

Spatial Experience of Outsideness and Insideness of Disabled Characters in All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr and The Silence Between Us by Alison Gervais



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Abstract: *Disabled people are often spatially excluded and feels the sense of detachment in the place due to their disability. The present research attempts to answer the questions of the spatial experience of the disabled protagonists in All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr and The Silence Between Us by Alison Gervais. The present study, through a textual analysis of Anthony Doerr's All the Light We Cannot See and Alison Gervais's The Silence Between Us, explores the spatial experience of Disabled people. The spectrum of analysis includes but is not limited to theories of disability, Spatiality, and Sensuous Geography and literature. They also incorporate the theoretical underpinnings of Edward Casey Relph's theory of the experience of spatiality employed to understand the disabled experience of space and place. The present study concludes that disabled people spatially experience of Outsideness due to their disability*

Keywords: Disabled people; Spatial Experience; Anthony Doerr; Alison Gervais

Introduction

According to Clifton and Grace, Disability is socially created because disabled people are often marginalized, isolated, or excluded and given no importance in society. Disabled people often don't actively participate in society (Clifton et al. 2018).

As a marginalized community, disabled people face various physical and social barriers due to spaces and places constructed based on the norms of able-bodied people. This shows that disabled people experience a sense of "Outsideness" and feel they do not belong in those places. They also feel excluded from those spaces and places. In an ableist society, disabled people experience spatial injustice due to biased attitudes of favoring able/normal people.

This research explores whether disabled individuals have experienced a sense of Insideness or Outsideness in certain spaces constructed based on the norms of able-bodied people. By Insideness and Outsideness, the researcher means whether an individual feels a sense of belonging to that space or not. This study also investigates how individuals encounter this Outsideness through their senses to develop a sense of Insideness. Insideness refers to the experience of being in a place where an individual feels that they belong.

Statement of the Problem:

Disabled people often excluded from the places due to their disability. Disabled people don't feel the sense of belonging in certain places. This study attempts to answer whether individuals experience

“Outsideness” or “Insideness” in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais. The selected texts have been explored from multiple perspectives, including critical discourse on disability, Neorealism, and psychoanalytical perspectives but not explored from the perspectives of E.C Relph notion of Spatial experience. The expected finding of this study is the impact on the spatial experiences of the protagonists in ableist geography in the selected literary works. This study also examines the Spatial experience of “Insideness” of the main characters in ableist geography.

Research Objectives:

1. To investigate the experiences of disabled individuals as Insideness and Outsideness in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, and *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais.

Research Question:

1. How do disabled individuals spatially experience Outsideness and Insideness in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais.?

Theoretical Framework:

There are certain discourses in which disabled people are excluded from the places. The present study is based on the theoretical foundations of E.C. Relph's notions of “Insideness” and “Outsideness”.

Relph (1976) defines the notion of the identity of place or the sense of place in terms of their components and human experience of the place. Physical setting, activities, and meaning are the basic components that contribute to the experience/identity of a particular place. "Meaning" is related to human experience and intention towards the place, varying from place to place (Relph 47). Besides these three components, other essential

features also constitute the identity of places, such as insideness and outsideness. To be inside a place means "to belong to it and to identify with it." To be outside means to look into a place as an observer, while to be inside means to be part of that place. Both experiences vary because human intentions differ in different places (Relph 48). The notions of outside and inside develop the ideas of existential insideness and existential outsideness. According to Relph, existential outsideness occurs when someone is not involved or does not belong to the meaning of that place. In other words, when a place gives negative vibes to an individual, it is known as existential outsideness. In existential outsideness, the place becomes meaningless to the person.

Existential insideness refers to the unselfconscious involvement or belonging of someone to a particular place. In other words, we can say that if an individual has a positive experience of a place, it is existential insideness—like when someone is in a place and feels that this is where they "belong" (Relph 55).

Significance of the Study:

This research is significant as it shows how disabled individuals experience a sense of Outsideness in the selected novels. This study is important; it explores the experience of Insideness by disabled individuals through their senses. The study is also significant because it offers a new paradigm to investigate the literary representation of disabled spatial experiences.

Literature Reviews:

Egie Danarke Widyastuti Purbani and Nand Y Intan Kuria in their research “Gender Narratives in Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See* Women in an American War Literature” explore the stereotypical representation of male and female gender through narrative style. The researcher tries to find that how different words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in the selected text show gender differences. The study adopted two approaches: the first

one is post-structuralist narratology, and the second one is feminist criticism on gender and war is a theoretical framework of the study to examine the portrayal of male and female characters in the selected work of Anthony Doerr. The researcher obtains primary data from the proposed text, while that of secondary data is taken from books, magazines, articles, and journals. The researcher used narrative analysis to analyze the text, which was conducted in four steps. Those stages were reading the text, identifying specific elements, categorizing, examining, and making interpretations. The researcher uses qualitative textual analysis as a methodological framework of the study to make a narrative interpretation of the text. Vanderstoep and Jhonston (2009, 213) define narrative analysis as the process that describes how the story is narrated and what the impact of that story is on society. By analyzing narrative structure, the researcher finds that the female character is portrayed as a subordinate creative while that of the male is described as the dominant. A female character is shown as fragile, dependent, scared, emotional, and suppressed. Throughout the novel, Marie is shown as a physically weak person who is scared of others and always depends on her father. The male character in the novel is described as a powerful, brave, and intelligent person. The male is either shown in the form of a soldier who has the strength to march on an empty stomach or shown in the form of another male character like Werner, who bravely faces all the conflict zones of war. The study concluded that the binary construction of both genders in the novel is the result of a patriarchal mindset.

