



**T.R.**

**SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL UNIVERSITY**

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**FAMILY (DYS)FUNCTIONALITY IN ANNE TYLER'S  
SELECTED WORKS: A BOWENIAN READING**

**Mehmet AKGÜL**

**1930224016**

**Master's Thesis**

**Supervisor**

**Prof. Dr. Ömer ŞEKERCİ**

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**T.C.  
SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI**

**ANNE TYLER’IN SEÇKİ ESERLERİNDE AİLE İŞLEVSİZLİĞİ:  
BOWENCİ BİR OKUMA**

**Mehmet AKGÜL**

**1930224016**

**Yüksek Lisans Tezi**

**Danışman**

**Prof. Dr. Ömer ŞEKERCİ**

**ISPARTA - 2022**

## YEMİN METNİ



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Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak sunduğum “*Anne Tyler’ın Seçki Eserlerinde Aile İşlevsizliği: Bowenci Bir Okuma*” adlı çalışmanın, tezin proje safhasından sonuçlanmasına kadar ki bütün süreçlerde bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurulmaksızın yazıldığını ve yararlandığım eserlerin Bibliyografya’da gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu, bunlara atıf yapılarak yararlanılmış olduğunu belirtir ve onurumla beyan ederim.

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# ORJİNALLİK RAPORU



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BEYAN BELGESİ



## SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE

ÖĞRENCİ BİLGİLERİ	
Adı-SOYADI	Mehmet AKGÜL
Öğrenci Numarası	1930224016
Enstitü Ana Bilim Dalı	Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı
Programı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
Programın Türü	( X ) Tezli Yüksek Lisans ( ) Doktora
Danışmanın Unvanı, Adı-SOYADI	Prof. Dr. Ömer ŞEKERCİ
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*Dedicated to my late mother, Kudret.*

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## ÖZET

Toplumun en küçük birimi olan aile, sosyal bilim disiplinlerinin sık çalışılan araştırma konularından biri olmuştur. Yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısı, psikiyatri alanında Murray Bowen’ın (1913-1990), aile etkileşimlerine, bu etkileşimlerin aile üyelerinin gelişimi ve kişiliği üzerindeki etkilerine eleştirel bir bakış getiren, birbiriyle örüntülü sekiz kavramdan oluşan aile sistemleri teorisine tanıklık etmiştir. Bowen Teorisi, bireylerin öz benliklerini ailelerinden ayrımlaşma düzeylerinin kendilerinin işlevselliğini belirlediğini ileri sürer. Bireylerin benlik ayrımlaşma düzeyleri ne kadar düşükse, özerklik algısı ve içgüdümlü hedeflere sahip olma kabiliyeti o kadar düşük olur; çatışmalı ailelerin düşük düzeyde ayrımlaşan kişileri, aile ortamındaki yüksek kaygının sonucu olarak işlevsiz nitelikler göstermeye eğilimlidir. Bu çalışma, Anne Tyler’ın *The Accidental Tourist* ve *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* eserlerini edebi eleştiri kuramı olarak Bowen aile sistemleri teorisi açısından incelemektedir. Bu tezin amacı, Anne Tyler’ın seçki romanlardaki belli karakterlerinin Bowen’ın benliğin ayrımlaşması ölçeğine göre ne kadar işlevsel olduğunu tespit etmek ve çekirdek ailenin duygusal sürecinin dört model (evlilik çatışmaları, eşlerden birinde duygusal rahatsızlık, sorunun çocuklara yansıtılması ve duygusal uzaklaşma) temelinde, belli evliliklerin nasıl çatışmalı evlilikler olduğunu göstermektir. Bu çalışmada bahsi geçen romanlardan belirlenen dört farklı karakterin aile içindeki işlevselliklerini teorik olarak ölçmeye yarayan Bowen’ın benliğin ayrımlaşması ölçeği uygulanmakta ve seçilen evliliklerin ne kadar çatışmalı olduğunu ve eşlerin kendi işlevsizliklerini eşlerine ve çocuklarına nasıl aktardığını ortaya koymak için çekirdek aile duygusal sürecinin dört mekanizması kullanılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez, Anne Tyler’ın seçilmiş romanlarında, düşük düzeyde ayrımlaşmış bireylerin, aile ortamında meydana gelen kaygıya uyum sağlayamamaları nedeniyle düşük ayrımlaşma düzeylerine sahip bireyler yetiştirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Aile işlevsizliği, Bowen aile sistemleri teorisi, *The Accidental Tourist*, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*.

