asked, "Oh, you mean Celine?" And please, stop calling me that name?" her daughter said, now I'm known as Celine by everyone" (Thammavongsa, 2020, pp. 123-124).

Due to the influence of host land culture, she unconsciously hides her real name and starts living with her fake identity with the alien land culture name. Freud states that "dominant force in the Superego currently resembles a pure expression of the death instinct, frequently manage to compel the ego towards destruction" (Freud, 1923, p. 24).

The immigrants mostly suffered from Nostalgia due to the struggles in the new country. They feel low, and they try to recall their memories of how they happily lived in their home land. In the story "How to Pronounce Knife", during dinner, Joy's father shares his nostalgic memories. He shares his economic suffering in new country because of the low pay in his work place. With that, he recalls the days when he and his friends happily lived in their homeland, Laos. In Laos, they had great jobs with a good salary, but now in this new country, they are suffering a lot and working in worst jobs, like picking worms to survey their life in this new country. In "Edge of the World" the protagonist's parents and

the Lao refugees, all together occasionally had a get-together at any of the Lao Refugees. There, they were all reminiscing about the old memories of Lao days. They all share the same tragic experience which they had during the immigration and also they share about how they are struggling to adapt to this new country's culture. The protagonist's parents always keep asking about the current condition of their homeland and checks regularly either in the newspaper or news channels, whether any information is available about their homeland. They also keep asking others if there are any possibilities to live there or not. They are longing for their homeland, and they are not ready to accept their host land as their homeland. They are always in a dilemma and thinking about the memories of their homeland.

In "Picking worms" the protagonist, her mother and fifteen Lao people all sit together and recalling their memories about their homeland country, Lao. They all sit together during night. In "Randy Travis" the protagonist and his family came to the new country through the refugee settlement. The protagonist's mother remains miserable due to the impact of the tragic immigrant experience. To cope with her pain and suffering, she starts to occupy her mind with something. At first, she got addicted to the songs of the famous singer Randy Travis and later to slot machines. She always feels lonely, and sometimes she won't come home. Most of the nights she sleeps in car itself and later, due to the impact of traumatic experience, she got lost and never returned back to her home which was in the new country. In "Mani Pedi" Raymond's sister shares her pain and suffering of immigrant experience by yelling at her brother. She cannot fathom the fact that they were displaced from Laos to Canada. While immigrating, she brought her brother to Canada along with their parent's corpse, and she says that they left Laos because of civil war and heavy explosion happened in their country. Due to that, they were forced to move from their country. She brought her brother and her parent's corpse through the bamboo raft.

In the "Edge of the World," the main character's mother was deeply traumatized due to the disturbing incident of her immigrant experience that worsens her life. She mostly remains unconscious; it psychologically affected her mind. In one instance, the protagonist's mother during her sleep she severely got disturbed by the dreams of her immigrant experience. The protagonist describes it and says,

I watched her and when she was shaking I pulled a blanket over her to cover her, trying not to wake her up. Sometimes he had nightmares. I could tell by his breathing: short and breathless. Then I stroked her hair and told her that everything would be fine, even though I didn't know if it was true or what those words meant. I just knew that saying them was good for her. (Thammavongsa, 2020, p. 100)

During her sleep, she starts shivering because of her nightmares, and the protagonist noticed that her mother had short panic on her breathe. Due to the nightmares, she always sleeps in protagonist's room. The protagonist's mother directly saw the unease in her eyes, and she saw the deaths close to her arms, and she directly saw the explosions which happened in the Laos. With these incidents, her mind was psychologically affected and disturbed her sleep on many days because of these nightmares that make her mind remain unconscious and affected her psychologically. Some days the protagonist's mother sits alone in the park and cries thinking about their tragic incidents of immigration and her mind remains unconscious. Due to her pain and suffering, without telling her family she left her home and went somewhere in this new country. Freud proposes that, "just as tensions stemming from physical needs can remain unconscious, so can pain- a phenomenon that lies between external and internal perception, behaving like an internal perception even when origination externally" (Freud, 1923, p. 70). The Characters in this short story collection endure a lot of pain and suffering while trying to adapt to the new culture in Canada. The characters feel a sense displacement and alienation due to their hybridity. Consequently, many characters in this short story collection struggle with their sense of dislocation. They constantly experience a cultural clash which affects their both mental and physical health. Also, the characters profoundly affected by trauma. This study highlights how the characters divided and impacted by Cultural Clashes, as well as psychological struggles involving their Id, Ego and Superego reflecting the issues faced by immigrant in the host land.

V. CONCLUSION

This study reveals the psychoanalytical perspective of the characters in the short story collection *How to Pronounce Knife*. This particular collection of stories has been taken into consideration and been subjected to analysis in terms of the theories, methodologies, ideologies and approaches of the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Throughout the short story collection Souvankham Thammavongsa's fictional characters traumatic experience, pain and suffering happened during the process of acculturation incorporated through Freudian theory, clearly demonstrated in this study. Everything that the characters in these stories do, think and involve themselves in contributes to the significance of that theory by Freud. Also, this short story collection sheds light on Linguistic Racism, Racism, Nostalgia, Alienation, and Cultural Conflict. The characters longing for their home land country Laos clearly showed in this short story collection. The characters, due to the traumatic experience of their immigration knowingly or unknowingly they suffered by the unconscious state of mind. When the characters see newly Immigrated Lao people they feel happy and start asking about the current condition of their homeland, Laos, and shares their nostalgic memories that how they happily live in their homeland. Souvankham Thammavongsa, through her conscious and wonderful writing unpacked the aches and aspirations of immigrant and refugee life in tight. Thammavongsa's psychological state of mind clearly showed in her writing. This study has focused only on certain concepts. Through this study, it gives scope to do more research with other

psychoanalyst. Though she is a contemporary author, the Researchers have more opportunity to do research on Souvankham Thammavongsa's work.

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