

Theorizing the Self through Dimensions of Alterity in Amruta Patil's *Kari*

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Abstract

Alterity is a phenomenon that is most often used in association with post-colonial studies. It synonymies itself with the 'other' in the self/other binary. While maintaining this stance associated with the said domain, this paper will focus on variegated meanings, angles and approaches this word can take resulting in newer perspectives and findings within academic discourses. Through this paper, the researcher wishes to study Alterity as a phenomenon vis-a-vis *Kari* (2008), the eponymous graphic novel written and illustrated by Amruta Patil. The paper, first and foremost, will study the subjectivity of the self in association with the otherness of the other. It will map the existence of *Kari* and navigate whether *Kari's* 'self' sustains selfhood through her own autonomy or is dependent on the rest of the characters for defining it. The study will then venture into studying Alterity through narrativization that the multi-modal framework of graphic novels has to offer. Methods such as rupture, disruption and breakage will be used to show how discontinuity in narration is a perfect tool to visualize an identity that itself is not a unified whole. Concepts such as the Fantastic and Phantasmagoria will be discussed in detail to showcase the identity formation of an individual that has become emblematic, through various experiences in life, of Alterity. The most important aspect of Alterity will be discussed through experiences of *Kari's* queerness, especially by reading queerness as a temporal category. Overall, the study will provide a fertile ground for navigating the existence of queer youth, such as *Kari*, living in the urban-scapes of 21st century India.

Keywords: Alterity; Graphic Novel; Phantasmagoria; Rupture.

Literature, amongst many other things, has been a platform that allows writers, thinkers and artists to narrate the marginalized, rejected, dejected and the iconoclasts. In any civilized society, civility is maintained through

a proper adherence to a given set of norms that are advocated for a better functioning of the very society. Some individuals or groups reject these norms for the sake of their personal agendas, and some, negate them by questioning the authenticity of these rules, and by extension, the people who made them. However, there exists a third category – the kind that wishes to, but is unable to perform these norms because they do not fit into the mold that is set for them. *Kari*, the eponymous character of Amruta Patil's graphic novel falls into this third category of people. Every choice that is made by her and for her caters to an alternate approach of existing, so much so that her state of existence morphs into a condition of Alterity.

Generally, Alterity exists in comparison to something. Something has to be the established norm, and the detoured comes to be known as the alternate, so that the alternate and norm, the self and the other can co-exist, even though constantly in rift with each other, but exist nevertheless. Given the vast scope of Alterity, as a phenomenon within the scholastic domain, it can, for more nuanced understanding, be explained in association with other phenomena such as identity, desire, being and (be)longing of an individual.

Judith butler in *Undoing Gender* corroborates the idea of (sexual) desire and identity as characteristic features of Alterity. Butler claims that gender and sexuality, both one's own and another's are not to be understood through the agency of the self, but of another. The authority or authorship of the self of the self's desire does remain their own, but becomes phenomenon for the other to characterize, shape and re-shape. For Butler, gender and sexuality are:

modes of being dispossessed, ways of being for another, or indeed, by virtue of another (19).

Such representations of Alterity can be explored in *Kari* through various thematic concerns, narrative techniques and aesthetic and stylistic choices

The opening page of the graphic novel features full-length portraits of two lovers namely, Ruth and *Kari*. From Ruth's hands, hangs loose, a pair of scissors, and a cord, bleeding and staining her own clothes. Both the figures seem to be attached through multiple cords that are emerging out of their visible hearts. The two lovers sit silently, after having conducted a medical procedure on each other. Slipshod, as the procedure is called serves as a medical metaphor for breakage and separa-

tion, the two themes that will haunt the readers for the rest of the text. Below the portrait are words emphatically expressed:

There are two of us, not one. Despite a slipshod ...we are joined still. (Patil 01)

The portrait also serves as a direct reference to the infamous self-portrait of Frida Kahlo called "*The Two Fridas*". The two figures of the Mexican painter portray her public self and the private self, marking her life-long allegiance with herself after the revelation of multiple affairs of her partner and fellow revolutionary, Diego (Mukherjee 157).

