

Traumatic Impact on Eleven for the Capitalist Exploitation in
Stranger Things



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Fall 2022

“The Impact of the Capitalist Exploitation Resulting Trauma in Eleven’s Character in
Stranger Things”

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of English and Humanities
University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
BA in English

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my dearest parents who have been my biggest support with their unconditional love and affection throughout the whole journey.

Acknowledgements

I want to start by expressing my gratitude to my supervisor, Senior Lecturer Mohammad Zaki Rezwan, The Department of English and Humanities. His advice assisted me to refine this Dissertation.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all of my faculty members for their support, constructive criticism, and suggestions during my journey at ULAB and my thesis as well.

I want to thank God for blessing me with a mother like Jahanara Afroza, without whom I would not have been able to graduate today, and a father like Azizul Wahab Khan, whose generosity, unending encouragement, and support helped me to get all of my achievements. I want to thank my family especially my beloved sister Tasmia Anni and my brother Shafqat Aziz for their unconditional love, support, encouragement and positive motivation. Also, I want to thank my dearest, the Assistant Director of English Zone K. Rubaiyat Tasmia for helping me throughout the whole journey, especially this dissertation.

Last but certainly not least, my supportive friends who have actually helped me to conquer all of my obstacles, particularly throughout my dissertation. I am grateful to have such supportive people in my life because without all of the aforementioned people, I consider myself zero.

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Abstract

Capitalism has been a synonymous topic when it comes about the consequences of development, prosperity and profit operation. Followed by this, exploitation initially takes up its place and has been exposed to the darkest sides massively in literature during the earlier ages. Many things are yet to be discussed even in recent times, one of those is the victim's trauma resulting from the decimated mental health that is caused by the exploitation itself. This research on *Stranger Things* will highlight the factors of capitalism and mental impact on Eleven that will work as a prognosis on this matter. The research will be conducted to simplify the lack of study on trauma of the victims who suffer from exploitation during their childhood and the following effects of it. Diverse research and featured components will be used in this study through the lens of Marxism, traumatic realism and how trauma takes place as a result of earlier traumatic events. This research will make a comprehension in cultural research that will let researchers contemplate capitalism, on the mental health of the victims who have witnessed it thoroughly therefore, that it does not only remain within the boundaries of capitalism but also focus on the innocent victims who suffer their whole life questioning their own selves. The aim of this paper is to represent how the exploitation of capitalism affects a particular victim through the hierarchy of a capitalistic society through *Stranger Things* and Eleven (as a prime victim) and also how it creates an impact on later life that becomes a reason for a doubtful mental health.

Chapter One

Introduction

Previous trauma affects anyone's initial stages of life. But when it occurs because of establishing a certain capitalist ideology it "powerfully" impacts on the victim's life. It is primarily crucial to comprehend the political views in *Stranger Things*. Eleven is triggered by darkness because of the traumatic experience she had at Hawkins Lab as a result of capitalist exploitation. The series examines the results of capitalism in America in the 1980s that resulted in trauma through the central character of the series Eleven by using modern media. It examines what capitalism does when kids stop playing at their homes and find more interests playing games at the malls, how it makes a kid afraid of darkness not for monsters but from humans. This paper has been conducted for researchers, students and also for general *Stranger Things* fans. The paper generates the reasons and socio- political background of the *Stranger Things* plot, Eleven's trauma arousal and the connection between capitalism and Eleven's trauma in *Stranger Things*. The paper is designed on America's capitalist society in the 1980s, and how it is portrayed in the contemporary media. Primarily it shows that the major reason for the trauma Eleven goes through is the rise of capitalism.

There has been a few research done on Eleven, and her trauma and also the aspects of capitalism but both are done individually not linking it with each other. For instance Chrisovolandou in his article "Psychoanalytic Examination of *Stranger Things*" Eleven: Trials and Tribulations of Childhood Trauma on the 'Child-Hero'" mentioned briefly about Eleven's psycho analysis and her trauma. But she did not depict the clear reason and gave a voice about capitalism in that manner. Similarly, Howell, Amanda, and Lucy Baker talked about parenting and the trauma that affected the kids and their parents are analyzed in addition the relationship of

Eleven and Dr. Brenner but not the capitalist connection that certainly created the massacre in their journal, “Parenting Into the Spin: Trauma, Coming of Age, and Raising Children in *Stranger Things*.” But, in Meek Allen’s book *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images*, he directly talks about power and capitalistic domination on media and he combines several trauma theories that include the depiction of class, society and the capitalist system that creates trauma. This book is not near to *Stranger Things* but it combines numbers of theoretical and political ideologies to generate my research topic. Therefore, these researches are fragmented and connected to either way but do not connect the relevancy at the same time equally. Therefore, this research has been conducted to fill in the links and put together so that this research can analyze the victim’s impact that improvisation of capitalism has done. Although there are researchers who have conducted research on either the victims or capitalism or the consequences of capitalism, there are less researches conducted on the mental health of the innocent victims. There is no significant research found on Eleven’s trauma that is caused by the major capitalist hierarchy. Apart from the socio-political perspective, Eleven starts to question her own identity that becomes doubtful. it impacts throughout her life and nearly destroys it. Therefore, this research has been conducted to manifest the aftermath of the victim's long term mental effects after getting exploited by the capitalist nobles.

It is important to work on the mental health of the victims who are the sufferers of the progressive capitalist class. Eleven has been taken away from her mother the moment she was born and clearly the moment she needed her the most. There are thousands of victims who are taken away that way to gain for the progressive capitalist society and there are clearly very few works that have been conducted on their mental health. This series has been found a clear

reflection of the capitalist culture and its fidelity towards the victim's mental health depiction. Therefore it is crucial to work on the leading plot of the series that is a social issue as well.