## ABSTRACT

As the smallest unit of society, the family has been one of the most frequently studied research subjects in social sciences. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed Murray Bowen's (1913-1990) family systems theory in psychiatry, consisting of eight interlocking concepts, which took a critical look at family interactions and their effects on the development and personality of family members. The theory argues that individuals' levels of differentiation of self from their family of origin determine their functionality: the lower the level of differentiation of self, the lower the ability to acquire self-determined and inner-directed goals; in conflictual families, poorly differentiated people are prone to showing dysfunctional traits due to high anxiety in the family environment. This study examines *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler through the integration of Bowen family systems theory as a school of literary criticism. The purpose of the present thesis is to find out how (dys)functional Anne Tyler's selected characters in her selected novels are according to Bowen's scale of differentiation of self, and to demonstrate how selected marriages are conflictual on the basis of four patterns of nuclear family emotional system: marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, impairment of one or more children, and emotional distance. The study applies Bowen's scale of differentiation of self as a theoretical measurement to four selected characters from the novels to determine their functioning in the family setting and employs four mechanisms of nuclear family emotional system to find out how conflictual the selected marriages are and how spouses transmit their dysfunctionality onto their spouses and children. Consequently, the thesis reveals that in Anne Tyler's selected novels poorly differentiated and conflictual individuals breed impaired individuals because of their inability to adapt themselves to anxiety occurring in the family setting.

**Keywords:** Family (dys)functionality, Bowen family systems theory, *The Accidental Tourist*, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*



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## INTRODUCTION

As a unit and a concept, the family has been visible in every culture and society. As a worldwide phenomenon that constructs the smallest unit of any given society, the family has been an important subject analysed by scholars. From sociology to psychology and psychiatry, family studies have grown to be a significant field of study in various disciplines. Since the family environment is the original setting where individuals are shaped, flourish, and decay, many scientists, philosophers, psychologists, and novelists have grown deep interest in analysing, examining, and portraying it. Anne Tyler (1941- ) is a noticeable author whose fiction focalizes the family setting. It is believed that Tyler's works are fruitful in shedding light on individuals' interactions within the family and how each member is individually and reciprocally influenced by the family atmosphere, whether it be anxious or harmonious (Bail, 1998; Croft, 1994; Salwak, 1994; Stephenson, 1990; Petry, 1990, 1992; Voelker, 1989).

This thesis, rather than simply analysing the theme of family dysfunctionality in Anne Tyler's selected works, investigates the family dysfunctionality via a theoretical framework borrowed from psychiatry: Bowen Family Systems Theory. The theory, which appeared in the late 1950s in the works of well-known psychiatrist Murray Bowen (1913-1990), sketches eight interlocking concepts to conceptualize the family unit as an emotional system that highlights the reciprocal functioning of every individual within the family context. For the sake of this thesis, among eight interlocking concepts, differentiation of self and nuclear family emotional system are selected to scrutinize the prominent characters' levels of differentiation of self and their functioning within the nuclear families in *The Accidental Tourist* (1985) and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (1982/2008). Being the keystone of the Bowen theory, differentiation of self is interrelated with the other eight concepts since it constitutes essential knowledge about the other concepts to examine the functionality of the family. Nuclear family emotional system is used to explore the anxious family atmosphere caused by individuals' low levels of differentiation of self.

In the present study, the first chapter presents Bowen family systems theory and provides background information about its eight interlocking concepts:

differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, emotional cutoff, sibling position, and societal emotional process. It is aimed to highlight that each concept is interconnected with one another. In the second chapter, differentiation of self is discussed and applied to two characters from each of the novels respectively through determining their levels of differentiation of self by using Bowen's scale of differentiation of self which consists of four ranges. This theoretical scale provides a concrete base for the study's approach to these individuals' functionality within the family setting. It is intended to find out whether the characters' differentiation of self is rooted in childhood and paves the way to their poor or high functioning in their adult life. The concept postulates that the higher the level of differentiation of self of individuals is, the better they function in the family. The third chapter deals with four patterns of the nuclear family emotional system that emphasize conflicts in marriages resulting from dysfunctional spouses. It proposes that the more anxious the family environment is, the poorer the nuclear family members can function on the basis of their low levels of differentiation of self.