Much like Kahlo's painting, right at the beginning of the novel, *Kari*, a sense of doubling and dichotomous binary of self and the other is established; but who is the self and who is the other is not defined by the narrator. The only message we receive is that "*the two are joined still*" even after the split in the linkage (Patil 01). Metaphors related to split, disruption, breakage, incision, puncture and rupture will be found in many instances throughout the novel. As we move forward in the novel, we go back in time to understand the reason for this slip-shod. Both *Kari* and Ruth attempt a "*Double Suicide*" which they ultimately fail. They both take a lunge from the terrace of their respective buildings. While Ruth is saved by the safety net of her building, *Kari* finds herself floating in sewage. This incident makes Ruth flee to another city while *Kari* is left behind to survive in the "*Smog City*" of Mumbai.

All the incidents that follow afterwards trace *Kari's* endeavors to survive in a place that is not at all attuned to her disposition. She is a queer woman who has to deal with norms of a heteronormative society that constantly questions and undermines her choices. She has to defend her sexuality, while other people either mock it or use it for their own benefit. Moreover, her present remains in constant conflict with the past where memories of her past lover, Ruth haunts (her) in the present. She morphs memories of Ruth and the longing for her past into creatives for the advertisement (hereafter, ad) agency she works in. By a thorough dissection and comprehension of these incidents, we realize *Kari* is an-other in her own story. Her present, identity, desire, even though hers are not governed by her; they are governed or informed by her past, the city, her work, memories and the constant longing. To make sense of her selfhood, we have to study the Alterity of her-self. Therefore, *Kari's* Alterity cannot be studied exclusively through theories of Alterity or self and the other, but can be approached through a confluence of many other critical approaches.

Queerness as Alterity

Patil showcases *Kari's* queerness as an evolving phenomenon, without any bouts of confusion or re-consideration of the established queerness. A general trope that is found in queer narratives, especially narratives pertaining to same-sex attraction between females, is that the romantic/sexual pair-bonding between women is often a by-product of their failed marriage, or discontentment that seeps into the lives of women as a result of living with the male partner. The two prominent queer figures that Patil draws inspiration from are the portraits and stories of Frida Kahlo, and the scandalous and much-ahead-of-its-time Bollywood film *Fire* (1996), directed by Deepa Mehta.

Frida Kahlo, the Mexican revolutionary and feminist icon is known to have romantic and sexual relationships with women. But her involvement in such arrangements was not devoid of political and personal agendas. Amongst many a love affair, Kahlo was known for indulging in sexual arrangements with women, especially the ones who were involved with her partner, Diego's infidelity. In Kahlo's case, her bisexuality was a personal choice, a political statement and an act of notorious retribution – as a way to even out her husband's infidelity and disloyalty towards her (Saxena). On the other hand, in Mehta's film, *Fire*, Radha and Sita find solace in each other because their respective husbands shun them of sexual intimacy. Theirs is relationship of convenience, solidarity and Alterity that is marked by longing and desire that their male partners cannot fulfill. Nowhere throughout the novel we see *Kari* doubting her queerness or same-sex attraction. In fact, she gets more and more sure of her queerness and sexual orientation as the plot unfolds.

Elizabeth Freeman in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* studies different kinds of temporalities and bodily rhythms of human beings. Freeman attests that [through institutions]:

...naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation (03).

The theorist is a firm believer of the fact that the way we experience time, and within in it social, cultural, and personal details, is not objectively perceived, but an individual is made to perceive life through the vantage point of industries in a way that is advantageous to their (economic) growth. Freeman calls this phenomenon as Chrononormativity.

