



Evaluating the Autobiographical Narratives in Najwa Zebian's "Sparks of Phoenix": A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The present research study is focused on the exploration of the multifaceted and diverse autobiographical layers and implicit ideas depicted in Najwa Zebian's "Sparks of Phoenix". The novel depicts and focuses on her emotional, inspirational, and motivational life journey. The study particularly focuses on the perspectives of women and generally on the collective human voices. The researcher uses the technique of close-reading for data analysis. The analysis and investigation applies the conceptual frameworks of the life force theory and the pleasure and pain theory of motivation. The book explores the depiction and expression of voices through the application of literary techniques of symbolism, satire, and binary oppositions. These voices explain and reflect themes such as discrimination, abuse, soul-burning, and self-realization. It also throws extensive light on female's extremism, empowerment, expressionism, and pleasure. The poetic exploration is used to infer these voices in the lives of individuals by encouraging them to recognize their strength, worth, and honour.

Keywords

Autobiographical Voices, Symbolism, Satire, Life-Force Theory, Pleasure and Pain Theory of Motivation.

Introduction

The researcher has made a literary approach for examining the lives of people who are overcoming hardships and misfortunes exposes a multitude of autobiographical voices that are resonated during those particular times. In the modern world, every individual lives as a unique creature and expresses themselves freely among a chorus of voices that may be both powerful and oppressive. Each day presents an excess of narratives that are interwoven with the complexity of events, revealing a sailing of autobiographical aspects of a person's journey. The researcher has implicitly holds mirror to her voices through their narratives. Each new day brings with it an abundance of tales entwined with the intricacy of encounters, revealing a multitude of autobiographical aspects of a person's journey. Authors, via their stories, offer intimate perspectives that help to articulate and investigate, embrace and advance, erect and reconstruct, envision and establish a new vista of thoughts and ideas.

According to Rice-Defosse (1991), autobiographical voices provide a heightened and illuminating account of a person's life story that breaks through stereotypes related to culture, genre, gender, and theoretical frameworks.

One perfect example of a life story that reveals multiple autobiographical voices is "Sparks of Phoenix," written by Najwa Zebian. Voices that transcend boundaries resound throughout its pages: voices of suffering, joy, hatred, women's experiences, emotional abuse, prejudice, reconstruction, loneliness, torture, power, confidence, morality, expression, love, and respect. Najwa Zebian was born in Lebanon during the civil war and experienced severe political, economic, psychological, and physical adversity. She saw first-hand the empowerment of women who were actively engaged in the struggle against violence, growing up in a nation still attempting to overcome the devastation caused

by war. Her experiences at this pivotal time helped her become a successful motivational writer who connects with a wide audience, particularly young people and women. Zebian's writings highlight a variety of autobiographical voices, providing encouragement and presenting rejection as a light house for regeneration and launching a fresh beginning.

Statement of the Problem

Amidst the dichotomy of pleasure and suffering in today's world, the human heart is frequently beset by emotional distress and lacks true fulfilment. In this stage, people try to calm their hearts and replenish their lost energy. Adversity can be made into something meaningful by the creative mind and the spiritual depth of the heart, even though not all life experiences contain such intense agony. This present research study tries to explore the different autobiographical voices that compose the life experiences of Najwa Zebian. The study displays her unique approach of her autobiography in "Sparks of Phoenix".

Research Questions

The research questions are as under:

- What autobiographical voices are presented by Najwa Zebian in "Sparks of Phoenix"?
- What style has she used to portray these autobiographical voices in her poetry?

Research Objectives

Research Objectives of this study are:

- To evaluate the understanding of the diverse autobiographical voices employed by Najwa Zebian in "Sparks of Phoenix".
- To analyze Najwa Zebian's stylistic approach in depicting autobiographical voices within her poetry.

Significance of the Study

This research study represents a significant endeavour to enhance life experiences through the exploration of autobiographical voices. Presently, the world grapples with a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction, with a majority of the global population yearning for an environment characterized by peace and love. Rarely do individuals embark on a path of self-realization and personal progression. The findings of this study aim to illuminate the true essence of life, offering insights that have the potential to bring healing to hearts worldwide, transcending current circumstances and reaching beyond contemporary boundaries. It is anticipated that individuals will draw inspiration from this research, viewing hope as a formidable force in navigating their forthcoming life experiences. Furthermore, this study is poised to contribute valuable insights to researchers engaged in exploring autobiographical voices intertwined with individual life experiences.

