

## DISCOVERING VULNERABLE EXPERIENCE: SEXUAL ABUSE, AND TRAUMATIC LIFE OF MAGGIE SULLIVAN IN JENNIFER DOWN'S BODIES OF LIGHT

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### ABSTRACT

Sexual abuse, vulnerability and trauma are not new. These incidents are constant in all levels of society. The story of Maggie Sullivan portrays the traumatic life experience of Maggie Sullivan, which portrays the truth of the world. Jennifer Down has portrayed all the characters in such a way so that readers can instantly connect with them. The story talks about a little girl that has faced sexual harassment and has been raped by a man. All the incidents have made her life difficult, and the discussion that she has made was greatly influenced by the circumstances and the past experiences that she had faced earlier in her life. Down has beautifully portrayed all the emotions of Maggie that allows readers to develop an emotional and empathic connection with her instantaneously. Her experiences and life lessons have transformed her life in a certain direction that she has never dreamed of. The transformation of her life and all the phases of life have allowed Maggie to switch her life that she thought was right for her. She has tried her best to survive and chase happiness from others, but eventually fails sometimes.

**Keywords:** The bodies of light, Mental trauma, Maggie Sullivan, Damien, Vulnerable, Violence, Sexual harassment, Rape, Relationship, Love.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Jennifer Down's "Bodies of Light" showcases the vulnerable life story of Maggie Sullivan's empathetic tale that is painful yet gives a greater reality check. The book tells about a woman who has been forced to live the life of a lost child and spends her entire life attaching herself to those people who pretend to be true. At the beginning of the story, it has been observed that the main character of the story is trying to lead a healthy and happy life despite her past experience. By going deep into the story, it can be observed that an innocent little girl goes into a life that is full of trouble mentally, physically, and psycholog-

ically. Since childhood, Maggie has seen many ups and downs. She lost her mother at a very young age and was brought up by her father. However the first turn of her life begins from that incident as she was growing up with her dad who was a drug addict. By recalling her childhood memory, she has always addressed her father as a good human being who used to love her, but due to his condition, he was not able to take care of her (Sydney Reviews of Books. 2021). Being a kid, when an individual loses both of her parents, this eventually makes their lives more difficult in every aspect. In this scenario, the same thing has

happened with Maggie Sullivan. Her life was full of twists and turns, and each time, she did her best to make her simple and full of joy and happiness. Her father was not able to take care of her because of his addiction to drugs, and she ended up going to jail. Afterwards Maggie was sent to "state care" and from that a new chapter of her begins that she has never dreamed of. During her stay at her 'state care,' Maggie experienced a nightmare of her life and that has haunted her throughout her entire life. Being a nine-year-old kid, she first went through sexual harassment by one of her coach at the institutional care, but she did not dare to speak about it, and neither she had the strength to protect herself from that beast. She said, "The day when he unzipped his pants behind the fuel store and showed me his muscle, I knew I'd arrived at a new, terrible place..." (Down, Bodies of Light, 150). In the past she has also hacked sexual harassment and assault from a demon who was her father's friend. Throughout her life, she has searched for friendship, love and care, but instead, she gets humiliation, loneliness and abuse. Her terrific experiences have never left her alone and for a minute and that constant battle with herself; with her soul eventually let her quit her studies at university level. It is not that she never fell in love or tried to stay in a healthy relationship, but destiny never gave her the opportunity to be loved or happy as she manifested. However, life continues at its own pace and finds a way to meet the ultimate goal. Likewise, Maggie has also found her life partner, and her ultimate goal is to be a wife and disassociate herself from all the horrendous past experiences that are heartbreaking from all the aspects of a healthy and peaceful life.