This thesis, incorporating differentiation of self and nuclear family emotional system, investigates and answers two research questions:

1. Do dysfunctional families breed dysfunctional individuals in Anne Tyler's selected novels?
2. Do selected conflictual marriages repress the spouses and children in Anne Tyler's selected works?

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1. THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

This thesis analyses *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler with the application of two significant concepts of Bowen family systems theory, namely differentiation of self and nuclear family emotional system. Originated in psychiatry, the Bowen theory provides a thorough understanding of the functioning of the family as an emotional unit and focuses on emotional reciprocity among family members. The study argues that individuals' levels of differentiation of self determine their functionality: the lower the level of differentiation of self is, the lower the adaptiveness to anxiety and flexibility to change individuals have; the poorly differentiated individuals are unable to acquire self-determined and inner-directed goals. And in nuclear families, poorly differentiated people are prone to showing dysfunctional traits as a result of high anxiety in the family environment. The key objective of the present thesis is to determine how functional Anne Tyler's selected characters in her selected novels are according to Bowen's scale of differentiation of self and four patterns of nuclear family emotional system. These selected individuals score three out of the four ranges of the scale of differentiation of self based on their adaptability to anxiety and how these characters react during emotionally intense situations depending on their level of differentiation of self. Also, it is aimed to identify how conflictual nuclear families in Anne Tyler's selected works are and how they transmit their dysfunctionality onto their children, as her selected works successfully picture individuals' domestic relationships within the family setting.

#### **2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Bowen family systems theory appeared in the late 1950s and has been applied in psychiatry by Bowen and his followers, conducting many studies regarding the application of its eight interlocking concepts in clinic studies (Bowen, 1966, 1976, 1978; Kerr, 1981, 2019; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Knapp & Womack, 2004, 2010; Noone, 2015; Papero, 1983, 1990; Titelmann, 2013). However, to the best of my knowledge, the available literature reveals that studies integrating the Bowen theory and its eight

interlocking concepts in literary works are scarce (Schiff, 2004; Lester, 2011; Alzoubi, 2016). In Turkey, there is currently no study that applies the theory to literary works. Initially, the present study is significant in the sense that it is an interdisciplinary piece of work, that is, a psychiatric theory is selected and applied to two selected literary works of Anne Tyler. Furthermore, rather than simply describing the dysfunctional traits of characters and families, the study provides a critical and alternative look at the dys/functional literary characters in the family environment by executing the Bowen's scale of differentiation of self and four mechanisms in nuclear family emotional system on Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Therefore, this thesis is one of the leading studies in Turkey in the sense that it scrutinizes the above-mentioned novels with two notable concepts of Bowen family systems theory. This study fills the gap in the literature related to the integration of the Bowen theory in selected literary works of Anne Tyler and will hopefully open a new window for further studies regarding the application of Bowen's family systems theory to novels, plays, and short stories.

### **3. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The method of this study is primarily to incorporate a theory of psychiatry into literature. This thesis utilizes Bowen family systems theory as an interdisciplinary approach for demonstrating the individual and family dys/functionality in Anne Tyler's selected works. Differentiation of self and nuclear family emotional system are selected among eight interlocking concepts of the Bowen theory. The first concept is the Bowen's theoretical measurement of differentiation of self that determines characters' levels according to their traits that score its four different ranges which are respectively 0-25(complete undifferentiation), 25-50(poor differentiation), 50-75(high differentiation), 75-100(complete differentiation). The second concept is four mechanisms of nuclear family emotional system employed to demonstrate the dysfunctionality of nuclear families in the selected novels. The mechanisms used in the study are the marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, impairment of one or more children, and emotional distance. While examining the novels, the text-based research method is used to find out characters' positions on the scale of differentiation of self and to disclose features of conflictual marriages by referencing the quotes of the characters from the novels.