I applied the theories of capitalism and trauma theory. I made an effort to put America's 1980s capitalistic socio-political history into context using the Marxist concept of class distinction. I made an effort to consider the ways in which the series dealt with industrial advancement and the effects it had on the main character. The paper examines textual materials , providing a background look at how I approach my research on the socio-political atmosphere in America in the 1980s through the trauma that a fictional character named Eleven suffers as a result of the capitalist society itself, as illustrated by Cathy Caruth and Freud's repetition of the experience.

The world can not be stopped from progressing. This is not what I aim to establish. Rather, the finding from the paper is that Eleven is a child victim of the 80's America's politics and capitalism and the media also has its own way of depicting that. Primarily it shows that the major reason for the trauma is the rise of capitalism. I hope this paper will make a clear understanding about the socio-political structure of the 80's of America and the central victim's trauma.

Chapter Two

Methodology

This research paper is a qualitative research work . This research is based on analyzing the series, reading and analyzing research papers that are done on *Stranger Things* using Marxist class division and trauma theory. The methodology the paper uses is textual, which provides elements of capitalism that are present in several ways in the series. In addition, the paper required to go through several scholarly articles that show the rise of capitalism in the 80's of America. Moreover, some books and articles have been analyzed to conduct this research that depict trauma theory and how capitalism creates trauma on a victim who is directly related to it and this thesis connects the theories and put it together to analyze how it is shown through the series. For example: Sefa Bulut in his article, “Freud’s Approach to Trauma.” argues that according to Frued, “The trauma repeatedly disturbed the capacity to deal with other challenges and the victim” (Bulut,1) This statement penetrates with the whole idea of Eleven’s Trauma approach.

Karl Marx’s division of class has been applied to show the class differences in *Stranger Things* and Frued’s and Cathy Caruth’s analysis based on the repetition of potential previous events has been examined to look through Eleven’s trauma. The time frame of America during the 1980’s capitalistic socio-political history has been contextualized through the Marxist class division . I tried to go through the aspects in which the series deals with industrial progress and what consequences that created on the central character of the series. The paper analyzes textual contents from capitalist perspective which gives a background look at how I work on the socio-political situation in America in the 80’s through a fictional character, Eleven’s trauma that is

caused by the capitalist society itself using Cathy Caruth's and Freud's repetition of the experience.

Eleven is triggered by darkness because of the traumatic experience she had at Hawkins Lab as a result of capitalist exploitation. This conducts with these research questions "How Hawkins Lab is presented as capitalist hierarchy in *Stranger Things*? "How does capitalism cause trauma in Eleven in *Stranger Things*?" To illustrate this, many research papers have been gone through in this paper on capitalism and trauma theories also on Karl Marx's division of class, trauma approaches by Freud and Cathy Caruth to identify the research gaps as there are less research done on the victims of trauma that is caused by capitalism.

While the primary theoretical framework for the paper is Marx's division of class as a consequence of capitalism, the methodological design consists of a close trauma theory that analyzes a study of various symbols such as visuals, metaphors etc.

Though *Stranger Things* is not all about capitalism and its reflection. There are several aspects that are significant. As the first scene of the series starts with a scientist running away from a haunting creature all throughout the Hawkins' lab represents how Hawkins Lab might haunt throughout the whole series. Hawkins Lab is a solid depiction of capitalism and this is the best way to look through this because the analysis shows the aspects such as division of class, child exploitation, violence that results in lifetime trauma.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Eleven is certainly the main character of *Stranger Things* who has a special superpower and she has been experimented as an object in Hawkins Laboratory since she was born. As many experiments were done against her as a test subject, she has gone through a permanent trauma and that has impacted on her life since. She becomes claustrophobic as a result of these traumatic events. In addition, she displayed certain symptoms of recalling her horrific hallucinations at the laboratory often after her escape. “Government forces in *Stranger Things* are seen as heinous and destructive with devastating consequences for Eleven’s childhood and sense of identity. They are charged with the corruption and loss of innocence of the families whose lives they enter, often without permission and with a lack of respect for human emotions such as love and friendship.”(Mollet). This paper talks about the consequences of her earlier life and the post exploitation including adolescence, love and sexuality. The relevance of the article with my research topic is relevant and penetrates the ideas to analyze through intertextuality, transmedia, cinematic complex, nostalgia, geek culture through hyper postmodernism. In addition, as it discusses power and government it is connected to the impact of it.

Chrisovolandou Gronowski (2018) goes through a psychoanalysis of Eleven, the main character who exhibits extraordinary and super strength powers. Eleven is examined as a series' young protagonist who has a diagnosis for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has major psychosocial developmental issues (PTSD) difficulties she keeps overcoming as the series progresses. This article quotes, “Eleven, taking her namesake from the tattoo on her left forearm, was the subject of intense psychological experiments throughout her lifetime, beginning from birth. She was a product of a classified, conspiratorial US government project in which children

were used to test their psychic abilities in hopes to create supernatural weaponry for future use.”

how this influenced her development of a complicated trauma background, which is as significant as her crucial function to fathom the 1980s cultural mythology of the era that "Stranger Things" is based in. It also adds that the underlying themes of "Stranger Things" may be seen by concentrating on the psychology of the character Eleven, implying the necessity of exploring more into the series from other perspectives. This article analyzes conspiracy theories, the psychoanalysis by the diagnosis of Eleven's mental state that were caused by the inappropriate nurturing. This topic is related to mine as my topic also deals with the behaviorist structural changes of Eleven and caused trauma within herself. To understand the integration of Eleven's trauma and analyze it, it is also important to understand the settings of 80's America itself. In the United States, awareness of the impacts of trauma, such as recollections and withdrawals, have grown in a significant way since the 1970s. Americans can now claim to be familiar with the term posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) even though they do not meet the requirements for diagnosis set out by the American Psychiatric Association. This volume aims to demonstrate that despite how deep ingrained these concepts are in modern American thought, they are broader in application than the typical thoughts.