"Chrononormativity is a mode of implantation, a technique by which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts. Schedules, calendars, time zones, and even wristwatches inculcate...forms of temporal experience that seem natural to those whom they privilege." (Freeman 03)

The following examples will showcase how *Kari*, her queerness and its temporalities reject the phenomenon of experiencing time that can only be used by capitalist industries, instead her queerness is shown to aid in personal growth and various epiphanies and realizations. *Kari's* queerness is better understood through its temporalities, in association with her sexuality and being.

We trace *Kari's* first realization of her romantic and sexual attraction in the chapter "*Love Song*" (Patil 80). The page outlines three panels that seem to be a visualization of her childhood memories. Out of the three, the panel on the left features two people staring at the silhouette projected on the television screen. This silhouette that can be seen on the television screen is leaning against the wall. The second image, in the same panel, is of an unknown figure, presumably the either parent of *Kari*. Finally, as we glance through the panel, in the left corner is the figure of *Kari* who is looking at the television screen. The silhouette revealed in the second panel happens to be of "*KD Lang*", a Canadian singer performing at the Grammy Awards 1997. Smitten by the "*genderless*" and "*handsome*" creature shown on the television, *Kari* realized that her "*heart would be in serious peril*" if she shared the room which such a human being (80). It is this moment when *Kari* was made aware of her own queerness and sexual awakening.

However, in the same breath *Kari* claims that Ruth put "*her heart in serious peril too*". (80) We, the readers, in half-a-page are made aware of *Kari's* queerness in and through two different time-zones - one in the past and one in the present, but both of the same recognition - the effect of people on *Kari's* heart. *Kari's* queerness is not merely shown to us through a spectrum of time, in addition, the temporality of her queerness is established. Even though years have passed, both *KD lang* and Ruth put *Kari's* heart at peril, at one point in time because of sudden and utter discovery of being queer, and in another point in time because of the hurt, abandonment and slip-shod of the supposed life-partner who, though absent, has left, in wake, the "*gore*" *Kari* still nurses.

Freeman further attests that "*Mourning and romance, empathy and affection were not [read, cannot] [be] segmented into clock-time*" (04). *Kari's* sexual and romantic awakening watching *KD Lang*, and experiencing perpetual

mourning after Ruth left her, allowed her to not be confirmed in the shared bodily rhythms that the industrialization of the urbanity has to offer. All the three experiences of discovering, abandoning and nursing directs us towards realizing that one of the major dimensions of *Kari's* identity is being queer, but at the same time, her queerness is also a moment in time, and narratives like these, especially the one that Patil weaves, takes cognizance of young, Indian queer bodies and their experiences, for the sake of representation. Moreover, Patil not only substantiates their being but also provides a new perspective by situating the discourse within newer dimensions of queer temporalities, an alternate form of temporality.

Alterity through Rupture

There are some instances where the narrative of *Kari* delineates from the original story-line(s). However, mere deviation, delineation or digression cannot be termed as a rupture. For rupture, especially as narrative technique, would mean to crack-open and break-out from streamlined narrative into a sudden eruption – an offshoot of lateral narrative that might or might not align with the continuity of the primary plot. Muller-Funk in a defining article entitled *Broken Narratives: Modernism and the Tradition of Rupture* defines

...rupture [as] any cessation of a narrative sequence, which contrary to narrative closure does not arise out of a story's inherent causal logic. Narrative rupture is inherently dynamic: it is engendered by sequentially and in turn triggers anew chain of events (09)

One such specific moment in *Kari's* life that can be read as an eruption or an offshoot of the primary plot is the instance in the chapter "*Angel On the Cornice*" where *Kari*, upon returning home, stumbles upon a new lane that redirects her to an unknown house. On the page we can see what seems to be a paper road-map of all the roads and lanes in Mumbai. Over the page is mentioned places like "*Worli*", "*Parel*", "*Dadar*" and "*Mahalaxmi*" with different branches shooting out of every linear path (Patil 43). Patil's genius can be seen in the way she carves this rupture. There is a navigation of new geography with newer experiences, of landscape and the mind-scape, all through a rupture in narration. The text mentions:

An unfamiliar road, a tender offshoot to the tar has appeared today and it tempts me to walk it. I have walked from the railway station to the ad agency almost every single day for an entire year

and never seen this road before. It must have grown anew last night (Patil 43)

This dual path leads *Kari* to a place, space and a moment in time that is not related to Ruth, the failed suicide, her as a boatman or the general angst of life – a few things that drive the main narration of the plot. This rupture of narration, if taken out of the plot would not affect either *Kari's* life, her experiences or the continuity of narration. Perhaps, at a surface level, this dis-ruption in narration is author's way of giving its character a moment of respite from a life that is continually flowing with its fair share of tragedies.

However, when analysed further, this rupture serves an important purpose. Even though it is not related to *Kari's* daily reality, this “*tender offshoot*” informs her present. As the rupture in narration unfolds, *Kari* meets a tomcat named Bostiao who is a frequent visitor at Alexa's house. Alexa who feeds many cats, invites *Kari* for a meal and a heartfelt conversation. This conversation that follows leaves an affective impact on *Kari*. She claims, after indulging in a wholesome conversation with Alexa and her husband Manuel “*who plays the violin like a haunting dream*”, to have felt a “*happy buzz*” in her heart and compares this happy buzz with a blue bead and an egg that sits quietly in Ruth's hands. For the first time in the text, we see *Kari* experiencing happiness and it is through this rupture that *Kari* is able to, for the first time, materialize her affective strain into a tangible object. The blue egg is at once both mystical and a corporeal representation of *Kari's* desire to be one with Ruth. The knowledge of this desire never coming true in her reality allows her to use it as a symbol in creative platform for her ad that is most aptly named “*Fairytale hair.*” The rupture amongst many things becomes an alternative aid for *Kari* and Ruth to meet once again on an affective, symbolic and imaginary level, but also ensures that she channelizes her longing and desire into a creative endeavour - an endeavour that acts as a daily and much needed rupture in *Kari's* otherwise overbrimmed life.

Another form of rupture in narration can be seen through the fantastical and phantasmagorical offshoots that Patil employs to enhance the narration of the story. Most of the segments of the texts are endowed with fantastical qualities, especially the creatives for the ad agency. Moreover, these creatives always allude to, in one way or another, to *Kari* and her lost partner, Ruth.

Our first encounter the fantastical is with the introduction of *Kari's* abode

- *Crystal palace*. As the name suggests Crystal palace should be made entirely of crystal(s), and of rubies, gems, diamonds, gold and other precious stones. *Kari* reinforces this glorious image of the place when she proclaims that Crystal palace echoes of a Fairytale landscape in the "Smog City". It is the place "where gold trees with silver boughs bear pomegranates and Ruby seeds." It has "Floors of marble (and) ceilings of brocade". Lastly, the most outlandish imagery is bestowed upon the readers - the dancing of 12 princesses dancing through the night until their soles are tired. (Patil 16)

Underneath the textual description is a vibrant panel filled with images of princesses decked in pink gowns and exquisite jewellery, donned with pink stones in all shapes and sizes. The adjacent page juxtaposes vibrancy with utter dullness as the two-dimensional aerial view of *Kari's* apartment is sketched out in the most minimalist fashion. The sketch contains lines and other geometrical shapes to indicate places in the apartment such as the window, bathroom, basin and other areas. The narrator exclaims that there are not gold trees at Crystal Palace but "potted plants that double up as ashtrays" (17). The reduction of the grandeur of a palace to mere room sufficed with sustenance offers a stark juxtaposing of the outlandish to the minimal, the fantastical and the real. The juxtaposing of artifice by the real, the outlandish by the minimalist and the abundance with scarcity is a conscious tools Patil employs to engage the reader for a brief moment to get stuck in the fantastical element of *Kari's* imagination.

