



VICTIMS OF MIND CONTROL IN DENNIS LEHANE'S *SHUTTER ISLAND* **B. Antony Steniba**

PG and Research Department of English, St. Mary's College (Autonomous),
Thoothukudi

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

The research in hand sets out to analyse, illustrate and exemplify the mental distortions, trauma, and the traumatic events through which not only the plot of *Shutter Island* was constituted, but also the identity of characters, as they will be duly psychoanalyzed through the course of this paper, was stoutly solidified through their impact. Throughout the novel, Lehane explores the devastating effects of trauma on the human psyche. He portrays how past traumas can haunt an individual, affecting their perception of reality, their relationships, and their ability to cope with everyday life. Teddy's journey on *Shutter Island* serves as a metaphor for the journey through trauma – a maze of confusion, fear, and painful memories that one must navigate in order to find healing and understanding. Lehane's masterful storytelling and intricate character development make *Shutter Island* a compelling exploration of trauma. Through Teddy's experiences, the novel sheds light on the complexities of trauma, showing how it can shape a person's life and alter their perception of the world around them.

Keywords: trauma, human psyche, distortions, psychoanalysis.

American literature is the body of written works published by the writers of United States. Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. American literature begins with the colonization of England in America. The first English colonies in America were Virginia and New England. The literary wealth of the American country was bought by these colonists with them. Most of these Americans were the English migrants who began writing in the sixteenth century.

The flowering of American literature occurred during the mid-nineteenth century. The period 1850-55 marked the American Renaissance. American literature flourished in

the New England region. The late nineteenth century was considered as the transition period to Modern age. During this late nineteenth century that is 1860s, people had a harsh experience with the Civil War. This war influenced the works written by the authors of the nineteenth century. Political corruption, violent conflicts and loss of religious certitude gave path to tragic novels of the twentieth century.

The 1950s and 60s brought significant cultural shifts within the United States driven by the civil rights movements. Prior to the last decades of the twentieth century, American literature was largely the story of dead white men who had created art and of living white men doing the same by the turn of the 21st century. American literature had become a much more complex and inclusive story grounded on a wide-ranging body of past writings produced in the United States of different background and open to more Americans in the present day. Some of the prominent writers were Vladimir Nabokov, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Lorraine Hansberry, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, Sylvia Plath and Cynthia Buchanan.

Dennis Lehane was best known for his mystery and crime fiction. Dennis Lehane was born on August 4, 1965, in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Since his first novel, *A Drink Before the War*, won the Shamus Award, he has published thirteen more novels that have been translated into more than 30 languages and become international bestsellers: *Darkness*, *Take My Hand*; *Sacred*; *Gone, Baby, Gone*; *Prayers for Rain*; *Mystic River*; *Shutter Island*; *The Given Day*; *Moonlight Mile*; *Live by Night*; *World Gone By*; *Since We Fell*, and *Small Mercies*.

The novel chosen for present study is Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island*, published by Harper Collins in April 15, 2003. Lehane has said he sought to write a novel that would be an homage to Gothic settings, B movies, and pulp. Lehane was inspired by the hospital and grounds on Long Island in Boston Harbor for the model of the hospital and island. The novel *Shutter Island* was adapted into a film by Martin Scorsese in 2010. Lehane is one of the greatest contemporary American writers; nothing compares to his character intricacy and depth.

Dennis Lehane's writing style is never over-embellished. Lehane describes his setting just enough to paint a picture of area suitable for his characters. The sparse,

simple style fits well with the realistic tone and the bleakness of the characters' situations. Typical to Lehane's writing style, the characters are not weighed down by lengthy description of their appearances or clothing. There is no flowery prose about their looks or attire; instead, Lehane allows their tense and genuine dialogue and their actions to shape their characters. Lehane uses subtle moments and realistic dialogue to show the characters' goals and desires.