The article "Parenting Into the Spin: Trauma, Coming of Age, and Raising Children in *Stranger Things*." dispatches the idea about parenting and how parenting plays a huge impact on Eleven's mental health. Baker, who has achieved her doctorate from Griffith University and Howell a lecturer from the same, depicts the transition of how the families react to the different sort of traumas through "parenting into the spin" and how they keep the relationship between their children and their expectations keeping the traditional practices during the 80's. The paper is designed as a qualitative format. The topic resembles the current topic as both talk about

Eleven's development while living in Hawkin's Lab where she considers Dr. Martin Brenner as her papa and the current research topic relates with the relativity of her manipulation and the exploitation of her power that is forceful and operated by a man she calls "papa". The increasing attention on males in worry positions is one of the effects of previous trauma and current fear. Contrasting in Season Two's heavy emphasis on diverse male characters playing good parents balances Season One's great focus on the cruel and opportunistic Dr. Brenner, the terrible father. Nevertheless, the theme of the dysfunctional parent persists. Bad fathers are now linked to the exploitative peaks and normative failings of patriarchal control within the nuclear family itself, rather than just with patriarchal structures of government or even broken families like the Byers, despite the fact that Brenner's wrongdoings continue to resound through the trauma of Eleven and the ongoing monstrous incursions of the upside down.

According to the argument made in the book by Allen Meek *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images* is that the theoretical and cultural discourses surrounding trauma and experiencing, which have become so prominent in recent humanities research, often tend to reinforce rather than challenge the notion that some events are traumatic for large collectives, such as regions or particular ethnic groups. Genuine modes of witness that directly communicate experience outside of the protocols and conventions of mainstream media are sought after by recent trauma theory. (Allen). This book talked about Psychological theories of trauma that have shown how exposure to physical pain or situations in which one's life is in danger can result in long-term behavioral and cognitive problems. Trauma theory investigates how the chronology of trauma creates an event that is perpetual and dislocated in time and space. It might not have been noticed at the time it happened, but it often pops up in the form of bothersome recollections, phobias, obsessive acting out, and nightmares.(M.Allen). Eleven in *Stranger*

Things her discovery of a strange monster aimed to stimulate a dual function, however, causes things to change. Upon coming into contact with the false monster, Eleven starts to have unpleasant memories. She recalls repelling the Flayed in Starcourt Mall and the instant she lost her abilities. But the worst part is that some bullies dress up as monsters and attack her. Eleven has a history of having flashbacks to an extreme traumatic past that are related to her current problems. Through terrifying memories, we learn how Eleven was subjected to psychological harmful experiments during her whole childhood by a figure she knows as her Papa in order to identify the impact of her abilities, which, as we soon learn, allow her to enter a world inhabited by a predatory animal.

Richard Sennett explains in his book *The Culture of the New Capitalism* depicts in contrast to the perspective of rigid and dynamic bureaucracies and refers to iron cage, advocates of both commercial and governmental institutions have advocated that adaptive, global enterprises offer a paradigm of freedom for individuals in past years. Sennett contends that the current economic system has brought forth fresh social and mental traumas eradicating old problems. Even just a particular sort of person can thrive in erratic, fragmented entities: the culture of contemporary capitalism needs an individual identity that is focused on the near term, relies on prospective capacity rather than achievement, and is ready to disregard or forsake prior experience. Sennett looks at a more lasting definition of oneself in the last part, as well as what concrete steps may be taken to counteract the destructive consequences of restructure. This book will help to analyze the hypothesis of the contemporary capitalism on which the exploitation takes place in terms of expectation. Hawkins is a governmental scientific research lab in *Stranger Things*. Where plenty of children are being used and their childhood have been destroyed and their super power has been misused that is intentional for a specific profitable

reason. If we think about outside the series, every industry uses children as a tool to increase individual profits for the sake of prosperity which is destructive.

As per Marxist theory, there is a significant impact on society's productivity reflecting on their class. Therefore, according to the perspective that views history as a class struggle, it is being watched by conflicts for social, political, and economic advantage. In its unfettered nineteenth-century form, modern industrial capitalism is prone to the exploitation of one social class by another.. e. It concerns the way that employees are robbed of their whole humanity and are regarded as "hands" or "the labour force" when capitalist aims and considerations of profit and loss are predominant, such as the impacts of industrial closures. (Barry, 160-161) The books provide a very fundamental idea of Marxism and how Marxism has to be seen as a primary outline. This book is essentially important to analyze methodology and fragment each piece of evidence that is found in *Stranger Things* for example Season 3 is influenced by the Cold War in a few different ways. The deployment of the Russian army is the most glaring example. The USSR seeks to harness the Upside Down for the sake of its sinister Cold War objectives, and it has learned that Hawkins is where the gap between worlds is thinnest. Soviet spies, with the partially-inadvertent assistance of Hawkins' corrupt mayor Lary Kline, construct a massive scientific center underneath the supermarket and are activated in purchasing properties all across the town.