MD Mozaffer Hossain in his research “Cognitive and Linguistic Manifestation of a Blind Child in Anthony Doerr’s *All the We Cannot See*” (2023), explores the psychological interpretation of a language that was spoken by a blind girl. The researcher aims to examine the thoughts, language, and mental and physical condition of Mari-Laure, the protagonist. The researcher tries to find that cognitive skill without the support of her vision. Vision plays a vital role in the development

of cognitive skills, while that of blindness hampers the mental, intellectual, and language skills of the protagonist, but she works hard to achieve this. The researcher adopted the concept of linguistic, psychologist, and cognitive approval as a theoretical framework of the study to examine that how the linguistic and psychological exhibition of a blind child leads to the manifestation of her cognitive skill. The study collects data from two sources, primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the selected text of Anthony Doerr’s *All the light we cannot see*, whereas the secondary source is research articles, journals, and books. The research applies qualitative textual analysis as a methodological framework of the study to analyze the portrayal of the protagonist in relation to her psychological behavior. The study maintains that despite being blind, Marie Laure slowly and gradually develops her cognitive skills through her senses. She tries to see the outer world through her inner eyes, for which she uses her senses of touch. Apart from this, she had a strong psychological behavior that contributed to the development of her cognitive skills.

Vinisha R. and Kamala Kannan, in their essay “The Power of Loyalty and Sacrifice in War Time in *All the Light We Cannot See*” (2023), explore the themes of love, family, empathy, loyalty, morality, power of human connection, and the traumatic effects of war. The researchers argue that the selected novel narrates the story of a character's life experiences after WWII. The story revolves around two characters, Marie and Werner. Werner is a young German boy who grew up in the mining town of Zollverein outside Essen. He and his sister live in an orphanage after their mother abandoned them and their father died in the mine. Marie-Laure is a blind girl raised by her widowed father. When the war started, the daughter and father flew to Saint-Malo to live peacefully with her uncle. At the same time, Werner was also recruited by the Nazis to join the military academy as a technician. Both characters come across each other at Saint-Malo, where they start feeling for one another. The researchers

conclude that although the characters are facing the challenges of war within the brutal situation, there are some moments of hope, love, loyalty, courage, and kindness.

Monica Herdiati in her research “Marie Laurie’s Struggle as Blind Teenager in Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See*” (2020), explores the theme of struggle that a protagonist does to fulfill her need. The researcher aims to examine the character's struggle in a precarious situation with a German invader. The researcher means to provide the answer to the question regarding the struggle and portrayal of the protagonist in the selected text of Anthony Doerr. The Study also threw light on how people Marie Laure throughout her life. The first one is a new criticism of character and characterization, and the second one is a hierarchy of needs theory by Abraham Maslow, which is a theoretical framework of the Study to identify the struggle and personality of the protagonist. The researcher obtains data from two sources. The Primary and secondary sources. The primary data is obtained from *All the Light We Cannot See*, while secondary data is taken from books, articles, and research journals. The researcher uses qualitative textual analysis as a methodological framework for the study analysis. The passage and narration from the novel describe the character's struggle. The Study maintains a conclusion: firstly, the researcher found that despite being a blind girl since age 6, Marie's character is portrayed as a brave and intelligent girl who works hard to sharpen her skills and become equal to other people. Secondly, the researcher found that Marie struggles to fulfill the basic needs of psychological safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization, such as staying alive without a vision, finding a safe place, getting an interest in a neighbor, gaining knowledge, and becoming a Mollusk expert. Thirdly, the researcher found that Marie is always supported by her father and uncles.

Research Methodology:

The present study includes a qualitative research method. This study

textually analyzes the selected texts of Anthony Doerr and Alison Gervais to explore the spatial experience of “Outsideness” and “Insideness” of disabled protagonist.

This study uses the textual analysis method of Allan McKee as a research methodology to interpret dialogues, scenes, paragraphs, and chapters in the selected texts to explore the disabled protagonist's experiences of insideness and outsideness regarding ableist space and place.

According to McKee textual analysis is a method of data collecting process in which researchers want to know about the people of various cultures and their experience of the world and people around them (McKee 2003:1). In other words, Textual analysis is the interpretation of the text. A text is something from which we can take some meaning from it like meaning from books, advertisements, magazines, films, television programs, plan shirt, or meaning from furniture or ornaments. Different cultures might have different attributes to the meaning of things because of the different people, the difference in the value of judgment, and different perspectives of the people.

Discussion:

The essence and the identity of a place reside not just in a physical appearance or structure but also in the experience of the place. The physical structure may be found different in different geographical locations, but the true essence can be confined by the activities, meaning, and experience of the people in a place. The experience of place refers to how an individual perceives the sense of place, either as an individual feels being inside or outside. In other words, besides three basic elements of the identity of place, it is also constituted by Insideness and Outsideness as well.

According to Relph, to be inside a place means “to belong to it and to identify with it. (Relph, 1996, 49). In other words, to be inside refers to not just the physical presence of an individual in a place. Rather,

it means belonging to a particular place, having a connection with a place, and having an identity to that place. From connection with a place means that you have a strong relation or some connection to a place, to its meaning, activities, and physical appearance of the place.