## 2. VULNERABILITY AND CONTEXT

Vulnerability, abuse, and trauma are part of the life of Maggie Sullivan, and in the book "Bodies of Light" Jenifer Down has shown the real picture of life to a large extent and has portrayed the real face of the world. The psychological battle that Maggie Sullivan has carried out through her childhood and adolescence is a naked truth of society. The novel can be read in the context of global evaluation into the institutional sexual harassment, abuse of children or psychological context of a young girl that has gone through rape, threats,

and harassment (Midalia, 2021). Being an orphan young girl Maggie has been raped by different men and was abused sexually, and that impacted her psychologically and gave an idea about the world that 'Men are the authority of the world'. As she grows up, gradually, she realizes that she has survived in such a world that has no mercy, or empathy and has led her life by cutting all ties with her past in order to stay happy and joyful. This novel by Jennifer Down was her second novel and she has portrayed the life story of Maggie Sullivan. Jennifer is an Australian novelist and also an expert in writing short stories, and her expertise has brought her so many awards, namely the Jolly Prize in 2014 (Midalia, 2021). Her novel "Body of Light" is one of the most impactful stories that shows all the sides of the real world. The story portrays the pain of a sexually abused child, her fear of a series of failed and broken relationships, the impact of drug addiction and so on. On the other hand, this also portrays the story of survival, resilience, human kindness and the importance of hope and self-belief and willingness. The story thus empathized with the feminist saga and popularised feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, and that impacted the misogynistic authority to a great extent. The story starts with the disturbing childhood of Maggie Sullivan, and in the chapter, her pain and fear are drowned in such a way that readers can immediately establish a connection with the character. As the story begins the reader can see the transformation of an innocent girl into a scared, terrified girl who doesn't know what is the right way to protect her and what to do in a circumstance when someone is trying to take advantage of her advantage. The author has beautifully shown all the shades of her life in order to mirror the reality of life. Maggie had to go through different phases, some good and most of them horrific but despite that she never stopped hoping for a better and joyful life where she is being loved and respected. This story describes the life of a daughter of a drug addict and the consequences she faced throughout her entire life. Maggie had to shift to child care after her father went to jail, and the first phase of her traumatic life started from there (Books, 2023). During the time of her institutional care she had gone sexual harassment and even raped by one of her

teacher. The teacher named 'Terrence' used his authority to take advantage of her and abused and threatened her. Being a young kid, she did not have the words to describe what she was experiencing, and that eventually impacted her psychology. Maggie has seen many things in her life, from sexual harassment to a failed and broken marriage to child death. She has been backstabbed by the men since childhood and even failed to enjoy most of her motherhood. However, life doesn't go according to plan, and somewhere, her willingness helps her to survive after all the backlashes. The character has all the shades and there is a will to survive the horrific trauma and on the other hand darkness, depression, and anxiety from her past experience. Maggie has been there throughout her life to find real love, support and respect. Throughout her life she has experienced abuse, rape, betrayal from her surrounding male individuals. By the age of 9 Maggie had learned to keep secret of all her pain and she had the constant fear that in case she shared her experience that might lead her to more danger. Maggie has undergone mixed feelings and complex psychology in the case of her relationships and made wrong choices and ended up being lonely, broken and devastated. From their life experiences, Maggie has realized that the reaction of an individual is the reflection of their earlier experience, and it is ok to do. The abuses and mental trauma had impacted Maggie from the core of her soul, and she was not able to concentrate on her studies. She constantly felt that she did not have the same social facilities as her peers. That psychological and social battle forced Maggie to quit her studies and this is just the beginning of another chapter. After quitting her studies, she moved to another place and met her first happiness 'Damien' and married him. At that point Maggie was really happy and she was in love with him and wanted to live the happiest life with Damien. However, this time life had other plans for her as three of her children died one after another and their relationship had come to an end. This time period was one of the most devastating and depressing for Maggie as she could feel that her connection with her husband was going to be in vain (Sydney Reviews of Books, 2021). During her third pregnancy and the death of her second son Maggie felt less emo-