The nature of capitalism is rethought in this innovative and ambitious work. Lippit , a famous heterodox economist in the United States, provides a comparative analysis of several systems of capitalism in the book *Capitalism*. He explains that political economy has placed a premium on the examination of class and class conflict since the classical era in economics, which spanned the century from Adam Smith to Karl Marx. Early in the nineteenth century,

David Ricardo established three major classes: landowners, capitalists, and laborers. Because he anticipated, like many of his predecessors, that laborers would be constrained to a subsistence income in the long run.(Lippit). The creature of capitalism lingers over the entire series in *Stranger Things*. Although the literal monsters pouring slime all over town are far more distracting. Nonetheless, the entire show revolves on the new retail complex, Starcourt. The mall is entertaining — El and Max connect over the 80s-themed shopping spree replete with photography — but it is also driving local businesses out of business and displacing residents. And it emerges out that it was most intended in most cases to conceal the secret Russian laboratory that is assisting the Mind Flayer in re entering the town. Another negative stain on its name is the protest against it, and the corrupt mayor supporting it in the guise of vintage American business.

Marxism is a theory that combines social, political, and economic theory. It was created in the latter part of the 19th century. In order to combat the inescapable inequality that capitalism breeds, it suggests a structure of shared ownership of the means of production. Its major concern is with the effects of a society divided between an owning class and a working class. This consists of an outrage of severe exploitation of the working class. Owners must squeeze the most work out of their workforce while paying them the minimum wage feasible in order to generate more profit - according to Marxist argument of class division in *Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Due to the ownership exploitation of the workers labor for their personal advantage, this causes a disparity between the landlords and the laborers. The mayor's reputation as a tyrant is among *Stranger Things's* most glaring plot points. He is responsible for bringing a new mall to Hawkins, which some locals feel has come at the expense of the community's historic downtown. The majority of the businesses downtown are closed and vacant. When asked

about this and how the mall contributed to the crisis, he grinned and said, "That's simply good old-fashioned American capitalism," while lighting a cigar. Two strata of individuals had already been established as the number of capitalists increased. For instance, Steve Harrington and Robin Buckley, who work at the ice cream shop, are examples of the working class while the mall is a reflection of the capitalistic society. The source *Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* is resourceful in order to understand the class division right.

Cathy Caruth's trauma theory is one of the most prominent examples of trauma theories. This trauma notion is a prominent discussion in Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* which employs Caruth contends that dissociation and delay associated with trauma make it difficult to comprehend or adequately recount a traumatic event. The painful incidents and large-scale historical tragedies can never be identified ; rather, they can be grasped by someone with a damaged sense of history who sees the past as a performance or a repeat. from being a little child to a teenager. Each season shows how she has changed over time and how her personality has evolved. Her trauma was one thing that remained constant. Whether it's darkness or an overflowing bathtub, every new situation she encounters causes her to remember her old existence. As part of the procedure, Eleven once more had her vivid flashbacks of her time as a little girl at Hawkins Lab. The book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* is essential for the theoretical point of view which will provide me with the theoretical structure of the paper.

Chapter Four

The Political History and Capitalism

In the book *The Culture of The New Capitalism*, Richard Sennet asserts that "Capitalism would remain, and remain the issue." (180). It is important to understand the political ideologies that have been subjected in *Stranger Things*. It is a series that discusses the outcome of 80's capitalist America through contemporary media. This chapter talks about the 80's capitalistic spin of America and the political ideologies and its portrayal in contemporary media. At the end of this chapter will come to an understanding of the victimization of the capitalistic point of view of the series and the outcome of it.

From 1953 through 1973, the CIA undertook the secret operation known as Project MKUltra with the intention of creating mind-control methods that might be applied on adversaries during the Cold War. In addition to several other experiments, the subjects—many of whom were unaware—were subjected to heavy hallucinogenic drug usage, physical and emotional abuse, insufficient sleep, and malnutrition. Many people die as a result of the procedures. The Duffer Brothers, makers of *Stranger Things* appear to have hit gold with *Stranger Things*, as seen by the series's immediate success. Its allure is no accident, and while the 1980s past may have played a role, it can be assumed it has more to do with America's ongoing obsession with imagined threats from invisible forces to childhood naivety and the solitude of our thoughts, both of which are linked. *Stranger Things*' "Chapter Six: The Monster" has the major reveal: Eleven, the daughter of Terry, a previous victim in the CIA's Project MK-Ultra, was seized by a person to be utilized as a mental weapon against the Russian Empire. Everything is prevalent: kidnapping, brainwashing, the Man, and an irrational dread of

capitalism. In other words, it has all the hallmarks of a superb conspiracy theory, brimming not just with authority mistrust but also with other concerns and fears.(Beck, 2-3).

Hawkins National Laboratory at Hawkins, Indiana, one of the institutes involved in the research, was led by Dr. Martin Brenner. The laboratory is confidential and protected; a barbed wire fence ringed it, and militaries were assigned to safeguard it. It comprised a structure that descended to an underground bunker. There was just one track getting to it, which was hidden away in a jungle. This laboratory's trials commenced in 1953. Terry Ives, a young college student who was pregnant at the time of the studies, was one of the volunteers. Terry's frequent use of exotic substances, resulted in the birth of her girl Jane with exceptional mental capacities such as telepathic and telekinesis. Jane was removed from her mother after the delivery, and there was no formal record of her presence. Terry filed a lawsuit against Dr. Brenner and the researchers, but the case was dropped owing to insufficient evidence, and Terry f ends up in a deep coma that required the supervision of her sister. Jane was given the new name "011" and continued to be a lab rat in Dr. Brenner's lab tests. Even trained her skills by forcing her to ruin things, and they tried to mentally murder a cat. Last but not least, they put her in an isolation chamber where she was able to snoop.