Furthermore, as he/she feels a sense of belonging, it also makes the identity of a place as well. Relph further explores that Being Inside means that you know where you are. (Relph, 1996, 49) it refers to the notion of a "Sense of Belonging." Being inside a place is not just a physical presence of the individuals in a particular place, but it shows the personal, deep connection of the individual to that place. It is further explained that when you are being inside in a place, you are experiencing the place, you become the part of that place and you are surrounded by that place. (Relph, 1996, 49). In other words, it shows that being inside, you are not just observing the place, but you are experiencing the place. Individuals engage in that place and interact with other people in the place. In other sense, being an inside you are actually experiencing the place and you belong to that and you know that it is your place. While Being Outside refers to the detachment of oneself from the place and have not identified with it (Relph, 1996, p. 49). From "to be Outside," Relph means the total emotional detachment from the place and having no identified relation with a particular place. according to Relph, being an outsider means you are just an observer; you are not part of that place, while Outsideness means that an individual is not emotionally attached to the place and has no deep connection with the place. Being Inside, an individual has a feeling of home, and he/she is emotionally attached to the place and has a sense of belonging to the particular place. While being an outsideness in a place an individual does not feels like a home and not evokes any sense of belonging. Further, Relph explains that each individual carries the zone of insideness with themselves wherever they go. This shows that being inside is not just fixed to one physical, geographical location, but it is

beyond the geographical location (Relph, 1996, p. 49)

Furthermore, Relph explores that identity of place that is further comprised of different levels of insideness and Outsideness because it is an individual's subjective experience. It changes with the person's perception, intention, and feeling as well that how the individual perceived place and also, we experienced place at different levels to experience place as being insideness and Outsideness. Therefore, the present research focuses on different levels of the lived experience of the disabled character in the ableist place, such as existential Outsideness and Existential Insideness. This study further explores other levels of spatial experience to feel insideness and Outsideness, such as Vicarious insideness. The present research foregrounds the analysis of the selected texts *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais to explore the spatial experience of the disabled characters in the ableist place. This section provides a detailed analysis of the disabled characters' experience of the different levels of insideness and Outsideness in the ableist place in the selected text of Anthony Doerr and Alison Gervais.

Existential Outsideness:

According to Relph, Existential Outsideness is the self-conscious or unselfconscious experience of a place that makes an individual alienated and disconnected and makes a sense of not belonging to a place. (Relph, 1996, 51). In other words, it is when the individual is not fully immersed in experiencing a place. When individuals knowingly detach from the place, it isolates them from the other people in the place and causes them to lose their emotional attachment to the place. In other sense, existential Outsideness refers to when a place gives negative vibes to the individual. In existential Outsideness, the place becomes meaningless to the individual, and the person feels the sense of not belonging to a place. Further, when an individual experiences a place and does not

fulfill the basic components (Physical structure, activities, and meaning) of a place, this experience will be called existential Outsideness. From alienation, means that the person or individual is not connected to the place and separated from the interaction with other people. Existential Outsideness, when the individual is detached from the activities, the physical attributes, and the meaning of the place in which he/ she lives, leads the individual into isolation, and he/she becomes disconnected from the meaning of the place. In short, when the individual's lived experience of a place feels kind of detachment and lacks a sense of belonging to the place and is not involved emotionally in the place. It becomes unmeaningful or gives a negative meaning; it is known as existential outsideness.

In Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*, Marie-Laure, a blind girl, lives in Paris, France. Her modes of experiencing Paris change from Existential insideness to existential Outsideness when she becomes blind at the age of six. Before her blindness, she feels a sense of belonging to Paris, where she lives with her father, but when she blinds, suddenly she feels a sense of detachment from the surrounding space and place, and she is unable to navigate and make sense of space and place. Marie-Laure was sent by her father to the national museum where he works; she feels a sense of belonging to the surrounding place of the museum because she was not blind; she, along with other students, experienced the "Gallery of Mineralogy" and "ancient solar system" (Doerr, 19). After returning from the museum, she was blind because it was a belief that whoever holds the Sea of Flames will not be harmed, but the other people related to him or she will be destroyed, or they would face difficulties as the Sea of Flames is with her father as "Marie-Laure takes off her eyeglasses, and the world goes shapeless" (Doerr 23). It shows that when she was blind, the world to her became shapeless. It means all the things, spaces, and places become blurred, and she is unable to identify anything in the surrounding space and places. She feels a sense of existential Outsideness in the places where she lives.

She became spatially marginalized by the abled people, due to which she feels a sense of detachment from those places where she was once familiar with it. She became disconnected from the places as "Marie-Laure will not see anything from the rest of her life. Spaces she once knew as familiar the four-room flat she shares with her father, the little tree-lined square at the end of their street have become labyrinths bristling with hazards." (Doerr, 27). It shows that when she is blind, she is not able to navigate the spaces. The lived experience of those spaces and places that were known to her becomes disturbed, and she does not recognize her room. She cannot navigate the "little tree-lined square at the end of their street have become labyrinths bristling with hazards." (Doerr, 27). This means that the streets become puzzling and it becomes dangerous for her, and she cannot identify them. The toilet in her home becomes a void, and she does not find the drawers, as "Drawers are never where they should be. The toilet is an abyss" (Doerr, 27). She also did not identify her fingers; "they sometimes become big and sometimes too big" (Doerr, 27). She lost spatial awareness of the surrounding environment as she did not recognize the "glass of water us too near, too far;" (Doerr, 27). It means that she lost herself as well in the ableist space and place due to her blindness. Overall, it shows the lived experience of Marie-Laure in a place where she feels a sense of detachment and disconnected from space and the place where she once felt a sense of belonging. The places that were once a sign of peace became dangerous for her, and she was unable to identify things like drawers. She lost the sense of the meaning of place and sense of belonging, due to which she emotionally disconnected from the familiar places because of her blindness. She is unable to move from her bed, and the only place where she will be is her bed as "her only sanctuary is in bed" (Doerr, 27). When she first interacted with the outer world, it was shapeless for her after her blindness. Her father built a miniature model of Paris. However, it was not up to her expectations because it also limited her geographical