tional connection with Damien and that eventually ended in a while. The story not only describes Maggie's psychology, her struggle but at the same time also portrays a twist and turn for her life. After breaking up with Damien Maggie moves out to another nation and falls in love with a woman. That eventually states another chapter of her life, and she changes her name here to Josie, which signifies her willingness to live and gain happiness in life that she had never experienced for a longer period of time (Sydney Reviews of Books, 2021). Maggie falls in love with a woman named Tamaryan, who portrays that after being broken by men, she wants to be loved by a woman as for her men gives pain, trauma and violence. She tried to love Tamaryan from the bottom of her heart and wanted to give her that love and respect that she manifested from other men. However, that relationship didn't go well, and she realized that love was enough. It requires trust, and Josie, as in Maggie, was not able to reach that part. This chapter is one of the most heartbreaking parts and devastating on the other hand most impactful. This portrays that love, respect, and trust are required to feel loved and respected, that there should be both ways, and that life doesn't stop; it finds its own way to find happiness and love. In the last chapter, the reader can notice that life gives the opportunity to fill in the blank space and fall in love again. It is evident that love is like a river and it always finds a way to flow and meet its ultimate destination in various ways. Josie has moved with a loving man to America and to again believe in love, to stay in a relationship that gives hope that heals wounds and helps to grow. Maggie as in Josie got married to Jeff and tried to disassociate her from her terrifying past and make the relationship work. However, the fear of being abandoned and being broken never stops haunting Josie, and to prevent another breakup, Josie keeps many secrets about her life from Jeff. Jeff could feel that something was wrong with Josie but was not able to anticipate the horrific past life of Josie. Maggie said, "There was so much that I never told Jeff" (Down, Bodies of Light, 289). The entire story describes the ups and downs of life along with the psychological battle of a human being. It is evident that 'Bodies of Life' is a book that teaches its audience empathy, the power of willingness and

the pace of life. By looking into the context of the book, it can be stated that the statement "When life gives you a lemon, make lemonade out of it" is so relevant to the life story of Maggie Sullivan (Midalia, 2021). The woman has faced several setbacks despite always finding a way to survive and moreover she has "love" a chance every time. However she failed most of the time but never stopped believing in love. Moreover the story is inspiring for many women around the world and teaches all the sexually harassed, abused and abandoned women that even if life is not going as planned, never stop hoping for that happy day.

### 3. NOT HAVING A VOICE AS KID

As the stories start, readers can see that Maggie is talking to someone who knows her past and is talking about some past memories, and then from that, the readers can see the switch back to the past, which is in 1975 Australia. It can be seen that Maggie has a vulnerable past and a disturbed childhood and that eventually impacted her entire life to a great extent (Midalia, 2021). Young age Maggie Sullivan lost her mother and was initially growing up with her dad who was a drug addict. Whenever Maggie talks about her past, memories related to her father have always put him at rest as a loving man who was addicted to drugs and was not able to take care of her. Within these phrases the readers can see the option down of Maggie's life at that young age. Maggie, who was just a kid, was not able to understand what was going on with her and what was the meaning of it but she could feel that she was weak and she had no place to go. She needs something to hold tightly. At the age of 5 her drug addict father went to jail and the first ever turn off Maggie's life began from that. As her father went into jail, Maggie eventually became an orphan and was placed in state care. Maggie's traumatic life started at the age of 5 when she was sexually assaulted by one of her friends. She is a child who is fragile, scared, and doesn't have the words to describe what is going on with her -she is quite silent. Being a kid, she doesn't have the capacity to describe what she feels. Child actions can only describe that "it hurt to pee afterward and that she had 'fingertip-sized' bruises on her thigh that 'yellowed and eventually disappeared" (Down, Bodies of Light, 314). During her childhood she