#### **4. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This thesis is one of the leading studies incorporating two concepts of Bowen family systems theory into selected works of Anne Tyler. Therefore, there is currently a scarcity of sources in the available literature. During the data gathering process, this scarcity was proved difficult to trace similar studies which would enrich the present study.

#### **5. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study is an attempt to provide a Bowenian analysis of Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by including its two crucial interlocking concepts. Bowen family systems theory is carefully selected because it is an integrative and fruitful theory as it conceptualizes the family as an emotional unit, and any change occurring in one part of the family directly affects the other parts of it. Even though the theory includes eight interlocking concepts (differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, emotional cutoff, sibling position, societal emotional process) to scrutinize family and the relationships and interactions of its members, the present study utilizes two of them thoroughly because it is observed that the selected concepts embody most of the features of the other concepts. Furthermore, Anne Tyler is one of the few authors who pictures dysfunctional families in her works. The selected novels are fruitful in terms of portraying the dys/functionality in the familial context. *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* are chosen since the writer has realistic and keen observations on the relationships of fictitious individuals within the family environment, as the novels carry similar characteristics in terms of family dysfunctionality. Since both Bowen and Tyler build their families on a similar basis, they incorporate the traditional type of family, including a biological mother, father, and child/ren. The thesis focuses on the families in Tyler's selected works, including a biological mother, father, and child/ren from the view that the Bowen theory perceives them. For these reasons, the scope of this study is limited to the application of the scale of differentiation of self in only four characters (Macon, Muriel, Pearl, and Cody) and the integration of four patterns of nuclear family

emotional system in only two marriages (Macon and Sarah, and Beck and Pearl) in Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*.

## 6. LITERATURE SURVEY

The present study uses the Bowen theory as a methodological tool to emphasize Tyler's perception of family members' reciprocal interactions in *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Many academics have favoured applying psychoanalysis for analysing fictional characters' unresolved inner and outer conflicts in literary studies. Even Freud himself carried out an analysis of Hamlet to exemplify his Oedipal complex (Jones, 1910, pp. 97-8). Therefore, literary critics have paid little attention to the Bowen theory to highlight family settings where individuals constantly show reactions towards and are influenced by each other. The differences between Bowen family systems theory and psychoanalysis are discussed further and shown that the Bowen theory centralizes individuals' functioning in accordance with the functioning of their family members. As the critics mostly favour psychoanalysis to bring to light fictional characters' conflicts, it overshadows Bowen family systems theory. However, studies applying the Bowen theory demonstrate that it also provides a critical and alternative look at literary characters through the perspectives of their reciprocal functioning within the family setting.

Knapp (2004) puts forward that "[Bowen] family systems [theory] as criticism enables the critic to understand diverse members of an intimate fictional grouping with integrity, rather than taking sides with the person whose voice is the loudest, clearest, most poignant" (p. 159). In literary texts, it is highlighted that interconnected family relationships are significant to study the functionality of characters in the emotional family atmosphere. Applying Bowen family systems theory hence enhances literary studies uncovering characters' inner and outer conflicts concerning the influence of the deeds and feelings of other characters on them since the literary families are representatively emotional units according to which each member influences the other's emotional functioning. The theory looks at the characters' interactions that bring about particular conflicts within their family environments. In the available literature, there are a few studies that utilize Bowen family systems theory, such as Schiff (2004), Morgan (2007), Lester (2011), and Alzoubi (2016).