Shutter Island is an immersive psychological novel that delves into the depths of the human mind. Through its gripping storyline and skilful narrative, it challenges the reader's perception of reality, blurring the lines between truth and illusion. *Shutter Island* is an accurate depiction of the changing methodology in clinical psychology and worthy of praise in that area. But to those unfamiliar with the history and progression of psychological treatment, the way the novel portrays psychology in the 1950s concerns about how one understood the abnormality of mental illness, they no longer reflect the treatment realities of the modern field of psychology, which strives to rehabilitate individuals without violating their rights as human beings.

Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island* is a haunting exploration of trauma, set against the backdrop of a sinister mental institution. Through the experiences of U.S. Marshal Teddy Daniels, the novel delves into the depths of psychological distress, unravelling the intricate layers of trauma that define his existence. As Teddy navigates the enigmatic corridors of Shutter Island, he is forced to confront the demons of his past, ultimately leading to a profound reckoning with his own fractured psyche.

Lehane masterfully portrays the fragmentation of the self in the aftermath of trauma, exploring how it shatters the very foundations of identity. As Teddy delves deeper into the mysteries of Shutter Island, he is confronted with a series of harrowing revelations that challenge his perception of reality. The novel blurs the lines between truth and illusion, leaving Teddy questioning his own sanity and struggling to discern the remnants of his true self amidst the chaos.

In *Shutter Island*, Andrew's wife, Dolores experience multiple traumas. In state Andrew is filled with nothing but regret, guilt and remorse for having lost Dolores for all he knew due to his psychosis, and Andrew Laeddis had committed that unforgivable

crime and was awaiting retribution. If not for the delusions, Teddy would remain only a bare and monotonous line of two deductive with resolute efforts in untangling the elusive escape of Rachel Solando, a notorious multiple murderess who drowned her three children in cold blood from a locked high security room in the Ashcliffe hospital. As a fact, the entire narrative is an instrumental means of approaching the psyche of Andrew as to share with him the grave severity of his illness, the regressions he had prior to then, the violence he was using to hurt other patients and guards. The delusion he had solemnly webbed around his unredeemable soul as a culminating goal to unveil and expose the private portions of his dying soul to him.

Andrew's first internal conflicts appear when he talks with Chuck in the ferry. Chuck asks about his wife, Dolores, and it made him remember her suddenly. Andrew sees his wife in the mind, picturises her in the brain and sees her face again. Actually, he prefers not to discuss about his wife at all because his mental vision of his wife leaves him with nothing but only pain.

Teddy saw her again, her back to him as she walked down the apartment hallway, wearing one of his old uniform shirts, humming as she turned into the kitchen, and a familiar weariness invaded his bones. He would prefer just to do about anything swim in that water even- rather than speak of Dolores, of the facts of her being on this earth for thirty-one years and then seizing to be. Just like that. (35)

Andrew is described as person suffering with trauma. It is shown in his specific descriptions. One of them is frequent nightmares. His nightmare about his hometown, the man who killed Dolores named Andrew Laeddis, his partner Chuck Aule, Dr. Cawley, the missing patient named Rachel Solando and her three children all became the worst nightmares. In this dream he is shown how sadistic Rachel Solando who killed her three own children, two boys and one little girl.

They were the worst dreams he'd ever had. They began with Teddy walking through the streets of Hull, streets he had walked countless times from childhood to manhood. He passed his old schoolhouse. He passed the small variety store where he'd bought

gum and cream sodas. He passed the Dickerson, the Boyds, the Vernons, the Constantines. But no one was home. No one was anywhere. It was empty, the entire town.

And deep quiet. He couldn't. . . her mouth still smeared with peanut butter and jelly. (209- 16)

The intrinsic elements described the specific descriptions and conflicts experienced by the main character, and settings which pictured in the novel *Shutter Island*. Moreover, the extrinsic elements describe the cause and effect of trauma which the main character undergo. The effect of Andrew's trauma is his action of making a fictitious, dense narrative. This was becoming his denial response of the truth. All the staff of the Ashcliffe are given a role play to help him stage the story. First, he is staged as a U.S. Marshal named 'Teddy Daniels' alongside with his partner named 'Chuck Aule' who takes a case about the missing patient named 'Rachel Solando' in Shutter Island. In fact, 'Chuck Aule' is his primary psychiatrist in Ashcliffe named Dr. Lester Sheehan.