has been moved often to brutal residential homes and till the time of adulations she has the desire for true friendship but she has only received pain. During the time of the institutional case, Maggie has also been sexually tortured by her coach (Sydney Reviews of Books. 2021). Maggie was so scared to express her feelings to the authorities or even to her classmates as the person who was abusing her had a great connection with authority, and that gave the monster the opportunity to prey on young girls who don't have a support system to ask for help. Being a little kid Maggie was devastated and she had no place to go; she didn't have the strength to share her feelings and to tell people what was happening with her. She could only think that she had come to a place that was terribly merciless and cruel. During the time of institutional care, Maggie was assessed by her tennis coach, who transformed Maggie's entire life. The Monster who was taking advantage of Maggie often Maggie by saying that she knows what she is doing. Being a nine-year-old, Maggie had no clue what was going on with her and why she was going through all this drama, and she didn't dare to speak to someone who was older and could have helped Maggie as she was devastated and fragile. At some point in time, even Maggie realized that in this world, there's no one to listen to her; there is no one who can protect her or guide her to the right path. From experience, Maggie eventually learned to keep a secret to herself and use this as a shield to protect herself from the rootless world. The book Bodies of Light describes Maggie's childhood, which haunted her throughout her life and eventually impacted her adolescence. Past experience, scared from her past, have eventually led her to more darkness, and she ultimately engaged in a toxic relationship with a 33-year-old man when she was just 16. Childhood is considered one of the most essential periods of an individual as the memories and experiences an individual gathers from their childhood help them to grow and express their cells as an adult (Hoyle et al. 2020). In the case of Maggie, her life experiences as a child and the trauma that she experienced through her childhood have made her restless in order to find true love and friendship as an adult. Undoubtedly the past experience has made her terrified about the world.

Despite Maggie having a genuine ability for empathy, being a young child she was empathetic towards other friends of hers. Maggie was trying to establish friendships with others, and she was desperate to save water for a friend from that tennis court, as she knew that that girl was also a target for that beast. Maggie's story, from all the expectations, tells about the power of feline, Residence, and, most importantly, self-belief. She has been in such a situation that was not suitable for any human individual to survive her past and has not only impacted her physically but mentally to a great extent. Maggie has seen the brutality of the real world and has experienced terror not only in her childhood but in adult life as well. She is not told the truth, and therefore, she spends her entire life trying to attach herself to someone else and find happiness and joy. From the psychological perspective Maggie had to deal with such a situation that has put her in darkness despite that she has a credible kindness towards others and also has said belief to find true friendship and love. The childhood stories and the experience of Maggie are heartbreaking and this shows how important it is to protect a child in ways to make her life seamless, happy and full of Joy. The author beautifully expresses all the feelings of the little girl who was suffering from a terrific phase and her innocence, which has been hampered by those Demons who were taking advantage of her. All the incidents by which Maggie has gone through have allowed her to adapt to be as well as possible. The life story of Maggie Sullivan inspires all the young women as this story is about a woman or a young girl that has seen many backlashes and has been abused by many men but still a desire to survive never ends. The story of Maggie is relevant, yet it shows the naked truth of the world and the battle of a woman that everyone has to undergo every day and that many people don't know about. Maggie's childhood experience affected her personal life as an adult and as a consequence she has made a few mistakes in order to select the right person as she was never told how are right person behaves. What is the action of a right person? Maggie Sullivan was completely aware of it, and that affected her love life and her career to a great extent. Maggie has tried to concentrate on her studies and establish a good relationship with

her friends and acquaintances. Still, she could never feel that emotional connection or the sociological bond as she has been in such circumstances that are not good enough for a human brain to develop. Bodies of Light has described Maggie Sullivan's journey to express her fall in love again. she allowed herself to fall in love again, and she believed in it. In spite of all the attempts at extinction, she failed to establish a bond with other humans in terms of friendship. All Maggie was wanted love care respect and trust that she was not able to get from a partners. The brutality she have faced at some point made her believe that men only give pain and that's why at some point of life fell in love with a woman and tried to fix her relationship. Still, again, she was not able to do it as she was holding back or selling due to her past experience and the brutality she had seen and the sky she had in her brain and her body that had really faded but not from her memory (Sydney reviews of books, 2021). The life story of Maggie Sullivan has many layers, and each face tells more about the social world and the actions of the surrounding women. Throughout her entire life, Maggie never imagined her dad to be a villain or a bad guy; rather, she has always remembered her dad as a lovely father who is just capable of taking care of a little girl. The character- Maggie is fragile but not volatile. She has the mental strength to go forward and believe in love again and again. Of Course all the transitions were not easy for Maggie and each time Maggie has changed her identity and location shows her withdrawal symptoms and her desperation to survive in this world. Through her life experiences, she has understood the importance of adaptation to that circumstance, and she has used it as a weapon to survive in the world and to become accustomed to her surroundings. The story is not only about Maggie who was trying to survive in this world or was facing option downs or going to several psychological faces but it is also about the rootless world that was being served to her and asked to live with.