About the Poetess

Najwa Zebian is a Lebanese-Canadian author, poet, activist, educator, and speaker. She was born on April 27, 1990, she clinched international popularity in 2017 under the umbrella of Me Too Movement, and she expressed her panting thoughts using the rhythmical tune of poetry. She earned reputation through Canadian news channels and her poems found a place in the narratives of international news outlets.

Zebian moved to Canada at the age of sixteen after the 2006 Lebanon War forced him to leave his own country of Lebanon. She studied at the University of Western Ontario, where she currently resides in Ontario, Canada. She graduated in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and in 2012 with a Bachelor of Education in General Science and Biology. She continued her education, graduating in 2013 with a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies. Zebian is currently working as a teacher and attending the same university to get her doctorate in education leadership. Embarking on her life journey at the age of thirteen, which was momentarily disrupted by war but resumed at sixteen, Najwa Zebian initially started as a teacher, imparting writing skills to a group of Libyan refugees. It was during this time that she realized her dream of becoming a writer. Her writing style is characterized by a soulful rendition of free verse, conveying themes of strength, courage, and love. Zebian's voice is notably soothing, disciplined, and inspirational.

She has authored three books: "Mind Platter" in 2016, a compendium of living philosophy. "The Nectar of Pain" in 2016, which is a powerful portrayal of imaginative art rooting from the depths of a broken heart; she wrote "Sparks of Phoenix" in 2019, a new edition documenting the ascent and descent above the stories of suffering. Apart from her writing endeavours, Zebian participates in a

virtual community called Soul Academy. She has moved into recorded podcasts using her speech power, developing her identity through language and awareness programmes.

"Sparks of Phoenix" at a glance

"Sparks of Phoenix" is an all-encompassing examination of a profound trip that includes a variety of representational and theme autobiographical voices. It depicts the author's personal experiences as well as the stories of women, girls, and individuals overcoming obstacles including sexual harassment, repression, depression, loneliness, and prejudice based on attributes like race, grace, culture, and power. This autobiography serves as a healing tool, moral insight, and a compendium of the voices echoing in today's world. Get up and shine.

Symbolically, the book draws on the Greek Mythology of the phoenix—a bird that rises from its ashes. Najwa Zebian metaphorically reflects her own emergence from the ashes of pain, not merely as a survivor of abuse but as a symbol of feminine diversity. The narrative revolves around her existential struggle for love, presenting her distinctive approach to teaching and healing for those striving to rise and shine. It narrates a compelling story of the clash between truths and lies, the fall and rise, depicting the phases of life as a process of falling, burning, turning, sparking, rising, soaring, and ultimately, a new beginning. The book showcases the triumphant voices of Zebian's life, urging everyone to speak out against shame, silence and fear. Through her personal revelation, she inspires others to soar and ignite like a Phoenix.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The researcher has made her best effort for interpreting the autobiographical voices through the pain and pleasure theory of motivation, as presented by Naeem, H., Gulzar, M. A., and Raja, M.N.S. (2011), is a useful perspective. This theory holds that "Human nature seeks pleasure and avoids pain," which provides a fundamental notion for comprehending the various autobiographical voices that Najwa Zebian uses. Najwa uses a range of autobiographical voices in her work, covering both the painful and the joyful. For example, the world of suffering is linked to voices that describe human experiences of abuse, sadness, repression, torture, discrimination, isolation, hate, betrayal, disrespect, and contempt.

Drawing from Bernard Shaw's perspective, Najwa Zebian, in her poetry, portrays life as a journey teeming with impulsive experiences. Zebian employs a style akin to creative evolution in her poetic expressions, utilizing satirical elements and symbolism to convey emerging themes. According to Zebian, pain stands out as the most creative and essential force propelling individuals towards self-realization. Additionally, Zebian identifies binary oppositions as the dynamic form through which life continuously evolves. A notable binary opposition in her poetry is the juxtaposition of happiness versus pain.

Autobiographical Voices: A Critical Examination

The work of Najwa Zebian has passed through the critical analysis of reputed scholars who have pointed the channels of autobiographical voices in her work. One notable quote addressing abuse as a societal voice emphasizes, "Family is supposed to be our safe haven. Very often, it is the place where we find the deepest heartache" (Vanzant. n.d.).