boundaries and did not help her in the real world because of its “streets are empty” and its pavement static; to her fingers, it serves as little more than a tiny and insufficient facsimile.” (Doerr, 35-36). It shows that the geography of the model is different from the real one because the surrounding environment is full of people and smells of bread and bakeries, which she can’t perceive through her model because of her blindness. This means there is a gap between Marie-Laure’s model world and the real world, from which she has disconnected. Further, after a year, she went outside to the place Grand Gallery, but she did not navigate and couldn’t make sense of the identity of the place, its physical structure, and its geographical location. Her father insists that she think about the mini model of the place and takes him home, but she says, “I can’t possibly” (Doerr, 36). It means that she is doubting herself because she is blind and unable to navigate and lead her father home. It shows that she feels existential Outsideness in the Grand Gallery because she has lost the power to find her home as she is unable to see the place. Although her father helps her and claims that he will not let her happen anything as he says, “You know where you are,” and she says, “I do not.” Exasperation. She cannot even say if the gardens are ahead or behind” (Doerr, 36). The phrase “I do not” reflects her detachment from the place because she was not able to find herself in the surrounding environment where she is. She has the lived experience of the place Grand Gallery as outsideness because she lost herself in the environment of it and she cannot navigate herself and cannot get the meaning of the surrounding place. She feels alienated and feels a sense of not belongingness to the place. Even though she can’t recognize and navigate the distance from the gardens, she does not know that either “gardens are ahead or behind” (Doerr, 36), and she is frustrated with making sense of the garden. It shows that she was unable to gather information from the surrounding space so that she could navigate. She senses herself as existential outsideness in the Grand Gallery because she is unable to navigate in this place, feels

isolated, and has lost herself in the place because of her blindness.

Although she depended on her cane and navigated the space around her but, it does not clearly create surrounding awareness. Her lived experience is disturbed by the sounds of different things, and she is disconnected from the surrounding environment because of her blindness, which causes her to lose her spatial awareness through visual sense. As “crow shout, brakes hiss, someone to her left bangs something metal with what might be a hammer.” (Doerr, 36). It shows that due to her blindness, she was disoriented by the different auditory chaos. She couldn’t get information from the surrounding things and was unable to get meanings from the different things in her adjacent places. It means that she can’t get meaning from different things. She becomes alienated from the place where she is standing. Through her cane, she was not able to identify her spatial position as “she shuffles forward until the tip of her cane floats in space. The edge of a curb? A pond, a staircase, a cliff.?” It shows that she is not making sense of anything in the surrounding space and feels existentially Outsideness. It means that with her walking stick, she was unable to navigate the space, due to which she feels that she is existentially “not belonging” to that place. Similarly, “A roar of noise an exterminator just leaving a house, pump bellowing overtakes them. Twelve paces farther on, the bell tied around the handle of a shop door rings, and two women come out, jostling her as they pass. (Doerr, 36). Different chaotic noises of the nearby house exterminator and rings of doorbells hanging on the handle of a shop distract her mind from getting information from the environment. At last, “Marie-Laure drops her cane; she begins to cry.” (Doerr, 37). It portrays that the noises created by different things are chaotic, which makes her unable to create a sense of place, and she feels disconnected from the place. The dropping of her cane also illustrates the connection that she tries to establish between herself and the physical environment, but due to the cacophony of noises, this connection is broken because

she is dependent on the sense of touch. However, she also drops it because of the disjointed noises and feels existentially Outsideness. The space to her becomes vast when she says, “It’s so big” (Doerr, 37). It means that the space becomes uncontrollable and spatially alienated from the other people and places where she lives. She cannot clearly describe things in the adjacent space and place. The space and place, due to her blindness, become void but also not reachable. In a nutshell, due to her blindness, Marie-Laure becomes emotionally alienated and disconnected from the surrounding environment. She feels Outsideness in the Grand Gallery because of her visual impairment, and she cannot make sense of the space and place.

Furthermore, when Paris was attacked by the German forces in WWII, Marie-Laure and her father migrated from Paris to Saint-Malo. On the way from Paris, her lived experience of existential insideness goes to existential Outsideness because after she became blind, she became familiar with the spaces in Paris by using hearing and haptic sense. She feels a sense of belonging, but when they are migrating from Paris, she feels an existential experience of Outsideness because she is not creating a sense of the surrounding objects, space, and places. During the untidy movement from Paris to Saint-Malo, she uses her sense of touch and hearing to make sense of the world around her, but due to the fragmented sounds of “husband yelling at wives” and “child has been run over by a truck,” (Doerr, 88) makes difficult for her to get information from the surrounding environment and navigate the space. So, she asks “disembodied questions” from her father, “*how far to Saint-Malo German? Is there any food, Auntie? Who has fuel?*” (Doerr, 88) It means that she is unable to perceive the sense of place through her alternate senses, and she feels physically isolated from the external physical space and place, due to which she senses existential Outsideness. In another sense, the uncertain questions and the fragmented sounds from the surrounding environment make her alienated from the surrounding space and

place, due to which she senses a spatial experience of Outsideness.

After migrating from Paris to Saint-Malo, Marie-Laure was confined to her uncle Etienne’s house, where she felt existential Outsideness throughout her life until she returned to Paris. In Saint-Malo, she was not emotionally involved with the Saint-Malo because, in Saint-Malo, she was restricted to a single house and was spatially marginalized because of her disability. She does not feel a sense of “belongingness” to the city of Saint-Malo as she can’t existentially experience the sense of outer space and place of the house where she lived for a few years. In Saint-Malo, she can’t interact with the people and does not understand the meaning of the surrounding space and places. She was emotionally detached from Saint-Malo and did not feel like she was at “home” in Saint-Malo. As “One week in Saint-Malo becomes two” (Doerr, 145). It suggests that the time for Marie-Laure becomes static because she is not allowed to interact with outer space and place due to her blindness. Although she is physically present in her uncle Etienne’s house but, emotionally, she feels alienated, due to which she loses the sense of “being at home” and has lived experience of existential Outsideness. Overall, Marie-Laure feels emotionally detached from the surrounding space and place in Paris because of her blindness, but after sometimes she is emotionally involved in the place of Paris. In comparison, the lived experience of the Marie-Laure in Saint-Malo is not good. It always gives negative vibes to her. In Saint-Malo, she does not feel like her home.