#### **4. LOVE LIFE AND TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES**

The adolescent period is one the most crucial period for a person, and this period teaches most of the life lessons to a person, and that impact

the entire life of an individual. Since her childhood Maggie has faced many difficulties that have broken her and made her believe that men are the ultimate power and she has tried everything to find her soul mate. However fate had other plans for Maggie; she made bad choices due to her past experiences and the brutality by which she has gone through has also affected the psychology of Maggie. The author of the story beautifully described all the phases of Maggie's life with metaphors. The novel- *Bodies of Light* has drawn detailed pictures of various cultures and periods and has drawn vivid experiences of the love life of Maggie. As Maggie was growing, she had to deal with brutality and abuses, and this eventually allowed her to be more anxious, depressed and depressed. She also developed a tendency to attach herself to others. This scenario is not different for Maggie; she has faced many backlashes from her partners and that eventually made her grow withdrawal symptoms. As the story of Maggie Sullivan continues the readers can observe she has changed her identity and places to run away from her past and lead a happy joyful life. It is the natural tendency of an individual to lead a happy and joyful life and enjoy the most of it (Fuchs et al. 2021). This scenario is not different for Maggie; she has also tried her best to be loved and went to extreme scenarios to find true love in this world. In most of the cases; it has been seen that when an individual goes through violence, abuse, this transforms the entire life of that individual. In Maggie the readers can see that exact same things in her past life had never left her alone and that made her restless in finding the love of her life. In compiler to other women, Maggie has faced more difficulties, and that has affected her love life as well. Psychologically, it is evident that whenever someone fails in their love life that makes an individual go through withdrawal symptoms and other psychological consequences. Being a young adult Maggie fell in love with a 33 years old man and from that her experience in love became terrible as eventually he dumped Maggie (Sydney Reviews of Books. 2021) Maggie's relationship with 33 years old man named Ned was not liked by her foster parents Judith who had fostered her when Maggie was in high school. Judith was a sensible, composed woman, and she provided

Maggie with the best child care that she had ever expressed before. Being abandoned, Maggie has been brought up in "state care," and since her childhood, she has faced humiliation and sexual abuse from her surrounding environment. Despite all the love and care that Maggie's foster parent has given her, she fell in love with an older man who had eventually dumped her, and that disappointed her parent very much. Maggie realizes her feelings for Ned during the time of their physical relationship, but she was trying to hold him to be loved the way she loved him but didn't get that love. She described her feelings at the time of her physical relationship with Ned "Sometimes he was so rhythmic, grunting and heaving against me, that when I sneaked a look at his face, I got a flash of something primal but also pathetic, like watching a dog humping something's leg" (Down, *Bodies of light*, 402). During the time of Maggie's heartbreak, Judith supported her throughout the period and said that "she can be more than she is, "and Maggie trusted her (Sydney Reviews of Books. 2021). When Maggie recalls that phase she just wished that Ned could have treated her a bit more sensibly, and kindly. Maggie was in love with Ned, and she was passionate; Maggie said, "In those few seconds, I would have been happy for him to do anything with me, to make all my decisions for the rest of my life"(Down, *Bodies of Light*, 368). At that point, she also released the most important life lesson that that guy was not a demon or a monster- he did what he had learned from the ruthless world. It is true that every human action and reaction is a reflection of someone's actions or past expertise. Childhood trauma, a breakup with a man who is just double in age have affected her mind, and as a consequence, she was not able to pay attention to her studies. Another chapter of her love life begins the period- when Maggie was at Melbourne University(Sydney Reviews of Books. 2021). During her university days, she was not able to connect with others socially and her mind was allowing her to concentrate on her studies. One fine day she dropped out of college and at that period she met Damien and later on she got married to him. These times, the man was loving and caring for her and had genuine feelings for her, but this time also, her fate had other plans for her. The story of *Bodies of Light* is a