'Who are you?' he said.

Chuck stretched a hand across the table. 'Dr. Lester Sheehan,' he said. Teddy left the hand hanging in the air and Sheehan eventually withdrew it.

'So,' Teddy said and sucked wet air through his nostrils, 'you let me go on about how we needed to find Sheehan when you...you were Sheehan.'

Sheehan nodded . . .

'I had to keep an eye on you, make sure you were safe.'

'Safe,' Teddy said. 'So that made everything okay. Moral.'

Sheehan dropped his tie. 'We've known each other for two years, Andrew.' 'That's not my name.'

'Two years. I've been your primary psychiatrist. Two years. Look at me. Don't you even recognise me?' (382- 83)

At the end of the story, the above-mentioned incidents, to a certain degree, manage to take place all throughout the plot. In short, the plot is a mysterious juxtaposition of Andrew's mentality and the role play of the psychiatrists. In other terms, what should not happen, happens to give rise to a baffling plot, the fiction and reality of which can barely be told from each other, thereby finding a symbiosis of an equal weight. The equilibrium of the plot shatters easily either side or discord with the other. However, the entire novel, irrespective of its reliable or otherwise unreliable nature employs Andrew's traumas as the hinge upon which it revolves. Traumas of Andrew's albeit offer reliable nature, ironically, gives rise to a mentality which suggests otherwise, the urge to dissect them.

Another theme that is revisited many times throughout the novel is conspiracy theories. George Noyes, a prisoner, talks about illicit experiments and abusive treatment of patients at Shutter Island, when Teddy came into the institution. It is apparent that it would be very easy for the authorities to cover up any illicit activity by claiming that the accuser was delusional or paranoid. The novel takes place in a time of acute paranoia: worry about a Japanese "Fifth Column" within the United States, about Communist infiltrators, Nazi scientists working under assumed identities in the United States, and CIA experimentation. By filling his novel with conspiracy theories that did, in fact, turn out to be true, Lehane intensifies the suspicious atmosphere on Shutter Island.

I assume everyone knows why we're all here." Teddy said, "You had an escape last night. Far as we can tell, the patient vanished. We have no evidence that would allow us to believe the patient left this institution without help. Deputy Warden McPherson, would you agree? (77)

The novel's exploration of loss of identity serves to highlight the fragile nature of the human psyche and the ways in which trauma can distort one's sense of self.

Throughout the story, Teddy grapples with his own identity and past traumas, including the death of his wife in a fire set by Andrew Laeddis, a patient at Ashecliffe Hospital

who Teddy believes to be responsible for his wife's death. As Teddy delves deeper into the mystery of the missing patient, he begins to question his own sanity and memories. He experiences hallucinations and flashbacks, which blur the lines between reality and delusion. These hallucinations often manifest as visions of his deceased wife, further complicating his sense of self.

Teddy looked at Cawley, this too-thin man with great pools of shadow under his eyes. This man who'd come to save him. This man who might be the only true friend he'd ever had.

He saw the sound of his gun in her eyes and he felt his sons' wet wrists as he'd placed them on their chests and he saw his daughter's hair as he stroked it off her face with his index finger.

'I won't regress,' he said. 'My name is Andrew Laeddis. I murdered my wife, Dolores, in the spring of 'fifty-two . . . ' (409- 10)

Ultimately, the novel's climax reveals a shocking twist; Teddy Daniels is actually Andrew Laeddis himself, a patient at Ashecliffe Hospital who created the persona of Teddy Daniels as a coping mechanism to escape the reality of his crimes and traumas. The loss of identity is starkly evident in this revelation, as Teddy/Andrew has constructed an entirely false identity to shield himself from the truth of his actions.

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