Season 3 is influenced by the Cold War in a few different ways. The presence of the Russian army is the most glaring example. The USSR wants to harness the Upside Down for its own wicked Cold War objectives, and it has learned that Hawkins, Indiana is where the gap between worlds is thinnest. Soviet agents, with the partially-inadvertent assistance of Hawkins' corrupt mayor, construct a massive scientific center underneath the mall and are active in purchasing properties all across the town. But from our own vantage point in 2019, we see that

the US conquered in the Cold War. In such a situation, going back to previous anxieties is also a means to go back to former victories. In season 3, a flashy Fourth of July carnival with plush animals as prizes seduces a Soviet scientist to join the good, virtuous American side. On July 4, several youngsters shot the Mind Flayer with pyrotechnics kept in a shopping cart at that temple to consumerism, the mall. In the finale, the US military, which was presented in previous as the enemy, charges as part of the lance to clear up. As it is represented in contemporary times, The Duffer Brothers kept the diplomatic point of view as well by keeping the characters such as : Murray and Alexia. They are portrayed as the parallel personalities in terms of the Russians. It clearly is an aim to avoid further conflict in the contemporary point of view.

Capitalism can be traced to the establishment of development. With development, individuals can own profit with the help of a labor class. To establish the scene, let it be imagined that it's 1984 in Hawkins, Indiana, and the *Stranger Things* kids are now in their adolescent years. The majority of them have started dating, are uncomfortable in learning how to love, and have grown tired of the geeky shenanigans that dominated the show's first two seasons. Why play D&D in Mike's basement when there's a brand-new shopping center to discover! The mall is a recent addition to Hawkins and acts as a gathering place for a wide variety of fresh personalities to populate the center, shops, and food stalls. Richard Sennet states in his book *The Culture of the New Capitalism* that “both employers and unions seeking to stabilize and regularize these institutional monsters even if it meant sacrificing efficiency.”(32-33). This economic activity is referred to as trade that results in exploitation of the working class. The emergence of capitalism changed this. One of the most obvious facts of *Stranger Things* is about the mayor Larry Kline who is a bully. He is in charge of bringing Hawkins a new mall, which some residents believe has come at the expense of the town's old downtown. Many of

downtown's trades are shuttered and abandoned. He smiles and adds that that is just good old-fashioned American capitalism, as he lights a cigar, when questioned about this and the contribution of the mall to the crisis. If it is noticed, as the capitalists started growing, two classes of people have already been created. For instance: the mall is a representation of the capitalistic world, Steve Harrington and Robin Buckley are the working class who work at the ice cream parlor.

In the book *Capitalism*, renowned American heterodox economist Lippit compares and contrasts several forms of capitalism. He says that since the classical era in economics, which covered the century from Adam Smith to Karl Marx, political economy has placed a focus on the analysis of class and class struggle. David Ricardo created the three main groups of landowners, capitalists, and workers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Considering that he believed, like many of his forebears, that workers would be limited to subsistence wages. (Lippit, 108). Despite being a spoiled brat, Steve Harrington manages to work at an ice cream parlor in season 3 as he had a conflict with his dad which also shows an aspect of capitalism as well. But he would not leave working as he is also involved in exploring the conspiracies of the Russians. It develops into a concept in season 3. All of these symbols of capitalism reinforce the idea that the country that has the freedom to purchase goods overcame the advancing communist rabble. Steve Harrington, states in repeat that he works for the ice cream parlor Scoops Ahoy while being questioned by Russian military members. He's stating the truth, and by doing so, he's informing those oncoming officers that the happy worker of capitalism which is a foster statement keeping the exploring adventures he conducted with the kids against the Russians for whom he works at the parlor. Marxism contends that capitalism will inevitably fail because it is uneven and dysfunctional as a means of social and economical survival. Capitalism is described

as a method of manufacturing in which owners of businesses (known as the bourgeoisie) own all of the means of production (the manufacturer, the industrial machinery, the commodities, the desired outcome, and the revenue generated from their selling), while laborers (who are recruited for salaries) are only given access to them during the the work they do. In addition, employees earn lower wages than the commercial benefit that their labor generates for the capitalist.

The fundamental class conflict between labor and capital is fueled by this excess labor, which also provides the revenues for capitalists. Marx anticipated that people would grow hostile of company owners and feel isolated from both it and from their own humanity. In order to retain its position of privilege and power, the bourgeoisie also uses civil society, like as the governments, press, university, practice of religion, and the financial systems, both tools and weapons even against workers. (Blunden, 287-289). Unpredictability and change are prominent aspects of capitalism. That is something different from showing indifference or taking pleasure in the suffering of losers in that equation.

One socioeconomic class is vulnerable to being exploited by another under modern industrial capitalism, in its uncontrolled nineteenth-century form. e. It is about how workers are stripped of their whole humanity and treated as "hands" or "the labour force" when capitalist goals and profit-and-loss considerations are at the forefront, such as the effects of industrial closures. (Barry). In Season 3, we see that several downtown industries have been closed down due to the opening of Star Court Mall. But the authority (corrupted Mayor Lary Kline) even after getting hit by Jim Hopper pay no attention to that.