narrative of a lady who has been forced by the system that has repeatedly failed her to live a different life. As the story progresses from childhood, the readers can see that Maggie's Maggie Sullivan not only faces fraternity with a trial in our life, but she has also tried to love honesty in a concrete relationship but has failed each time. Although Damien was a good man who loved and both of them started their own family, destiny didn't support her at this point. Maggie has tried her level best to continue a relationship with Damien and she has planned their family but another tragic turn of Maggie's life started at that point when she lost her children. By this point of the story, the readers can see that in each and every face of Maggie's life, she had a child with difficult disappointment and anxiety failure. At the age of 3 when Maggie was a little kid she was abused by one of the friends of her father and when she grew up she was again abused and raped by one of the Tennis coaches when she was in the State care system. Sexual harassment, rape, and violence affect the psychology of an individual, and this impacts the rest of their life (Bongiorno et al. 2020). When Maggie was an adult, she made a bad choice by falling in love with a person who was double her age, and even after getting married to the love of her life, Maggie was not able to enjoy life. In each phase of her life such as being a kid as an adult and being a mother has dealt with anxiety, uncertainty and mental conflict. The time when she lost her kids was one of the hardest times for Maggie. Being a mother, it becomes difficult and heart-breaking to see the death of the child, and among all the challenges that Maggie has faced, this is definitely one of the greatest. At the time when Maggie lost her second baby and was pregnant for the third time within that period, she felt a less emotional connection with her husband. She lost her babies and her lover from her life despite all the willpower and courage that Maggie had in the relationship and motherhood. This story is full of characters and the readers can see various characters in the story, of course, the main character is Maggie and just like all the characters of the story she also has many shades. Within the time of her third pregnancy and grieving the loss of her second baby, Maggie felt that her relationship with her husband had come to an end

as she felt a less emotional and physical connection with him. One night, Maggie notices some sparkling bioluminescent lights on the water and calls Damien to enjoy the scenic beauty together. Maggie said, "I thought about how algae come to make its own light" (Down, Bodies of Light, 420). That night, the couple saw some cozy time that they had not spent in a few months. At this point, the readers can see her withdrawal symptoms as Maggie changes her name and shifts to another Nation to run away from her past. It cannot be denied that abusive childhood disturbs adolescence and the mental health of an individual and this eventually portrays the personality of that person to a great extent. In the case of Maggie, the scenario is extremely similar as she has tried many times to hide away from our past by changing her identity and nation. The novel rolls and Maggie has shifted to New Zealand and another chapter, another life lesson begins for Maggie (Sydney Reviews of Books. 2021). It is true that one can fall in love again and again as it is one of the ways of life to find happiness, respect, trust, and stability. After all the trauma and uncertainty in her life, she decided to change her identity and lead a new life by removing all the negativity from her past. This attitude of Maggie showcases her physiological condition to a large extent, being an abused kid, a betrayed lover and a failed mother she wants to change her old identity with the aim to stay away from all the past experiences and trauma. As mentioned earlier, love finds its own way - this statement is true for Maggie as in New Zealand Maggie, who is Josie, finds her love again. Josie is Maggie's new name, a new identity in a completely different nation. Josie falls into a caring and loving relationship with another woman, Tamaryan. This particular phase of Josie is miserable as the reader can see that the house is in love with Tamaryan. This particular phase of Josie's life gives a beautiful message that only love is not enough and respect and trust are required to maintain a relationship. Josie loved her love but she is closed off due to the past experiences and Tamaryan was not able to get through. As a consequence, this relationship was not able to survive for a longer period of time. Coming into a relationship with a woman was a great move by Maggie or Josie as she was trying to find peace