The first sequence that features the fantastical can be found in the second chapter of the novel entitled "Fairytale Hair." The sequence features a creative for the ad agency that *Kari* works for. The text of the creative reads:

The fox was beautiful, and white as snow. The Princess walked o'er hills and dales to find him. East o' the sun she walked, and west o' the moon. The further the Princess walked. The further the fox ran - always on the horizon." (Patil 12)

The seemingly autobiographical ad throws light on *Kari's* association of the creative mind and energy, symbolized by the fox, and with the princess that very much embodies the physicality and persona of Ruth. One cannot miss the allusion to the infamous poem *Thought-Fox* (1957) written by Ted Hughes. Patil pays homage to a literary text that concretizes fox as a symbol of creativity, thought, the writing process and the writer's block. The ad showcases what seems to be a game of chase. The more the princess walked in the direction of the fox, the further the fox moved - towards the horizon. If the princess represents Ruth, the fox ought to represent *Kari*.

It is as if the two are ill-fated to repel each other whilst attracting each other. Even though distanced, the two beings are interdependent- *Kari* on Ruth and the fox on the Princess. However, this interdependence has to be maintained without ever meeting or being in each other's vicinity, and this constant game of chase even on an imaginary level is important as it will help provide *Kari* the sustenance, she needs to fulfil through fantasy of what she lacks in her real life.

It is the nature of the phantasmagorical that morphs the human into a thing, an object or a being of allusion that will facilitate the unison, only on a symbolic level. Christina Britzolakis in "*Phantasmagoria: Walter Benjamin and the Poetics of Urban Modernism*" relates Phantasmagoria with "*transfiguration*" or "*transformation*",

...which turns the ordinary into the spectral, producing a figurative surplus of meaning (77).

Kari becomes a fox in this sequence, a blue bead or an egg in another. Ruth, because it is not her subjectivity and/or mind that imagines it, remains the real her. The horizon also serves as an apt representation of an illusion of unison, of emancipation and freedom. The union of fox and the horizon, and the princess and the fox seem plausible through sight but is deferred by their movement, reminding us of their ill fate to attract, but never meet, even in the imaginary. Another such sequence can be seen in the chapter titled "*Snow Globe*". The literal snow globe that is kept next to *Kari's* bed encapsulates a girl with a bed of snow, a park bench and a church. The only time the snow will fall on the figure of the girl is when the snow globe is tipped over. *Kari*, whilst imagining the plight of the girl stuck in the globe takes us on an imaginative journey into the fantastical. She extends her personal musings into another creative for the ad agency. The page features a woman lying down, blissfully, on the bed of roses, while the description reads:

The princess sat sewing in the snow, and her needle darted in and out of the cloth. Suddenly its tip pierced her forefinger, drawing a drop of blood. As the blood fell to the snow, there grew a vine with the most exquisite red rosebuds. Soon the snow was a carpet of roses. (Patil 49)

Rose is an anagram for Eros, and the bed of roses that the Princess (Ruth) blissfully rests on is *Kari's* projection of Desire. *Kari*, though distanced in physical world from her lover can only meet the beloved, and project her

sexual and romantic desire through phantasmagoria. The real world of tangibility evades *Kari's* most basic desire of emoting and showing affection towards her beloved, but the fantastical world lays open its imaginary dimension in which desire and sexuality, through any form, and object can be manifested. "*The act of desiring is not exhausted by the physical dimension*" (Guerrero 57).

Britzolakis repositions phantasmagoria, not as an exclusive category, but as a by-product or a tool that helps combat disenchantment seeped into the psyche of the residents of urban cities due to excessive modernisation and technologization:

[Phantasmagoria]...whose themes are the interpenetration between interior and exterior space, the impact of the urban crowd upon the individual psyche and the transformation of patterns of experience. (73)

Kari's bodily rhythm post-fall was adapting, day by the with the rhythms of the city. No matter, how much respite her condition as a boatman endowed her, her fast paced modern life: constant creation of new storylines, travelling to and fro from work to home, the general hustle-bustle of the city, and the slow yet recurrent formation of roommates into one whole organism forced her to retort to the unreal and fantastical. The sudden eruption into the imaginary helped *Kari* deal with her reality better. Thus, reinforcing the idea that ruptures in thought, narration and in many other ways that Patil utilizes them weren't mere coincidences but conscious literary choices that helped shape the narrative better. The break, pause, halt, end and disruption in narrative help move the plot ahead instead of bifurcating into unrelated literary pieces without congruence and cohesion.