One of them is the background of Eleven's plot and the other one is how that occurs in terms of the capitalistic point of view. *Stranger Things* is a series that examines the results of

capitalism in America in the 1980s using modern media. This chapter discusses American capitalism in the 1980s and political ideologies and also the sufferings and the conspiracies that have been discovered later keeping the contemporary time frame in mind by putting Russia in the opposition and at the same time in a diplomatic zone. Therefore, this chapter is about the two different aspects of the background. From these seasons the evidence of capitalistic aspects have been found which are connected with the major factors of Hawkins Labs conspiracies. These lead to resulting trauma in Eleven's character. In this chapter I tried to locate the aspects of capitalism through Lippit, Beck.B and Peter Barry's book's capitalistic interpretations.

Chapter Five

Trauma and Eleven

Trauma is a psychological reaction to a catastrophic occurrence, such as a tragedy, violence. In the long run, responses can lead to unstable emotions, memories, lack of contact, and even distress. Those who experience trauma will be affected by it and will carry it with them for the rest of their lives. In *Stranger Things*, the main character, Eleven, possesses a unique superpower and has been used as a test subject in Hawkins Laboratory ever since she was born. She was used as a test subject for several tests, which left her with a lasting trauma that has affected her life ever since. These horrific incidents cause her to develop severe claustrophobia. She also often recalled her horrifying hallucinations in the lab after her escape, showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Eleven is shown as shy, culturally distant, and afraid of other people because she was raised at Hawkins National Laboratory and devoid of socialization. She developed into a strong protector, though, and showed everlasting loyalty to those who looked out for her, even to Mike, with whom she falls in love. She even gave her life to defeat the Monsters when it threatened to kill her companions.

Even though they had been apart for a year, Eleven showed great fortitude in protecting her companions by traveling back to Hawkins when she realized they were in threat and bonding with them in the meantime. Dr. Martin Brenner had a long relationship with Eleven; not only did he determine her upbringing, but he also may have been the reason she was born. Her mom Terry, who agreed to be an MKUltra test subject, had been used as a subject in Brenner's experiments. During these examinations, Terry unexplainably got pregnant. Brenner whisked the baby away from the moment she was born after learning about the pregnancy and raised her at Hawkins Lab.

Eleven has distressing recollections of the experiments Dr. Brenner does in the lab all through the rest of season 1. The first thing that triggered her was the darkness that she saw inside Mike's cupboard. By this she witnesses her first encounter with the traumatic flashbacks. She repeatedly calls "Papa", Dr. Brenner, who she considers as her papa, abandons her in a darkroom despite seeing her sufferings in season 1 episode 1. Eleven faced extreme emotional trauma. She combines the roles of hurting sufferer and furious fighter, making her a genuine center. Her primary nemesis, Dr. Brenner, is the target of her wrath, as is made clear at the conclusion of Season 2. Morris draws attention to the governmental researchers' important role as opponents in E.T. due to their status as "impersonal adults, deeply misunderstanding the needs of children." (Mollet, 10). While being under Dr. Brenner's control, Eleven would be punished by being confined in a tiny space, maybe for several hours.

She becomes anxious as a result of these traumatic events. She exhibited some symptoms of post-traumatic distress, often recalling the terrifying events that happened in the lab after she escaped. *Stranger Things* portrays government powers as evil and terrible, having severe effects on Eleven's development and perception of herself. They are accused of disrespecting human feelings like love and friendship and of corrupting and robbing the families whose lives they enter of their innocence. (Mollet, 12).

Chrisovolandou Gronowski in his article "Psychoanalytic Examination of *Stranger Things*" explains Eleven, the main character experiences childhood trauma and examines her psychoanalysis. Eleven possesses superhuman and super strong abilities. Eleven is seen as a young lead character in a series who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and faces significant psychosocial developmental challenges (PTSD) that she overcomes. How this affects her ability to build a complicated trauma history and how important it was for her to

understand the cultural mythology of the 1980s, the time period that *Stranger Things* is set in. In the very beginning of season 4, it has been seen the earlier stages of Eleven and how those start from. Eventually, in this season, Eleven struggles with her college life, making new friends and personality disorders. She struggles with all the bullying that she faces. Moreover, there are no names required for all the kids who have been raised in the Hawkins Lab. They are preferably called according to their given numbers “Ten”, “Eleven”, “Six”. (Season 4, episode 1). This shows how they are kept away from the external world. She had significant childhood trauma, which has affected her behavior in the past and is still influencing her present, beginning with her birth. Despite her physical escape from the lab at the beginning of the series, Eleven is nonetheless troubled by the traumas of her past. This comprises unpredictable responses like yelling, screaming, and shaking, persistent hypervigilance, and unpleasant recollections of being hauled through hospital hallways before being dumped in a tiny closet. It might be argued that Eleven meets the maximum criteria for a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis because she employs a range of coping mechanisms to deal with her trauma and likely condition.(Gronowski.C, 15)

Eleven has a very dysfunctional structure of her family unlike the other characters (Will,Mike, Nancy,Jonathen). She only considers Dr. Brenner is her parental figure and calls her “papa” (Season 1, episode1). But it is unfortunate that Dr. Brenner twisted her whole world with nothing but exploiting her super powers. Though she gets out of this, the consequences do not leave her. After getting over that she was adopted by Hopper hoping for a better life. Hopper finds her lost little girl again through Eleven and they both start a new life. She also gets captive as Hopper did not want her to lose and to keep her safe from all the threat. She was not allowed to leave the house. Again, she gets into the same situation but in a different context. (Howell &