Similarly, in the novel *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais, Maya is a sixteen-year-old girl who loses her sense of hearing. She studies in the hearing school at Englemann. Due to her hearing impairment, it was difficult for her to fully participate in the activities in the hearing school and get emotionally involved in the places. Maya is spatially experiencing Outsideness in the hearing school where she studied. On their first day in hearing school, Maya in AP

statistics class feels “uncomfortable” (14) and employs existential Outsideness because of “everyone’s piercing gaze fixed on us” (Gervais, 14). It shows that the ableist attitude of the people due to her deafness makes her uncomfortable, and she is waiting for as soon as class ends. This ableist attitude of the people in the class makes her alienated because although she is present physically but mentally she is not comfortable and interested in the activity of lecture in the class. It means that the activity in the class is meaningless for her, and it does not make any sense for her because she is deaf, and people are staring at her in the class, which makes her lived experience disturbed and feel Outsideness. Further, her spatial experience on the first day was not to the mark, and she is facing a prejudiced attitude from the people around her. She feels existential Outsideness whenever she interacts with Jackson. He makes her embarrassed by his negative attitude towards her as she narrates, “I smiled politely at Jackson and decided to respond to his overly dramatic introduction in the same fashion. I DON’T LIKE HEARING BOYS” (Gervais, 19). It exemplifies the gap between the hearing world and the deaf world, as Maya belongs to the deaf world and Jackson belongs to the hearing world. When Maya tells him that I don’t like hearing boys, it shows that Maya does not belong to the hearing world and she is not engaging herself with the people who are hearing. It shows Maya’s emotional detachment from people like Jackson, who is an abled person. She is not emotionally involved with the person who is hearing because she feels existential Outsideness whenever she is meeting with Jackson. Also, when she is meeting with other hearing students on the first day at hearing school, she feels “exhausted from lipreading” (Gervais, 20). It shows the spatially marginalized position of Maya in hearing school. The difference between the ableist world and the hearing world makes her tired of establishing a connection with the hearing world. It illustrates that she is emotionally disconnected from the hearing world in which she lives. The lived experience of

Maya on day first is existential Outsideness as she feels that she doesn’t belong to this place and feels like an outsider. After some time in her school, Maya compares her school with her brother Connor’s school as she narrates, “At least Connor enjoyed his new school even if I hated mine” (Doerr, 24). It highlights the experience of her brother in his school and Maya’s spatial experience in her new hearing school. She does not feel a sense of belonging to the new hearing school; it does not give her a positive vibe because she was not actively engaged in the activity in her new school because of her deafness. This new hearing school doesn’t have any facility for deaf people, so they are equally enjoyed in the hearing school. This hearing school for her it gives a negative meaning to her, and she feels exhausted in the gathering of hearing people. She senses discomfort in her school because she does not have the opportunity due to her deafness. So, this excerpt highlights Maya’s lived experience of existential outsideness.

Also, in her home, sometimes she feels lonely and alienated from her surrounding people and space because she doesn’t hear the sound of the people around her. As she says, “I would feel that little twinge of sadness I always did when my family was speaking around me and I didn’t have any idea what they were saying” (Doerr, 25). It illustrates the lived experience of the Maya in her home. The twinge of sadness refers to the fact that she is emotionally isolated in her home place because she does not actively participate in the conversation between her mom and her brother when they are talking due to her deafness. She cannot grasp the meaning of the talking of her mother and brother. Although she is physically present in her home place but, due to her deafness, she feels alienated and existentially feels Outsideness. The lack of hearing makes her spatially marginalized and emotionally alienated from the people and places. She feels alienated with her disabled identity in an ableist place as she narrates “I didn’t hate being deaf—it was part of who I was—but sometimes my lack of hearing made me feel

painfully alone.” (Gervais, 25). It shows that Maya accepts her identity as deaf in the ableist society in which she lives, but this disabled (deaf) identity makes her emotionally isolated, due to which she does not feel a sense of “belongingness” with her home. She is emotionally detached from her mom and her brother because she can’t hear their conversation and does not actively participate in their conversation. This means that she was unable to interact with the people nearby where she lives because she feels existential outsidership due to her deafness. After two months in the hearing school of Englemann, she only passes the days and never truly existentially belongs to the hearing school. On the surface level, she adapted to the new hearing school after two months of study in the school as “I grew more accustomed to life hearing school” (45). However, she is never emotionally involved in the hearing school as she narrates, “but I still never felt quite like I truly belonged at Englemann.” (Gervais, 45). It shows that Englemann Hearing School is a place where all the hearing students are enrolled. They are actively engaged in the actions that take place in the Hearing School. Maya, with her deaf identity, always struggles to be emotionally involved in the place, but it creates barriers between her and the ableist place, due to which she feels existential Outsideness.

In addition, Maya is a deaf girl who belongs to the deaf community, and there is always a gap between the deaf people and the hearing people. She is living in an ableist place where hearing people are prioritized. Therefore, she feels spatial marginalization and is not emotionally attached to her surroundings places. The space and places like her home and hearing school are built in favor of abled people. Therefore, Maya does not feel any sense of belonging to these places. Although she is physically present in these places but, psychologically, she is alienated from the surrounding environment.