from the relationship and this also showcases that she was fed up with the betrayal and abuse both mentally and physically that all the men of her life gave her (Midalia, 2021). Maggie's relationship with a woman signifies that she is trying to move into a relationship that is stable and at the same time she wants to avoid all the harassment and heartbreak that she has received from the men. From a physiological perspective, it can be stated that from past experiences with all her relationships and abuses she has understood that men give all the pain. As a result, she tried her level best to let go of her past experiences and lead a happy life with a person she anticipated would find her peace and happiness. After breaking up with her girlfriend, Josie again changed her residence and moved to America to again start a new life. During that time, she met a new guy, Jeff, who was kind-hearted and trying to fill in the blanks in the house's life. Josie did not hold her back this time and she decided to give Jeff the chance to fall in love again and marry him. Throughout her journey, Maggie never stopped fighting and tried all the ways to find her soul mate and life partner. By looking into the life of Maggie aka Josie it is noticed that despite all the backlashes and mental breakdowns she never stopped to find a way. Even though she was not able to succeed, she never stopped herself to escape from her circumstances. Josie moved with Jeff and slowly and steadily tried to distance her from her past. However, at this point, she also found it difficult to establish a special bond with her husband and she did not have the courage to share all the incidents that she had dealt with. Jeff tries everything from his end to find her issues and identify the key to her ultimate happiness (Midalia, 2021). Mentally Josie is vulnerable and her earlier experience with motherhood was pushing her back to entertain Jeff having kids. This action of Josie portrayed that she was scared of her earlier experience with her three babies and was not able to phase motherhood this time. Being a woman, it is the most tragic experience to see the grave of her babies (Jewkes & Laws, 2021). Despite her desperation to live a new life and remove negativity she was not able to take a chance and failed another time as a mother. The story of *Bodies of Life* starts with a naive, little girl who is unaware of the real world she eventually becomes an adult and has

learnt to keep shut and the way was not easy.

## **5. VULNERABLE EXPERIENCES AND LIFE AFTER THAT**

The life story of Maggie Sullivan is frictional but the life lesson the story portrayed is the reality of the world. In every part of the world, there is a character like Maggie who is dealing with the entire trauma each day but still surviving by trying their level best. By passing on the life experience of Maggie Sullivan, it is clear that the story of her life could have been different if she had saved herself from all the abuses. However, in life, there is no such button that can change everything and bring back all year to undo the incidents and make life better. The traumatic experiences of Maggie never left her mind and therefore, despite all her attempts she never succeeded to move away from her past experiences. Trauma makes an individual rigid, composed and closed, and this eventually makes the lives of an individual complicated (Picione & Lozzi, 2021). In the case of Maggie the readers can see similar psychological changes in Maggie. Although she tried her level best to survive and move on from her past, deep down the fear of being abundant never left her. In the majority of cases, people have led a positive and happy life after experiencing trauma at some point in their life. In *Bodies of Light*, the author has shown a similar experience of Maggie, and this experience hacker shaped the overall life of Maggie, and she has found ways every. The character of Maggie Sullivan is full of complex shades, and these shades are nothing but the past experiences that she has faced due to the brutal behavior of others. Maggie has changed her identity and her residence several times and that shows her fear and her unstable mind that is chasing her every moment. After marrying Jeff they both tried their best to make their relationship work. However the life of Josie aka Maggie completely her and the decisions that she has taken till the time marrying Jeff and the decision she will take afterwards will complete hers. The book *Bodies of Light*, written by Jennifer Down, is about Maggie's life and her after-all experiences by coming to a phase where Josie, aka Maggie, anticipates what it means to have seemingly changed everything related to her life. After the attempts, she

is what she was. She has realized that the incidents she has been through cannot be changed, and she has to deal with them and move on as this is the natural way of life. Just like any other individual who has been abused, humiliated and assaulted, Maggie has understood that she should move on and try to live a life that she has manifested for a long period of time. Psychologically, one of the most tragic events that trigger mental illness are sexual abuse, domestic violence, and natural disasters that also break the morals of individuals. In the life story of Maggie Sullivan, she has faced the entire trauma, and this not only broke her heart and morale but inspired those backlashes. She never stopped trying to get away from her circumstances.