The aforementioned claim draws attention to the subject of abuse, especially when it comes to domestic or female abuse. This is consistent with Najwa Zebian's poetic representation, in which she describes the devastation of her house and the absence of her sense of security. Zebian makes reference to an individual who caused her distress while recounting the terrifying ordeal of suffering from severe maltreatment that began in her own home.

A notable statement that encapsulates the essence of discrimination is attributed to Nelson Mandela. He expressed, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite" (Mandela, 1994).

The manner in which Nelson Mandela articulates the theme of discrimination bears a resemblance to Najwa Zebian's approach. Mandela delves into both love and hate, illustrating their existence as binary opposites. Similarly, Najwa, when discussing love, provides insight into the presence of hate in its shadow. Conversely, when referencing hate, she alludes to the pain she has transformed into strength and positive action. For Najwa, it was the experience of pain that bestowed upon her the courage to pen down and explores her narrative of abuse and discrimination. Pain, in her

perspective, is a powerful emotion. Through her poetry, as she defines these terms, Najwa conveys a message encouraging others not to fear or feel shame. She lends her voice to inspire individuals to embark on a journey of self-realization.

Another perspective on the theme of rejection in life is articulated by Burke Wilkinson, who states, "Rejection is the sand in the oyster, the irritation that ultimately produces the pearl." This line elucidates the autobiographical voice of rejection, suggesting that rejection is an integral element of positive transformation. In the context of this definition, rejection is seen as a catalyst for change, propelling individuals from a common place to a more recognizable and esteemed stage of life.

Another voice to consider is the voice of expression, also known as expressionism. Leo Tolstoy's quote, "Art is not about beauty; art is an expression" (Tolstoy, 1896), elucidates the essence of expressionism through various evolving art forms. It conveys that individuals can opt for any art form as a means of expression. Najwa Zebian, for instance, refers to the art of painting through poetry as her way of effecting change in her life.

Soul burning is another autobiographical voice explored in "Sparks of Phoenix." As expressed by Connolly (2011), "Here is a truth, a truth by which to live; there is hope. There is always hope. If we choose to abandon it, our soul will turn to ash and blow away." This quote underscores the enduring importance of choosing hope in life. The absence of hope often leads to profound suffering, a theme explored in "Sparks of Phoenix" where Najwa discusses the soul-burning voice that encompasses both extremism and the vital essence of hope.

The voice of spirituality is a key element in the book, as evidenced by the quote from Jane Austen (1818) that reads, "We women love longest even when all hope is gone." This notion underscores the timeless quality of love, especially in relation to women's hearts, which are endowed with the ability to endure and persist. Najwa explores spirituality and the strength that comes from being a woman in her poetry, echoing a similar feeling.

Additionally, there is another potent voice highlighted, as defined by the European Union: "Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country, or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks" (EC 2012, p.5). This definition provides a critical perspective on the theme of resilience. In Najwa Zebian's poetry, this voice is portrayed as a courageous force—the voice of human resilience, demonstrating the inherent quality of human nature to seek resilience until a new beginning is embraced.

Peterson, 2011, aims to distinguish between depression and self-realization, offering a compelling perspective that delves into the concept of binary oppositions. His viewpoint emphasizes that while depression may function as an impediment to progress, self-realization is perceived as the catalyst that puts an end to depression within societal contexts. These two factors, according to Peterson, operate interchangeably. Aligning with this viewpoint, Najwa, in her poetry, presents similar oppositions and elucidates how pain serves as a transformative element. Correspondingly, the notion is put forth that although depression is often perceived as a collective voice of failure, anxiety, weakness, and conclusion, it does not signify an end; rather, it signifies the potential for life's possibilities, leading toward self-purpose and self-significance.

"She is caught between a strong mind and a fragile heart" is one definition of a woman's will power (Kasparov, 2018). This demonstrates how having a strong willpower allows the voice of fragmentation to change into the ability to mend and get back to normal. It means that a woman's strong emotional resilience gives her the ability to bounce back. Despite her physical fragility, she possesses an incredible mental toughness and stiffness. As per Zavaliy (2020), there is a "comparison between the Aristotelian approach to courage and the modern mainstream understanding of this virtue. It is observed that modern attitudes have changed significantly in the direction of increasing the number of courageous agents by redefining courage as a capacity to resist any form of physical or psychological pressure."