In her thesis called *Family Systems Theory as Literary Analysis: The Case of Philip Roth*, Schiff (2004) uses the eight concepts of the Bowen theory as a literary tool to study five novels of Philip Roth. Being the first study, Sarah applies these eight concepts of the theory to the mentioned works without providing many details about each concept. She aims to show individuals' development through their interactions in the family by including quotes from the novels. She highlights that Roth, focusing on the reciprocal functioning of each family member carries similar characteristics to Bowen that the family is the original setting where individuals flourish and/or decay. The thesis concludes that Roth's view of the family is in parallel with Bowen in the sense of the impact of the family members on each other while contemplating his literary characters. Furthermore, Morgan (2007) looks at the relationship between the life and works of Ernest Hemingway through the lens of the Bowen theory. In parallel to the previous thesis, she aims to propose the theory as an alternative to psychoanalysis in order to examine individuals as products of the nature of their surrounding relations. Morgan concludes that, as he projects anxiety onto his writing, Hemingway manages the anxiety in his life by developing characters whose daily struggles such as alcohol addiction, are similar to his. Lester (2011) studies William Faulkner's selected works by incorporating the Bowen theory. She concludes that Faulkner's characters from the Deep South are filled with a narrow environment, and their capacity to adapt to change is limited due to a lack of freedom to act for the self (Lester, cited in Bregman and White, 2011, p. 264). Lastly, Alzoubi (2016) examines Tennessee Williams' eight plays by integrating eight concepts of the theory. She primarily discusses the theme of family disintegration from the perspective of family as an interrelated emotional system and how its members influence the others' functioning. She argues that the Bowen theory provides an alternative look to reading selected plays by Williams and concludes that the individuals along with the families pictured in the eight plays are disintegrated, estranged, and fused in their relationships with other family members as a result of their low levels of differentiation of self and lack of adaptiveness to stress. It is observed that the studies utilizing the theory mostly share a similar theoretical framework by making use of its interlocking concepts.

The present thesis applies the Bowen theory to Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* regarding its two prominent concepts:

differentiation of self and nuclear family emotional system. The study scrutinizes the selected works of Anne Tyler with the application of the scale of differentiation of self and four patterns of nuclear family emotional system. It uniquely contributes to the current literature on Anne Tyler.

### **Anne Tyler**

The following part gives some brief information about the author of the novels studied in this thesis. It succinctly sketches Anne Tyler's writing style and the framework of her literary works and provides selected studies in the available literature on Anne Tyler.

Anne Tyler (1941-...) is an American writer who has penned twenty-five books—some of which have been classified as best-sellers and awarded by many critics—a series of short stories and popular book reviews. She is one of the leading and most productive American authors who became popular in the 1980s. In 1964 when she was twenty-three years old, she published her first novel called *If Morning Ever Comes* that focuses on students' detachment from their families (Petry, 1990, pp. 3-5). Tyler has been nominated a couple of times for prestigious rewards in fictitious literature. Being translated into many languages around the world, her books, *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (1982), *The Accidental Tourist* (1985/2008), and *Breathing Lessons* (1989) were nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction; Tyler received the prize for *Breathing Lessons*. These books are mainly revolved around the family disintegration in Baltimorean society (Willrich, 1992, pp. 497-9).

The theme of dysfunctional families predominantly reframes Tyler's works set in South America. Setting mostly in Baltimore, Tyler focalizes the intrinsic and extrinsic conflicts of realistic characters within the family environment where individuals grow up with the past burden (Petry, 1990, pp. 6-8). Commenting on Tyler's fiction, Gilbert (1990) claims that Anne Tyler's

world is well defined. It is a personal world. The concerns of her characters are the persistent and primary psychological anxieties of life. Children hunger for their mothers' approval. They feel grief and guilt at the death or disappearance of a parent. Siblings' rivalries and dependencies, loves and angers,

last for lifetimes. Sons and daughters spend decades running away from, or back to, their homes. (p. 251)

The focal point of Tyler's works is domestic affairs in disintegrated families. Taking domesticity into consideration, it is claimed that Tyler has imaged a realistically critical eye on isolated families with their dependable members whose selves are shaped (McPhillips, 1992, pp. 151-2). The families portrayed in her works are inclined to follow alike consequences. According to Carroll (1990), "the presentation of kinship as both a nurturing bond and a source of isolation for the individual" is a recurrent theme in the families in Tyler's fiction (p. 16). Thus, the dynamic family setting provides a lot of insights to evaluate each individual discretely in it and examines the family as an emotional unit.