Vicarious Insideness:

According to Relph, various insideness is the experience of a place in

which an individual is not physically present in that place, but experiences place through some secondhand or mediated ways. (Relph, 1996, 53). From secondhand or mediated ways, I mean the experience of place through some medium such as reading a book, media, movies, etc., so vicarious insideness is when the individual feels a sense of belonging and is deeply emotionally involved and develops an emotional attachment to a place not because of that he or she is actually present in that place but because of the media or through reading a book. Through incidental insideness, we align the experience of place that we actually experienced the place, and it becomes easy to feel the sense of belonging to a similar place that is described through media. Although we are not physically present there. In short, vicarious insideness is when an individual appreciates and experiences a place through media and books.

In Anthony Doerr’s *All the Light We Cannot See*, Marie-Laure uses her sense of touch to experience the surrounding space and place. although she is blind and cannot see anything. she feels the sense of belonging to different places through alternate senses such as the sense of touch and hearing. She migrated from Paris to Saint-Malo because Germans attacked Paris. In Saint-Malo, she feels a sense of “outsideness” by feeling that she does not belong to the place, but this feeling of outsidership changes into “insideness” through vicarious ways. As she “listens to her great-uncle read another page of *The Voyage of the “Beagle.”* (Doerr, 150) it means that Marie-Laure uses her sense of hearing to make sense of the world of the book *The Voyage of the Beagle*. She creates hearing geography to experience the sense of places that are explored in the book, and she connects herself to those places. Although, she is not physically present in those places, but she feels a sense of belongingness to those places through her sense of hearing. She is emotionally involved in the actions that occur in those places as “she loves especially to hear about the dark coasts of South America with their

impenetrable walls of trees and offshore breezes full of the stink of rotten kelp and the cries of whelping seals.” (Doerr, 150). It shows that through the sense of hearing, Marie-Laure experiences the walls of trees, offshore breezes, and the dark coast of South America. Although she has not been there but she experienced the sense of these places through her sense of hearing geography that she structured through her sense of hearing. Further, she also emotionally feels a sense of belongingness to “imagine Darwin at night, leaning over the ship’s rail to stare into bioluminescent waves, watching the tracks of penguins marked by fiery green wakes.” (Doerr, 151). It exemplifies the experience of Marie-Laure to imagine Darwin, who leaned over the rail of the ships and watched the penguin's tracks in vicarious ways. It means that she imagines these places through hearing her uncle to read the book to feel vicarious insideness in those of *The Voyage of the Beagle*.

Similarly, Marie-Laure experiences the world of the book *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jule Verne by running her fingers on the pages of the book. As she describes and navigates the spaces and places of the book, experiences those places, and connects herself with those places emotionally. She imagines the character of Julie Verne, who is ‘walking along the streets, chatting in shops’ (Doerr, 46). Marie-Laure is a visually impaired girl who was restricted to her home place. She is spatially marginalized by the people, and her geographical boundaries are limited. So, she uses her sense of touch to read the book and compares the places that are described in the story with her surrounding real places. She experiences the real places by imagining Julie Verne’s character to connect to the actual places through a vicarious way of touch. She feels a sense of belonging to the talking in shops and the streets that are not possible for her to experience in the real world because of her blindness. Further, she imagines herself by creating haptic geography through which she feels vicarious insideness as “across the room is miniature girl, skinny, quick-witted, an open book in her lap; inside her chest pulses something

huge, something full of longing” (Doerr, 46). It illustrates that through her haptic sense, she imagines herself as a strong girl and her connection to the surrounding space and places. She became emotionally attached to the space and place described in Julie Verne’s book through the character. She sensed the feeling of “home” in the surrounding space and place by comparing it to the character of the book. Marie-Laure spatially experienced the real places through the sense of touch by running her fingers on the book *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Overall, Marie-Laure feels a sense of belonging to the real places by reading a book. She bridges the gap between herself and the places around her through a sense of touch that helps her to create haptic geography, due to which she feels vicarious insideness in the space and places around her.

Similarly, in *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais, the protagonist Maya lives in ableist geography where all the people are abled and hearing people while she is deaf at the age of six. She faces difficulty in making sense of the objects and the places around her. She feels outsideness in the surrounding environment, such as in the hearing school and other places where she interacts with people. Therefore, she uses technology to make sense of the places and objects that makes it possible for her to participate actively in society. Her spatial experience of outsideness becomes insideness by using vicarious elements such as her mobile phone.

When Maya was searching for her first job on Google where she found a job listing for “concessions clerk at the movie theatre” and “part-time stocker at the King Soopers grocery store.” (161), but she was not interested in that. After searching, she saw a “part-time barista position at Bean café, that cute little place where Beau, Nina, and I had gone. The café had been cozy and welcoming” (Gervais, 161). It shows that through her visual sense, she searches for a job position at Bean Café, where she and her friend have gone before. The moment she saw a job position at Bean Café, it evoked

her positive experience in the café with her friends. The café where she experiences cozy and welcoming suggests that she is not feeling comfortable, but she is emotionally safe for her. This emotional belonging to the Bean Café in a vicarious way. She feels “insideness” in Bean Café by using her optical sense in a mediated way where she senses “the perfect place for the job. (Gervais, 161). It means that the place of Bean café gives a positive experience, and it will be safe and give her comfort as well. That’s why she senses that it is a place that belongs to her. In short, Maya has a sense of belonging to the Bean Café through her mobile phone because it is a way that helps her to evoke an emotional attachment of her to the café. It is a perfect place where she will not feel any kind of alienation, and it will be a perfect job for her in Barista position in Bean Café.