Amanda) Claim in their article that Eleven has been targeted by both governmental authorities and otherworldly monstrosities as a result of her trauma as a used girl weapon at Hawkins Lab. Hopper takes her to a cabin in the woods where she is isolated from everyone out of concern for her safety and in an effort to avoid federal officials. She fights this need to be protective much like Will does. Nearly a year has passed when we first meet her, and it is obvious that her isolation and Hopper's constraints are making her earlier trauma come to mind. Hopper is far more compassionate than Brenner. She is being trained, manipulated, and even forced as part of a tight guarded covert project. In reaction, she plays out a more severe version of the typical teenage girl's hormonal and identity conflicts, heightened by her unique circumstances and abilities: she screams at Hopper. One thing to understand here is that both Hopper and Eleven have gone through past traumas. Hopper lost her only daughter who died earlier. He fears losing Eleven because he finds the lost father daughter affection through Eleven. Eleven has now tasted the outer world. She wants freedom and she no longer wants to be kept as captive. Both of their traumas are caused by these clashes between them. Sefa Bulut in his article "Freud's Approach to Trauma" says, according to Freud,

The trauma repeatedly disturbed the capacity to deal with other challenges and the victim "reaped the repressed materials as a current experience"; this phenomenon was called "repetition compulsion." Freud believed that the aim of repetition was to gain mastery, but current clinical findings have shown that this rarely happens; instead, Fine believed that "repetition compulsion" is an attempt to

transform a passive traumatic experience into an active one. (Bulut, 1)

So, according to Freud, The sufferer "reaped the repressed materials as a current experience" as a result of the trauma, which continually interfered with their ability to handle new difficulties; their traumatic events are responsible for their later behavior. Although Freud thought repetition was used to acquire mastery, modern clinical research has demonstrated that this seldom occurs. Therefore "repetition compulsion" was an effort to make a passive painful experience active. In the series eleven passes a hard time whether it is socializing or trusting or finding her own identity. As she has a past of trusting and getting deceived in a painful way by Dr. Brenner and this is referred to as "repetition compulsion." by Freud. This seems a current experience every time she gets triggered.

What the series accomplishes on screen is to inform what a particular traumatized victim again experiences what happens to that victim for entertainment, regarding the message it tries to make about trauma. Eleven was exploited in the most horrific manner possible. We often say that pain always makes us stronger is false, but it also doesn't mean that trauma always makes us weaker. Everytime she faces any traumatic events she gets through it however she can. Whether escaping or fighting through it, they make her even the strongest. Her trauma becomes her power. In my opinion, after analyzing Eleven's trauma the traumatic incidents, fear and doubt became common emotions acknowledging her strength as well.

Chapter - Six

Capitalism and Trauma of Eleven in *Stranger Things*

The Duffer Brothers are the creators of the American science fiction series *Stranger Things*. On July 15, 2016, it debuted as a Netflix original series. The mid-1980s setting of the series is the hypothetical Indiana town of Hawkins. The first season, which takes place in November 1983, follows several character groupings as they independently look into the disappearance of Will Byers. The second and third seasons that followed broadened the scope of the story by examining the complicated consequences of the events of November 1983. The show's focus is considerably expanded in the fourth season, which features the first major stories set outside of Hawkins. The series will end with a fifth season, which is currently under development. Apparently, this series looks more like a horror sci-fiction one. But, with the capitalistic frame, if there is a concurrent conviction that engaging is vital to prevent being harmed, the body reacts to dangers with restless awareness. This is referred to as a state of hypervigilance in trauma terminology, which is the desire to constantly check the surroundings for the risk that former threats would reappear and risk one's lives once more. This threat is straightforward, conducted in Eleven's character with multiple events that keep haunting her everyday.

The basic plot of *Stranger Things* still involves rugged outcasts in a simple town in America battling creatures of another realm, however as the show's tale moves into the middle of 1980s as depicted, it seems to be forced to address its broader political framework. The portrayal of American scientists and bureaucrats working in the heart of the heartland as enemies may have been controversial, but the connections between Hawkins Lab and the US government were at better ill-defined, making it possible to enjoy the sketchy bad guys while engaging in political

commentary. The third season continues the notion of the evil that resides inside by situating its hidden lab underneath Starcourt mall, the neon-lit commercial complex that serves as a crucial site in the conflict with the Mind Flayer, but it reverses the narrative with its human adversaries. With the promise of free ice cream as compensation, the immature fan favorite Erica, who was promoted to series regular status this season, delivers a two-minute monologue about the benefits of American capitalism and how it influences her decision to become engaged in the main mystery. It is not supposed to take it as serious since it is kind of a ridiculous comical moment and eventually her monologue is the closest *Stranger Things* gives its victims an idea, one that slides into the war over Communist Russia. Being one of the most watched television programmes in the world, *Stranger Things* was always going to evolve into a brand that Netflix could promote and develop to their liking. However, season three provides sufficient proof that the show's position as a successful and distinct American Franchise has entered the plotline and posed certain issues that the producers appear unwilling to address.

The fear or the unwillingness might come from the authority. Wesley G. Pippert in his book *An Ethics of News* says, "The public does not believe that the leaders of our institutions and our government are as dumb or corrupt as they appear in the press." Pippert continues by saying that the media's influence on public opinion is not what gives it power. but "in its selection of the stories for its audience and in setting the 'agenda' for them" .(55) Though it is a contemporary series it still gets into the propaganda of capitalism. *Stranger Things* itself is released on a commercial platform "Netflix". Netflix followed the agenda to balance the political influence as well. The media itself is dominated by capitalist propaganda. For example, in the series, The Russians are the leading capitalists in the nation and under their influence all the industries have started to mark themselves as the capitalist individuals. Which is visible to each of the people.