## 6. EMPATHIC ENGAGEMENT

By going through the life story of Maggie Sullivan, readers can feel a strong connection and empathy toward her. Author Jennifer Down has portrayed the life of Maggie extremely beautifully, and the phases and metaphors that she has used have enhanced all the shades of her character. It is essential for a good book to portray all the shades of the main as well as side characters in order to maintain the attention of the readers (Wan et al., 2020). The Bodies of Light Talk ends on a melancholy note as the readers can see how an innocent young girl grows into an adult and knows so much about the complexities and trauma of life. By assessing the story of Maggie Sullivan it can be stated that the life she led being an adult was made by her own decision. The life lessons of Maggie have made her audience realize that the life of each and every individual is the consequence of their own choices, and once the choices are made, there is one way back. Readers can feel the pain of Maggie Sullivan in every phase, and girls of every age group can relate their personal experiences to the main character of the story. The author has portrayed all the characters related to Maggie in an extremely attractive way that is just perfect to grab the attention of a wide range of readers. The story is full of layers, and readers can get the charm of the good times and the sorrow of the heartbreaking, barbaric tragedy of Maggie's life. The book had the perfect balance of emotions as at one point the readers can be emotional

by connecting with Maggie's personality, life and the battle that she had to continue through and the obstacles she has faced. This is the sign of a good book to ensure all the layers of the phases of all the characters are aligned (Caena, & Re-decker, 2019). On the other hand, readers can also feel motivated and inspired by looking into the ways she has found a way to find happiness. It is true that some of her attempts were not able to make her happy and were not able to bring the life that she desired. However, despite the failed attempts, Maggie has realized that life must go on; this cannot be started until her last breath. By going through this book, the readers can successfully observe the world from another perspective that will be able to change their lives for the better from all other perspectives. The readers can become more careful in making decisions and become more careful in choosing the way to live their life to the fullest. The author has not only expressed her thoughts and feelings through her story, but at the same time, she has showcased the psychology of all the characters associated with the main characters. The story talks about the struggle of a young girl who was unaware of several facts and the reality of life, and her life took several turns and made her a different person. Readers can feel the connection with Maggie as many of her life experiences are similar to others. In the society many women face violence from their loved one or betrayal, many of the women face sexual harassment and assault from any of the men of their lives.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The book Bodies of Light, written by Jennifer Down, is about a little girl that has grown in some circumstances that shed her entire life. The story is written in such a way that readers can see the struggle of a woman since childhood that has continued through her life. The books or the character- Maggie can be passed from a different perspective to realize the connection of the life story of the main character with the real world. In other words, it can also be stated that the story gives a lesson to all the readers that fall under all age groups, community, race and sexual preferences. The story of Maggie Sullivan is made up of several real-life incidents, and the way the author has described each and every small de-

tail related to the life of Maggie helps readers to connect with the character instantaneously. This story portrayed the will power and the life battle of a woman that Maggie had to deal with since she was 5 years old. In the story of Maggie Sullivan, the reader can see that there are all the elements of emotions that have made all the characters of the book well-known and easily understandable. People can relate to the story of Maggie and her psychology that have chased her throughout. Life is not what an individual anticipates; it is a lot more intense and complicated and the decisions people make affect their life.

The life Maggie had to lead initially was served by the circumstance of being a little of a drug addict. She did not have the choice to make her own decision and protect herself from the violence and sexual abuse. She is the victim of circumstances and that affected her future decisions to a large extent. Throughout her life she has chased happiness from others, as a kid she was not told the truth of reality and therefore led a life by chasing happiness, respect, and trust. As an adult she had led her on her terms and her past experiences have influenced most of her decisions. Readers can observe her fighting spirit and can be inspired by looking at the brave decision that has been made by her. The story also mirrors the reality of the world and the struggle of women to a great extent. Readers can develop knowledge about the society and the psychology of an individual effectively. This book has a lot of similarity with other books that has been written by focusing of the life of a woman. Still, this book has its own individuality and it is the shades and the graph of Maggie's life and the way Jennifer have arranged all the scenario together it is the USP of the book . Moreover, Maggie's circumstances and her decision made the character different from other characters.

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