Existential Insideness:

According to E.C Relph, being present in a place does not mean that you have lived experiencing of a place. (Relph, 1996, 55). The statement suggests that when an individual is present in one place, it does not mean that he or she will feel like an insider in a place until you are fully involved in the essence of the place. According to Relph, existential insideness is the unselfconscious experience of a place in which the individual experiences the sense of “belonging” to a place. (Relph, 1996, 55). In other words, existential insideness is the unintentional experience of a person and the deep involvement of a person in the meaning, activities, and physical attributes of a place. In existential insideness, the person senses the feeling of home or hometown and is deeply connected to the people and the activity that happened in the place. The individual feels that it is a place to which he/she belongs. The individual senses that he/she has some kind of identity with that place. In existential insideness, the person experiences a deep emotional attachment to the place. In the existential insideness experience, the individual feels at home and connects their emotion and feelings to the place. In short, we can say

that an individual has a positive experience in the place and has some positive attributes and intentions about the place.

For instance, In *The Silence Between Us*, the deaf protagonist Maya’s spatial experience of the homecoming event in Hearing School goes from existential outsidership to the feeling of existential insideness. At the start of the homecoming event, Maya did not have any emotional attachment to the event because all the hearing students were there, and no deaf students were present in the homecoming. There was no student other than Nina who could understand her sign language; therefore, she felt spatially marginalized in the event as she did not actively participate in the homecoming event as she wanted “an early escape” and “thought about finding a new spot” (Gervais, 69) from the homecoming event. But this spatial experience of the lived experience of “outsideness” changed into existential “insideness” when she saw Beau in the homecoming. She engaged in conversation with Beau, who was also sitting alone in the event reading a *Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer. Beau had learnt the sign language of Maya and started a conversation with Maya through the sign “Canterbury Tales shut, signing, TRUE, again,” and Maya “appreciated the signing” (Gervais, 69). It shows that Beau is accepting the disabled identity of the Maya because Beau has learned sign language of her, and they are both actively engaged in it. Maya feels existential insideness because of Beau and his talking in the sign language.

The conversation between Maya and Beau in signing language makes a sense of connection, which makes Maya feel comfortable during the event. This conversation is meaningful for her because they both inclusively speak in sign language. So, the homecoming is meaningful and creates a sense of “belonging” to Maya because both are speaking nonverbally, and Beau accepts the identity of Maya at homecoming. In short, Maya feels existentially connected to her surrounding space and people like Beau, which makes

her sense of belongingness and the place become meaningful for her. After the conversation with Beau, Maya feels some kind of comfort and starts participating in the activity in homecoming. At the beginning of the homecoming, she feels hesitates to dance because of her deafness as she is not fully present and feels lost on the dance floor in the event, but after talking with Beau in the sign language, she gets fully involved in the moment as “Despite her my earlier hesitation, it only took a few moments before I got lost in the beat I could not hear and let go.” (Gervais, 71). It shows that besides her inability to the sense of hearing, she feels the rhythm of the beat because of the vibration she feels through her body and through visual sense, which allows her to fully participate in the environment of the homecoming. It shows that the loss of hearing did not limit her boundaries because of Beau when she talks with her in sign language and through other senses. She is fully involved in the dance along with Nina and Beau to feel like “home” in the homecoming.

After one year of spatial experience in hearing school, Maya, a deaf girl, feels existential insideness in the ableist place of hearing people in Englemann. She feels existential insideness because she uses her other alternate visual and touch senses to make her sense of “insideness.” Also, along with Beau and Nina, she existentially feels the sense of “belonging” in Englemann, Colorado, because they understand her language and accept her identity of being disabled as she narrates, “now two different parts of my life—deaf and hearing—were connection even more.” (Gervais, 207). It shows that Maya has now been accepted by the hearing people and has the identity of both deaf and hearing because she feels a sense of belonging to both the community after being friends with Nina and Beau. In Colorado, where she first feels a sense of outsidersness, but after establishing an interaction with Beau and Nina, she feels a sense of “insideness” and is emotionally attached to this place. The journey of Maya in hearing school refers to the barriers that are between hearing and deaf people are

reduced and have a strong connection between them.

Further, she narrates, “A year and a half ago I couldn’t have felt more terrible about moving out here to Colorado, but it hadn’t turned out so bad in the end.” (Gervais, 208). It shows that in Colorado, she initially feels a sense of detachment and existential outsidersness and is disconnected from the surrounding space and place, but after her spatial experience in the hearing school, she feels a sense of “belonging” to that place. It is not just a physical structure where she only lives, but it becomes meaningful for her, and she feels emotionally attached to the Colorado and feels safe. In addition, the Colorado becomes meaningful for Maya because of the friendship with Beau and Nina that makes her feel secure and socially and emotionally connects her with hearing people in an ableist place as she says, “I’d found Beau and Nina and now Melissa was here, and it didn’t even matter who was Deaf or hearing.” (Gervais, 208) it refers to the emotional connection of Maya with the Beau and Nina in hearing community. Their relationship with Maya goes beyond the differences that were between hearing and deaf people. The relationship between Maya and Beau and Nina symbolizes the shared experience that helps to construct the bridge between Maya and the Hearing people and the acceptance of Maya as a disabled individual in the Hearing Place of Colorado. After being accepted in a hearing community as a disabled individual, she narrates “We Just Were” (Gervais, 208) and explores the spatial existence of Maya in a hearing community. It shows that she feels an authentic experience in the Colorado. She is emotionally connected to the Colorado and feels a sense of “home” and belongingness to the place. The spatial experience of Maya in Colorado, hearing school at Englemann, sense that these places are now not just a physical place and structure for her but it gives some meaning and have a connection with it. She has integrated her identity with the surrounding space and place, and it feels to her that she belongs to this place.

To conclude, Maya initially felt existential outsidership when they first moved to Colorado with her mom because she was deaf and unable to hear. She was spatially marginalized and felt emotionally detached from the people and from the place. After spatially experiencing one year in a hearing school, she meets with Beau and Nina, due to which she feels existentially “insideness” in the hearing school and Colorado. The surrounding places that were initially “meaningless” for her become “meaningful” for her because of her relationship with Beau and Nina and by using other senses of touch and visuals. It helps her to make sense of “belonging” to the place of Colorado.