On the other hand, there are some characters like Murray Bauman, Alexei and Dimitri who are portrayed as the foil characters of the Russians. They are seen as sympathetic, hospitable and accommodating knowing the fact that they are helping the Americans regardless of their sake. Does it appear dumb in a contemporary series on America's most influential political history? This consideration relates to what Pippert says, we see what the media wants to show us. Media has their boundaries that are controlled by the power itself. This is the reason why the mutual characters are introduced to balance the whole political agenda. They followed the mutual balance within the characters to avoid any political clash.

In *Cathy Caruth's Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History*, which uses a specific reinterpretation of Freud's trauma theories to further a wider poststructural issue with the explanatory boundaries of linguistics and history, this trauma concept is most featured and it is notable. The study set the stage for the critical analysis on the importance of trauma in literature and the connection between personal and collective trauma. According to Caruth, trauma's latency and dissociation impair the ability to understand or describe a traumatic incident in its entirety. Individually traumatic events and collective historical severe events can never be recognized explicitly; instead, they can be understood via a disrupted sensibility that views the past as a sort of performance or repetition. (Caruth, 11). This model's conception of trauma's psychodynamic problem for researchers is that it can not integrate into the mind and memory. Considering trauma as a distinguishing absence and the delayed reappearance of the repressed through Freud and Lacan's beliefs, Caruth says that “not locatable in the simple violent or original event in the individual's past” but only identified in “the way it is precise not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on” (Caruth, 17 & 4). Traumatic incidents

and its resulting isolation prevent the allocation of a fixed value to that situation since the level of panic renders the mind incapable of understanding it. Even though the experience may never be described or properly understood, it damages the self by acting like a disease in awareness.

The traumatic experience affects awareness and recollection of negative adaptation and pathologically, preventing the experience from being absorbed into a life story. From season 1 till season 4 each season shows the development of Eleven, from being a little girl to an adolescent. Each season depicts her development over the time and the changes of her personality. One thing that was consistent was her trauma. Every time she faces something new triggers her past life whether that is darkness or a bathtub filled with water. After losing her power, Both Dr. Brenner and Dr. Owens got Eleven to engage in an experiment to regain and even enhance her skills in season 4. Eleven again experienced her vivid flashbacks of her time at Hawkins Lab as a young child as part of the process; she recalled Henry Creel was accountable for the murder of the other former test subjects and that she had attacked and exiled Henry to the Upside Down on the same day. But this process was conducted for their reasons. El's (Eleven) powers were successfully restored due to the plan, but it was cut short when the US Military began an attack under the direction of the doubtful Colonel Sullivan. Eleven overwhelmed the military's attempts to murder her, and through the help of Mike, Will, Jonathan, and Argyle, she was able to flee. As a result, in every aspect she tries to escape from the trauma and she no longer wants to face it.

Here, capitalistic spin binds her in every possible way. As a victim of the capitalistic horrible trauma, she tries to get away from it. As Allen Meek asserts in his book *Trauma and Media: Theories, Histories, and Images* and makes the following argument: the idea that some events are traumatic for large collectives, such as regions or specific ethnic groups, is frequent

reinforced rather than challenged by the theoretical and cultural discourses surrounding trauma and experiencing that have become prominent in humanities research. Recent trauma theory looks for genuine modalities of testimony that express experience outside of the rules and conventions of mainstream media. Allen in this book discusses psychological theories of trauma that have demonstrated how long-term behavioral and cognitive issues can arise from experiencing physical pain or being in life-threatening circumstances. He also says,

Image does not register the trauma of the camp in a direct, but in a belated, sense. The image does not transmit a traumatic shock, but rather survives as part of a collective memory shaped by media representations that usually served some political interests. (Allen, 170)

Therefore, It is clear that the mass media shows us things in the context of present power ideologies. The capitalistic formation impacts the representation of media. The influence is clear in the less coverage of victim's trauma in a broader aspect. For example : darkness, water, bathtub, water, empty room, congested places etc. are her triggers. In the beginning of the series every time she encounters any of these, she recalls what she had gone through. In consideration, these are all served a purpose that was nurtured by strong political ground which is seen in the series. The triggers were shown to contemplate the previous trauma that Eleven encountered.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In the book *The Culture of The New Capitalism*, Richard Sennet says that "Capitalism would remain, and remain the issue." (180). Eleven is an individual representation of the capitalist exploited victims. Eleven's life is impacted by past trauma. It takes place because capitalist ideologies affect the victim's life. Understanding *Stranger Things*' political viewpoints is essential in the first place. Via Eleven, the main character of the series, the series investigates how capitalism in America in the 1980s led to trauma through the use of contemporary media. It explores what happens when children quit close playing and become more interested in playing games in malls, and how capitalism causes children to be terrified of the dark—not because of monsters, but because of people.

My research can serve as the basis for more analysis on the condition of the educational system for research students and their role in talking more about the consequences of the progressive world and on the victims as well. When it is evenly dispersed among individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and cultures, awareness can save lives. The effects of capitalism exploitation are impactful that most people no longer see the necessity for it, even in our contemporary progressive society.

My research does, however, have limitations. One of them is that, as one of the newest Netflix series, there hasn't been much study done on *Stranger Things* therefore I was unable to use many multiple sources based on the series to support my argument. Another factor is that, despite the fact that there are more films, television shows, and movies in this category, I was unable to see them all owing to time constraints. It was worked to address the impact of trauma

that the capitalist society creates in order to gain their own profit so that more research can be conducted on the exploitation that destroys their whole life.

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