This information mirrors the contemporary idea of how individuals readily accept reality and move forward. When examining the concept underpinning the book "Sparks of Phoenix," it symbolizes Najwa's obedience and courage, propelling her to change the world through the influential mediums of writing and speaking.

Reviews of "Sparks of Phoenix"

"Sparks of Phoenix" stands as a compilation of deeply resonant autobiographical voices, portraying the phoenix as a symbol of transformation. It encapsulates a myriad of human experiences, reaching

every soul with its expressive power of expressionism. Thanks to its compelling impact, Zebian's work has garnered a tremendous response worldwide. Here are some pertinent reviews:

"Najwa Zebian's writing truly resonated with me, reflecting my own encounters with emotional abuse and lifting my spirits more than once. The book's powerful theme of self-recreation in the aftermath of abuse harmonizes with the author's impactful voice" (Ramblebee, 2019).

As per Ramblebee, "Sparks of Phoenix" delivers potent themes concerning a shift in perspectives on life. It embodies the voice of resilience, urging individuals to acknowledge the harsh realities of the past and embrace positive change. Najwa's poetry encapsulates a movement towards a fresh start filled with hope, akin to the phoenix emerging from its ashes.

"Words possess the ability to influence, and Najwa Zebian has exemplified this through her poetry" (Tariq, 2019). Munazza Tariq elucidates the beauty and potency inherent in words, underscoring their role in shaping the essence of poetic creation. Words hold the power to articulate the intended meaning of a life story. In Najwa's poetic compilation, "Sparks of Phoenix," her choice of words enhances the poetic work, infusing it with the expressive quality characteristic of artistic ability in a poet.

"Tehreem (2020), sheds light on the book as a source of motivation, instilling hope for striving for the best in life illuminates "Sparks of Phoenix" with regard to its enlightening influence on life. Every moment of sadness eventually leads to a beautiful journey, even though life is full of both happy and sad times. Through her poetry, Najwa reflects this idea by discussing both her happy and difficult life situations. Her life narrative reflects a shift from a terrible period to a period of great relief. Through overcoming the difficult and dark times in life, a happy phase begins.

"It signifies the process of a phoenix's rebirth mirroring our lives, resonating particularly with individuals who have endured searing pain that shatters their soul into fragments" (Ahmed, 2020).

The above review sheds light on Najwa Zebian's distinctive style. Zebian showcases uniqueness in her expressionism, evident in the very title, "Sparks of Phoenix," demonstrating her adept use of symbolism in the evolution of her poetry. As a literary figure, she heightens the concept of rebirth, subtly echoing the contentment of a renaissance in her work. Her style also embraces universality, drawing in readers immersed in the flames of a burning soul. Najwa's life story becomes relatable to everyone as she weaves thoughts and feelings of unworthiness and self-doubt throughout her pieces, offering a profound understanding of life's true nature.

Furthermore, she illuminates the theme of pain, depicting it as a transformative force with the capacity to forge strength from darkness. Life's setbacks, Najwa suggests, serve as real-world incentives that sow the seeds of happiness and joy. Embracing patience amid pain becomes a wellspring of profound pleasure and satisfaction. The happiness attained after enduring sorrows illuminates souls and bestows the ability to soar into a new beginning.

"This poetry collection delves into the transformative journey of healing that many women embark upon at certain junctures in their lives" (Deleon, 2019).

As per Deleon, the book unveils a feminist perspective that amplifies the voice of women's deprivation in society. Within the context of "Sparks of Phoenix," women undergo experiences of abuse, discrimination, and isolation. The book portrays women as victims of emotional and psychological harassment, particularly by the harsh realities imposed by society, especially the attitudes of men toward women. Similar to Najwa's personal experience of emotional betrayal by her lover, the poetry illustrates women as victims of male behaviour, emphasizing man's focus on physical attributes rather than the soul or heart.

Justine, 2019, discerns the diverse autobiographical voices presented in the book "Sparks of Phoenix." Najwa Zebian, through thematic representation, articulates her life journey, highlighting voices of encouragement and inspiration as instruments of healing. Through these voices, she imparts messages of confidence and self-realization, particularly addressing the women of society who deserve love and nurturing in accordance with their inherent rights.

Research Gap

Many studies examine topics like feminism, women's postmodern status, post-traumatic stress disorder, and mental health difficulties, but there is still a dearth of studies that particularly target autobiographical voices. The scholar conducts a critical examination of the book "Sparks of Phoenix" from a particular angle, clarifying personal voices and their captivating themes and offering a separate and explicit reading strategy.