Stylization and Alterity

One of the most difficult yet immanent tasks for an artist to achieve, amongst other things, is to build perspective in and through art. The perspective built, visualized in the case of graphic narratives, is the most crucial step for making way for subjectivity. Graphic theorist Kai Mikkonen in *Subjectivity and Style in Graphic Narratives* suggests the importance of multiplicity in the framing of subjectivity through graphic style. Mikkonen distinguishes between two basic dimensions of subjectivity in the multi-modal framework of graphic narratives. One is the 'author function' i.e. subjectivity that is induced consciously through the stylistic choices

the author makes such as the “*graphic line*”, “*lettering*”, and the “*spatial organization*”. The second dimension is that of a character/narrator, and its subjectivity. The subjectivity in the character is built through graphic tool such as the narrative voice that can span from the external/internal, explicit, implicit, the “*presentation of dialogue*” and thought as represented through speech and thought balloons. In addition, the technique of following of emotions from one panel to another or from one action sequence to another, and other forms of visuals such as the facial expression, body language, gaze, and the character’s position in association with other visible objects. (101).

The building of perspective can be seen in the image of *Kari* lying down in mud, having survived her double suicide. Half of *Kari*’s body, specifically legs can be seen lying lifeless onto the mud while she manages to lift her torso up from the ground, supported by her two hands (Patil 08).

To build perspective between the fallen individual and the city-scape, the skyscrapers are drawn shorter in height and are placed at a distance in the background while a huge piece of landmass appears in the middle. *Kari*’s image in the foreground looms large, forcing us to pay attention to the fallen stature of *Kari*. The reader is forced to look away from the diminishing skyscrapers and focus on larger-than-life image of *Kari*. The land mass both connects and separates the figure with and from the city-scape. *Kari*’s legs don a striped pattern that serves as an optical illusion for mermaid legs. But a closer look makes us realize that it is no mythical creature, but a (normal) human being who will be forced to live life when she wished to end it.

The reader also looks at *Kari* looking at the city-scape, a very minute but important graphic choice the illustrator makes, for it informs the reader of a kind of seeing. A seeing/perceiving wherein *Kari* is forced to see, experience, envision and visualize the (city) life with her own eyes and we, the readers, will have to witness *Kari* see the rest of her life unfold. Patil visualizes, for us, to be able to see *Kari* facing her own reality after the fall. All of this visualization and the meaning-making therewith is possible only due to perspective which further is responsible for developing the character’s subjectivity.

Another important stylistic choice the author and/or illustrator has to make is the employment of rupture as a stylistic technique. In the previous section, we explored how rupture/dis-ruption and puncture in story-telling play an important role in maintaining the Alterity of the text.

However, the kind of rupture that is to be analysed here is not within the gamut of thematic concerns or the narrative techniques, but is concerned with stylistic techniques of Patil's work – especially the colour scheme.

Throughout the novel, Patil scribbles the images of the characters, landscapes and objects in a minimalist fashion, barring a few pages. Most of the panels are filled using lines of black and white. The dual tone adds to Gothic underpinnings and harrowing incidents that take place in *Kari's* life. However, there are some pages, and images that are crafted in the more traditional form of graphic illustration that are filled with colours – the opening page, for example, or the panels featuring “STD booths” (Patil 20-21). There are only a countable number of pages that are decked in vibrant colours, rest all the pages employ the simplistic black and white drawings. It can be easily observed that Patil's way of using multiple colours in some places and monotonous or dual tones in the rest is a conscious choice, but where and in which scenario colours are splashed and in which places, colours are restrained is worth noting.

