

(Re)collecting Trauma, (Re)constructing Speech: Questioning Economy, Gender, and Silence in Select Mother-Daughter Narratives of Elizabeth Strout

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Motherhood is perhaps one of the most complex roles that a woman is expected to fulfil. As the child grows inside her, it also grows out of her and against her. In providing for the child, the mother rejects her own autonomous identity. At the same time, the experience of mothering legitimises her authorial position within the social construct. A mother's body, henceforth, is constantly faced with the task of reconciling oppositional tendencies embedded in social and cultural narratives of self and history. In Strout's *Amy and Isabelle* (1998) and *My Name is Lucy Barton* (2016), the mother-daughter duos are constantly catapulted against the rampant economic advancements of a capitalist America. In the works of Strout, mothers choose to remain 'silent' about their past traumas of being assaulted or having been reduced to anonymity within larger historical and economic currents of migration and diaspora. Silence in these novels becomes a 'site' for creating a plethora of unsaid meanings, symbolising both disempowerment and reward. Henceforth, the purpose of this study is to deal with the 'dual aspects of silence and speech' by contextualising them against the immediate historical and socio-economic conditions that the mother-daughter relationship is subjected to. By doing this, this study will inspect how these acts of shaping narratives out of silence and memory are to be seen as acts of rebellion against 'collective' / 'meta' / 'grand' notions of history to further the construction of personal / 'local' understanding of how an individual's lived experiences shape their historical consciousness.

Keywords- Motherhood, Silence, Memory, American Capitalism, Elizabeth Strout