Research Methodology

This research study has applied techniques of close reading based on the criteria for selecting lines, and the approach to purposive sampling. It encompasses the process of data collection as well as the methods employed for data analysis, incorporating the close reading technique and its various levels."

Research Design

This research study is based on qualitative approach. Qualitative research involves exploring individual perspectives on life, encompassing dynamic features, concepts, ideas, opinions, beliefs, and understandable phenomena.

Data Collection Procedure

Being qualitative study by nature, the data comprises facts, details, and pertinent information that establishes a logical connection and serves as the foundation for data analysis. In acquiring relevant information for analysis, the researcher employs specific techniques such as skimming, scanning, and close reading. Skimming and scanning are rapid reading methods that offer a general overview of the study and aid in locating specific information within the context, thus serving as time-saving methods. Utilizing these techniques, various autobiographical voices in the book are identified.

Research Method for Data Analysis

The qualitative research technique of close reading is applied for the critical analysis of literary texts. Close reading involves a focused analysis that delves into the profound meanings within a text, enhancing the researcher's interpretative prowess. It serves as an instructional approach, guiding researchers on how to conceptualize the meaning embedded in a particular text. This method enables readers to adeptly discern the merits and drawbacks of the shared concept. Close reading follows a structured process with six fundamental levels that facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the text. These levels encompass the lexical, syntactic, thematic, iterative, generic and adversarial aspects of the text. Each level contributes to the extraction of various nuanced meanings. At the lexical or semantic level, meaning is derived from the individual contributions of words. The second level explores the sense of the text through phrases, clauses and sentences. The third level formulates the thematic approach by delineating the main ideas related to the context. The fourth level involves an examination of different figurative devices, such as repetition, symbolism, metaphor and simile. The fifth level introduces a critical approach, emphasizing the evaluation of the work in terms of genre, place and time. The final level involves an adversarial understanding of the text, incorporating various historical, political and theoretical considerations that aid researchers in achieving a definitive interpretation.

Analysis and Discussion

This part of the research encompasses the various levels of the close reading technique employed to align the data for the purposes of assessment and argumentation in relation to the study's topic. Furthermore, it provides a wide array of examples relevant to the research questions, exploring the selected text with respect to the research's main objectives. The overall discourse on the topic is presented by referencing the context with a thorough understanding and perception.

Explanation of the Levels of Close Reading

In the realm of literature analysis, close reading emerges as the most gratifying method, offering researchers an optimal choice for in-depth interpretation. This technique comprises six distinct levels, each playing a pivotal role in elucidating the underlying purpose of a text and delineating the key features and objectives inherent in a literary work. Close reading fosters a critical approach, integrating both linguistic and literary perspectives. Spanning from the lexical level to the iterative level, it addresses crucial aspects of linguistic analysis, encompassing semantics, syntax structure and grammatical rules, including repetition. The remaining three levels serve as the crux of the literary approach, exploring thematic avenues, generic criticism and an adversarial approach rooted in historical, theoretical and political backgrounds. This method introduces novel avenues for researchers to unearth facts, illuminate central issues, and extract hidden meanings, such as interpreting words, explicating sentences, describing diverse themes, accentuating figurative devices, evaluating literary criticism and highlighting historical content to bolster the central idea.

Analysis of Autobiographical Voices in Sparks of Phoenix

A person's life undergoes significant changes as time goes on. A need for a happy and fulfilled existence with more power and influence arises from someone who lacks courage and excitement and has little sense of self-importance and ambitions. At a time when voices seem to be echoing from

every direction, Najwa Zebian sets out on an inspirational journey in Sparks of Phoenix, sharing autobiographical voices derived from her own experiences with abuse, betrayal and contempt. With Najwa Zebian's life experiences, the story unfolds like the changes between dusk and day, encompassing all the voices that one needs to assert and respond to, from the oppressive to the expressive. Some of the selected text highlighting the main autobiographical voices are as under,

*You lit my soul
on fire
and told me
to watch it burn.*

(Zebian, 2019, p.2)

The above excerpt is extracted from Sparks of Phoenix, utilizing a lexicon characterized by simple English with a contemporary composition of words. Notably, the slang term 'lit' is employed, connecting to fire and symbolizing the burning process. Syntactically, the lines convey the perpetual burning of a soul, depicting the autobiographical voice of extremism and soul-burning. Zebian articulates the aftermath of an intense tragic attack on the soul, highlighting the notion that a soul on fire is devoid of life. This narrative delves into Zebian's past, recounting a love experience turned mysterious—a tale of her lover's cruel actions that resulted in significant misfortune.