Similarly, in *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, Marie-Laure, a blind girl, was born in Paris and became blind at the age of six. Initially, due to her blindness, the world becomes shapeless for her, and she does not make sense of the surrounding environment. She becomes alienated and emotionally disconnected from the surrounding environment in Paris. The place of Paris that was once familiar to Marie-Laure suddenly became anxious and spatially marginalized. Due to her blindness, the identity of Marie-Laure becomes blurred in ableist geography and dependent on the abled people like her father in Paris. She lost her sense of “belonging” to Paris due to her blindness. This spatial experience of the existential outsidership of Marie-Laure transitioned into the lived experience of “insideness” due to her other senses, such as hearing and touch, besides her visual impairment. Also, she experiences the feeling of insideness. She emotionally feels a sense of belonging to Paris by creating a miniature model of the city, due to which she fully participates in the ableist place. She uses her sense of hearing to make sense of the surrounding space and place by listening to her father to construct the hearing geography. The place of Paris becomes meaningful for her after experiencing it through her other senses. Furthermore, after the invasion of Nazi Germany in Paris, displaced Marie-Laure and her father and migrated to Saint-Malo, where she lived for

four years in Saint-Malo but does not feel the sense of belonging and does not feel like her home that she feels in Paris. Marie-Laure does not fully engage in the activities that were occur in the Saint-Malo. Although she is physically present in the Saint-Malo and navigates the surrounding space and place but she does not emotionally connect to the Saint-Malo like the place of Paris, where she feels like her home. Also, in Saint-Malo, there are some spaces and places where she feels existential insideness for a moment, although she is blind and unable to establish an emotional attachment with Saint-Malo. For instance, Marie-Laure's existential experience of Paris through her different senses helps her to navigate different spaces and streets in her surroundings and feel existential insideness. On her eighth year, “she gets it right” (40) on navigating the surrounding space and place. she helps her father “closer to home” (40), and through her sense of smell and hearing, she recognizes different objects around her and makes sense of “cars splash along streets” and “smell the cedars in the Jardin des Plantes a quarter mile away” (Doerr, 40). After running her fingers on the “chestnut tree,” she becomes “halfway up the rue des patriarches” (Doerr, 40). It shows that with the help of the combination of different senses, such as touch, smell, and hearing, she makes sense of the surrounding spaces and places around her to make her able to make a sense of belonging. when she touches the chestnut tree, she says, “Old friend” (Doerr, 40). It shows that with the sense of touch, she established a deep connection with the surrounding place, and she is emotionally connected and has a sense of “belongingness” to this place. After navigating the streets, houses, and home, her “father and daughter turning in circles on the sidewalks in front of their apartment house, laughing together.” (Doerr, 41). It shows that the surrounding space and places of the sidewalks, apartment, and chestnut tree are not just physical structures for her, but they have become meaningful and give a meaning of joy and safety. It meant that the surrounding space that she sensed through touch and hearing helped her to be

emotionally attached to the place. she feels a sense of “belonging” to the place and feels like her home in the surrounding environment where she is safe and has identified herself in the ableist place. Further, Marie-Laure uses her other sense of touch to make the haptic geography of the surrounding place. when she is walking on the beach, she makes sense of the “round pebbles beneath her feet, now the crackling weeds, not something smoother; wet, unwrinkled sand” (Doerr, 232). It shows that these are not just identified through a sense of touch but through the haptic sense of her to engage deeply with the shape and structures of the objects in the surrounding environment, and she is not just observing the objects, but it goes beyond the perception of things. It helps her to actively engage in the tactile qualities of the objects. It makes her deeply connected and immersed in the different things of the environment. Further, when she runs her fingers on the “cold silk, cold sumptuous silk into which the sea has laid offering; pebbles, shells, barnacles.” (232) and “the drops of rain touch the back of her neck, the backs of her hands” (Doerr, 232). Through her sense of touch, she not only makes sense of the pebbles, shells, and barnacles but also feels the essence of the objects in her surrounding environment. The “lay offering” of the sea makes her feel a sense of “belonging” to the place and sense like her home. It also shows that she fully embraced the natural environment through her sense of touch. She goes beyond the physical sensation of the objects in the place but is fully immersed and enjoying the environment. This sea beach also symbolizes the freedom of Marie-Laure; besides her blindness, she is fully involved in the place of the sea beach. It gives her a positive vibe, and she is emotionally connected to the place. She fully enjoyed this freedom without any restriction of the abled people on her. Marie-Laure feels existential insideness in the sea beach because she not only perceives the physical structure of the objects on the beach but is also emotionally attached to the sea beach through her sense of touch. In short, Marie-

Laure feels existential insideness in Paris and on the sea beach because she actively participates in these places despite her visual impairment. These places are meaningful to her, and she perceives the essence of these places through her sense of touch, olfactory, and hearing. It shows that Marie-Laure has a deep connection with the surroundings and is fully involved in the meaning, activities, and physical appearance of the place of sea and Paris.

Conclusion:

The present study sets out to examines the transformation of spatial experience of the disabled protagonists in the *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and *The Silence Between Us* by Alison Gervais from Outsideness to Insideness. This shift from Outsideness to Insideness is not just physical but an emotional journey from the state of alienation to belonging. for instance, Marie-Laure and Maya initially felt existential outsideness because of their blindness and deafness. After spatially experiencing the surrounding places, they feel existentially “insideness” in those places where they lived. The surrounding places that were initially “meaningless” for them become “meaningful” for them because of their alternate senses. It helps them to make sense of “belonging” to the places where they lived. In conclusion, the present study explores how space and place are not just physical locations but they are shaped by the bodily differences and societal norms.

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