It can be argued that Patil's usage of vibrant colours is symbolic of an alternate perspective in the text. Whenever Patil employs black and white drawing, it is to be noted that the action, activity, movement or momentum we, as readers, are witnessing is from *Kari's* point of view, and panels that use colours represent some other person's point of view. However, the above statement should not be held accountable for its absolute categorization, for there are moments in the text that can contradict this statement.

Notice some of the pages that offer multi-chromatic visuals. The opening page, that offers the first multi-chromatic visuals of the novel, has already been discussed vis-à-vis doubling and dichotomy. The next colourful page features an advertisement of the princess and the fox (Patil 12). Another colourful panel that should be taken into account is the one that imagines the ideal and the fantastical Crystal Place, followed by a large panel focusing on the bathroom sink that is overflowing with toiletries such as soap-dishes, loofas, toothbrushes, razors, (Patil 19).

The second chapter entitled “*Crystal Palace*” concludes with a two-page panel of *Kari's* conversation with her mother at an STD booth that is highlighted with hues of yellow, blue and green (Patil 20-21). In all the above-mentioned examples, it can be observed that these panels showcase narrative that is other than the mainstream storyline, and showcase subjectivity that is not *Kari's*. If *Crystal Palace* exemplifies the fantastical,

and the ad campaign represents the phantasmagorical, thereby evidently eliminating *Kari's* real-life subjectivity and perspective, then the third visual represents the alternate. The image of the STD booth, even though structures *Kari* in the foreground of the illustration, it does not centralize *Kari* in the foreground of the conversation. *Kari* is as the receiving end of the conversation, and her mother, even though visually absent, is the primary subject of the scene.

All the three scenes serve as a rupture in the otherwise continuous streak of visual narration that shows readers *Kari's* life through her own perspective and subjectivity. Furthermore, these ruptures should not be dismissed as mere coincidences or aesthetic choices, for Mikkonen claims that these:

...stylistic changes or ruptures create an illusion of direct access to character's mind (116).

Much of what is drawn in graphic novels is either done to substantiate the text or to visualize the character – its persona, situatedness and the mind. Rupture, here, also provides a tool to dismantle the dominant aesthetic style of traditional graphic novels. Patil subverts the idea of storytelling by showcasing the character's major incidents and the main strand of storyline through black and white minimalist design and employs colours for all the other perspectives, and to record minor incidents in the text. The sudden eruption of colour in dreams and imagination of *Kari* hints at an out-of-body experience that the illustrator deems fit to distinguish it through colours for the better understanding of the reader. In contradiction, the black and white figuration help represent the protagonist's inner turmoil and tumult better, and the fading away of colour of life after breaking away from her life partner. It also helps us understand how *Kari* post-fall perceives reality – without colour, without emotions, plain and stark that is continually done and undone by black and white lines. Such a dichotomy forces the viewers to distinguish between the world of dreams and reality, conscious and the unconscious, primary (perspective) and the secondary (perspective), and protagonist vs the other.

Conclusion

Alterity through *Kari* can be studied through three different dimensions: Queerness, Rupture and Phantasmagoria; not in any chronology or in exclusivity but with the help of a seamless confluence of all the categories. *Kari's* queerness is understood better with time; in its zones, chronology and temporalities. It branches into multiple strands where

time is perceived and experienced differently. As time passes, *Kari's* queerness gets more assured, centred and nuanced through many instances she encounters and experiences she goes through. However, most of the experiences mentioned above are not unified whole, some functions as a rupture in the linearity of time, plot and narration and some, in turn rupture *Kari's* identity, making it more fragmented and multi-dimensional. In addition, *Kari's* present is also not devoid of hinderances from the past, the conscious mind of the unconscious, and the real, through the visions, from the fantastical. Her experience of sexuality, desire, subjectivity, time, life and death are alternatives to their specific norms. Thereby *Kari's* life and her idea of selfhood has to be understood from the point of view of the other, otherness and Alterity.

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