Zebian engages with the audience, urging them to empathize with her situation and recognize the societal norms. As her story evolves over time, love morphs into hate, symbolized by the pervasive use of fire. Symbolism becomes evident as fire represents the extremities she endured, showcasing the poetic use of expression.

In a world where people hail from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and mentalities, the pursuit of a perfect life and understanding relationships remains a universal desire. However, the unpredictable nature of the future unfolds within fleeting moments. Zebian's narrative exposes a bitter reality—people often pursue love not for the benefit of the other person, but to satiate their own needs for satisfaction. The excerpt lays bare the profound changes that occur when a selfish individual enters the scene, disrupting the tranquillity and leaving Zebian's soul ablaze with the wounds of betrayal and hatred.

Another reference that shows linkage with the above-mentioned autobiographical voice is,

*He attached strings to my self-worth
and played with me
like a marionette.*

(Zebian, 2019, p.5)

These lines illuminate the internal state of Zebian's heart, strategically deploying the word 'he' as a semantic tool, inviting researchers to delve into her past and unravel her present. The term 'he' serves to characterize her lover, to whom she devoted her ultimate love, surpassing even her sense of self-worth. It paints a poignant picture of the delicate scenario when two souls undergo isolation, with 'he' departing like a falling leaf from a tree.

The narrative delves into the theme of dependency, acknowledging the mutual reliance between men and women for existence. However, societal norms often wrongly perceive women as the most dependent beings. Zebian's experience mirrors this misconception, as she was treated like a marionette—devoid of the power to speak and move. Zebian's storytelling transcends feminism, resonating with individuals of all genders. Her words encapsulate a universal experience, fitting seamlessly into the contemporary societal landscape.

Other reference that reflects the voice of fragility, chaos, lack of love and emotional aching is,

*I see myself crumbling
and my wings
becoming weaker and weaker,
but there is nothing I can do
it feels like
there is poison running through
my veins
and I am letting go
one breath at a time.*

(Zebian, 2019, p.7)

The carefully chosen words, including 'crumbling,' 'wings,' 'veins,' and 'breath,' vividly portray the profound intensity of her emotional state. Semantically, 'wings' symbolize the potential for soaring, while 'poison' suggests a gradual weakening. From a syntactical perspective, the arrangement of words conveys the notion of both physical and soulful fragmentation.

A state of heightened extremism, characterized by fragility, chaos and anguish is explored by Najwa Zebian. Metaphorically, the human body is linked to the ability to fly. Zebian suggests that, even without literal wings, humans possess the capacity to move forward and achieve. The underlying meaning of these lines reveals the autobiographical voice of hope, asserting that an end doesn't necessarily signify finality. Despite her metaphorical wings burning and turning black, Zebian's words radiate with hope, unveiling the profound reality of life where hopelessness courses through veins like blood. Zebian's portrayal of hope aligns with the philosophical perspective of Emily Dickinson, who aptly stated, 'Hope is the thing with feathers.'

*How do I tell you
not to compare me
with other women?
not to love me more
because you love them less?
because you love her less?*

(Zebian, 2019, p.227)

In the contemporary era, women are often subjected to degradation based on factors such as skin colour, beauty standards, body posture, social status and literacy rate. Such discrimination contributes to a pervasive sense of inferiority among women in society. However, Zebian's poetry serves as a catalyst, inspiring every soul to embark on a journey towards self-reconstruction, reclaiming self-worth and confidence.

*He wants my untouched body
to be his heaven for one night.*

(Zebian, 2019, p.186)

Najwa Zebian prominently highlights the autobiographical voice of abuse, employing satire to depict men through the lens of her lover's character. The word 'heaven' serves as the focal point in the aforementioned statement. In essence, her poetry employs sarcasm to unravel the peculiar nature of men. Zebian's work satirically addresses the tendency of men to exploit women in abusive ways, resulting in the physical and emotional shattering of women. This line specifically delves into the roots of sexual abuse, rooted in misconceptions about love. In contemporary times, Zebian observes that, for many men, love has transformed into mere lust.

Lust is a force that craves the body rather than the soul to fulfil the desired satisfaction. A genuine love always seeks a soul mate. Tragically, her lover utilized her untouched body as his 'heaven.' Zebian's viewpoint also sheds light on the presence of male chauvinism, portraying women as fragile creatures. While she amplifies her voice for women, her poetry resonates with a universal message that speaks to both genders.

Sexual abuse is very common and nobody has exemption to it.

Other voice that shows relation with the above-mentioned voice of abuse is the vocal abuse.

She quoted,

*I stopped longing
to be understood
when the ones I thought
understood me
in my darkness
turned out to have knives
hidden under their tongues.*

(Zebian, 2019, p.172)

Furthermore, building upon the aforementioned theme of physical abuse, Najwa discusses the autobiographical voice of verbal abuse in these lines. This represents another prevailing issue within society where individuals, primarily men, subject women to abusive language, inflicting emotional pain. The use of the term 'knives' serves as a symbol, portraying the malicious intent of men towards women. It illustrates the insatiable lust within them, with their tongues spewing forth venom like a

devil residing in their souls. In essence, both physical and verbal abuse serves as a societal awakening, emphasizing the crucial message: 'Do not mistake lust for love.'

Lines that depicts the voices of empowerment are,

Trust your journey.

Rest your soul.

(Zebian, 2019, p.48)

In these lines, Zebian reflects upon her profound journey, weaving together a collection of words that are intricately linked. The synergy of 'trust' and 'rest' encapsulates the essence of the lines. The syntax as a whole underscores trust as the most potent catalyst for carrying happiness. Zebian highlights autobiographical voices related to spirituality, confidence and the strength of decision-making. Her positive message resonates—chooses a journey guided by trust, not hate. The incorporation of alliteration enhances the attractiveness, inspiration and spirituality of the expression.

A unique reference that intensify the theme of hope and optimism in the work is stated asunder'

my soul has been burning

for a while now

Pain has become my

new normal.

(Zebian, 2019, p.13)

Once again, in these verses, she expounds on the transformative power of trust, shaping life's journey into a genuine adventure accompanied by the satisfying companionship of trust and pain, intrinsically linked with the soul's burning. Thematically, Zebian paints autobiographical voices of depression, loneliness and fleeting dejection, countered by her resolute focus on the theme of aspiration. Her tone assumes a satirical nature, wielding satire as a literary device to transparently convey truths. Existing in the crucible of burning that reduces the soul to ashes, rising and soaring become daunting. Human nature craves love, a composite of a kind heart, a mature mind and a spiritual soul, yet Najwa Zebian posits a counterintuitive truth. According to her, the force propelling a person skyward toward love is pain. Here, the autobiographical voice of pain as strength emerges, becoming Najwa's new normal. This collocational phrase resonates with the audience, depicting how pain, born from abuse, rage, hate and torture, transforms into the voices of trust, love and spirit. Her poetry serves as a healing force, especially for victimized women, delivering a powerful message through satirical nuances.

Najwa also emphasizes the quality of sensitivity and portrays it through the picture of pain. While sensitivity is often associated with mental states like over thinking, experiencing pain in life doesn't denote something negative; rather, it propels an individual toward learning, evolution and progress.

Najwa utilizes satire as a tool to communicate her ideas and opinions on autobiographical voices such as intolerance, abuse, prejudices, fragility, betrayal and extremism—essentially, the voices that define modern society. Satire becomes a vehicle to exaggerate these voices, unveiling her journey for the necessary change. While she may seem to expose and criticize individuals for their foolishness and corruption.

There are many lines in the book *Sparks of Phoenix* that highlights the autobiographical voice of change. One such lines states that,

I am free

not because

you let me go.

I am free because

I let you go.

And set myself free.

(Zebian, 2019, p.199)

The lines also portray the empowering voice as a catalyst for change, encapsulating two contrasting ideas and perspectives. Najwa shares her account of life moments that prompted her to assume the role of a hero. She asserts that freedom doesn't result from someone else's departure, but from the birth of an individual with great courage, breaking free from the clutches of negative influences. This narrative embodies a transformative voice that propels one's will toward the commencement of a new chapter. The repetition of the word 'free' serves to embellish the overarching

theme of enthusiasm and passion. Najwa has achieved freedom through her devoted spiritual experience, emancipating herself from fear and shame. Possessing a resilient soul brimming with missionary zeal, she has embraced all her sorrows and reached her destination

We encounter stories like these daily, particularly narratives involving the younger generation. Despite the existence of feminism, women are often perceived as fragile in society, where genuine acts of kindness, love and respect are sometimes lacking. An illustrative example is the drama series 'Sabaat' (2020), penned by Kashif Anwar. The title itself conveys the concept of maintenance. The storyline unfolds the contrasting voices of love and hate. Anaya, a resilient, positive and passionately lovely young woman, becomes a central character. Hassan, a young man, falls deeply in love with her unconditionally. They marry and initially lead a blissful life, indifferent to the world around them. However, the plot takes an unexpected turn into the realm of hatred. A minor misunderstanding, devoid of the truth, creates a significant rift in their lives, leading to separation.

Kashif Anwar sensitively portrays the heart-wrenching story of how one envisions their life and how it can turn into nothing. The narrative also amplifies the voice of extremism experienced by a woman, who perceives her life spiralling into destruction. As a woman, she sacrifices everything, including her space, her beloved, her home priorities, her lifestyle and her way of communication—all in the name of marriage. When all she receives in return is betrayal and disrespect, her soul begins to burn. Despite the challenges, the story of 'Sabaat' concludes on a note of moral and positive transformation. Anaya, embodying strength and resilience, emerges as a powerful character representing the creative progress of change. She becomes a voice of courage for the betterment of humanity.

The portrayal of Anaya's character in 'Sabaat' aligns with the life journey of Najwa Zebian, emphasizing her strength, resilience and profound humanistic power that define her as a true survivor. Zebian's poetry serves as a source of hope and resilience, encapsulated in her statement, 'My demolition might not be in my hands, but my reconstruction is.' The deliberate pairing of 'demolition' and 'reconstruction' functions as a binary opposition, conveying the idea that a heart can endure pain when coupled with the presence of self-realization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Exploration of Autobiographical Voices in Najwa Zebian's Poetry

In her poetry, Zebian captures the essence of her personal life journey, reflecting the various stages individuals undergo in contemporary society. She specifically emphasizes the strength of women, inviting all to immerse themselves in her soulful verses. Her writing is heartfelt, portraying her own experiences and delving into the process of healing. Zebian exhibits a remarkable ability for characterization, drawing from her encounters with harsh criticism to articulate diverse human voices through autobiographical elements. Life's entrapment in pain becomes evident through her shared sufferings and strengths, unveiling a spectrum of autobiographical voices. Pain, in Najwa's perspective, serves as a catalyst for life, stimulating voices of discrimination, abuse and disloyalty, leading to the metaphorical process of burning. Despite the challenging themes, Zebian's skilful portrayal transforms these voices into compelling narratives that captivate attention. Her poetry outlines distinct phases of life, encompassing the burning of a soul, the transformation into ashes, the symbolism of the phoenix, moments of rebellion, the act of soaring and the initiation of a new life.

Stylistic Elements in the Articulation of Autobiographical Voices

Najwa Zebian embraces a contemporary style in expressing her thoughts and vocalizing her experiences. Her poetry adheres to a free verse form, employing various figurative literary devices such as symbols, metaphors, similes, satire and binary oppositions to weave together the fabric of autobiographical voices. The simplicity of language in her compositions serves to effectively communicate nuanced meanings. The very title, 'Sparks of Phoenix' encapsulates the overarching theme of her poetic works. The phoenix, serving as a symbol, conveys notions of immortality and revolution. Furthermore, pain in her verses embodies the concepts of self-realization and inner strength. Zebian introduces binary oppositions like love and hate, fragility and strength, fear and courage, low self-esteem and high self-esteem, betrayal and loyalty, pain and resilience, aimed at addressing disparities rooted in gender inequalities. Additionally, satire emerges as a distinct stylistic element, allowing her to narrate her life story while engaging in satirical commentary on the human experience.

Future Research Recommendations

Spark of Phoenix by Najwa Zebian is the most recent book in which she has examined from a variety of angles and covers topics including prejudice, emotional abuse, empowerment and optimism. Still, there are a lot of unexplored regions that need to be investigated in further research. The researcher suggests a number of prospective research areas, such as narcissism, gender oppression, women's liberation and a philosophical investigation of male control over women.

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