The narratives of Anne Tyler have been revolving around the American family from a diversely portrayed realistic perspective, mostly concentrating on the South, and Tyler attaches great importance to the ordinary lives of ordinary people whom she portrays with natural human faults, struggling to sometimes persevere but often separate; she draws the picture of characters at their best– and worst (Bennett, 1995, pp. 57-8). Thus, the characters are visible in novels with their lifelike portrayals. Even though the families Tyler pictures differ in terms of the plot, most of her families share the common point of familial conflicts (Bail, 1998; Petry, 1990; Voelker, 1989). In her stories, family is believed to be the destiny of all since it is the very location actions evolve around (McMurtry, 1992, p. 132). Papadimas (1992) emphasizes the interrelationships of the family members and "the powerful influence that families exert on individuals, a force that creates a desire in them to return to the family for nurturing or causes them to reject the bonds as too confining for their autonomy and growth" (p. 45). Therefore, the family members' reciprocal interactions have a crucial point in every member's behaviour and functioning in Tyler's narratives. Bump (1997) asserts that families in Tyler's works are the characterization of individuals who are quite stable that it is difficult to trace transformations of the selves since the "heredity and family myths prove remarkably resistant to change" (p. 335). Since family plays a crucial role in constructing the self, by being fused with the family context, individuals in her novels instinctually tend to follow generationally built family practices. This treatment can be seen in two of her well-drawn novels –*The Accidental*

*Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. In the available literature, there are some studies that deal with Anne Tyler's fictional families such as Croft (1994), Wooten (1997), Medvesky (2008), Hastings (2014), and Carro (2015).

In his thesis called *Anne Tyler: An ordinary life*, Croft (1994) discusses Anne Tyler's life and realistic view on the family as a social institution. The thesis explores her novels written in the 1970s and 1980s and reveals that Tyler critically observes the domestic issues in the family environment, and the individuals in her novels are unique despite their ordinariness. The study concludes that Tyler draws the concept of family as the destination characters end up with. Furthermore, Wooten (1997) studies Anne Tyler's first thirteen works from the perspective of the family structure and its members' relationships. She puts forward that Tyler's novels include no idealized family patterns and characters struggle to find out their path towards individuation. Additionally, Carro (2015) investigates Tyler's fiction through looking at domestic subjects such as family and marriage within the scope of gender studies. In her thesis called *Anne Tyler's compass: A study of gender and humor in the novels of Anne Tyler*, she analyses Tyler's vision on socially constructed views on men and women. Carro concludes that Anne Tyler touches on the traditional topics in an unconventional way that she does not include the arguments of the gynocentric feminist school. Hastings (2014) studied six selected novels of Anne Tyler to analyse the origins of the suffering of selected characters. The thesis deals with grief resulting from unusual accidents, motherhood, and feeling of insecurity in unconventional settings. It concludes that Tyler portrays suffering as a realistic process that every individual shares. Lastly, Medvesky (2008) examines Tyler's works from coping mechanisms that obstruct characters' ability of hearing and seeing. She concludes that characters strive in the search for the self; however, the search mostly fails due to family history and socially constructed marriage roles.

*The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* are two leading novels by Tyler that focalize the estrangement of the family, and the disintegration of spouses and children. Set in Baltimore, Tyler characterizes the dysfunctionality of the Leary and Tull families in the sense of being a closed system and detached from the outer world in which they are aloof, living in their deadening cocoon. The abovementioned families typically bear dysfunctional traits in which their members

mostly suffer from issues such as a lack of well-developed communication skills and responding to one another. These family characteristics likely pass on to offspring. In the current literature, it is observed that there is no study that deals with these selected novels from the perspective of two selected interlocking concepts of the Bowen theory.

Within the scope of this thesis, *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* are chosen to conduct a thorough understanding of the dys/functionality of selected characters and families through the lens of two selected concepts of Bowen family systems theory: differentiation of self and nuclear family emotional system. The first concept is utilized onto four characters, Macon and Muriel from *The Accidental Tourist*, and Pearl and Cody from *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, to find out that characters' levels of differentiation of self are planted during childhood and determine their functioning in their adult lives. The latter concept is employed in the nuclear families: Macon and Sarah, Pearl and Beck; it is revealed that conflictual spouses breed conflictual marriages along with impaired children.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BOWEN FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION TO BOWEN FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY**

From a comprehensive perspective, the traditional family can be defined as “a human system” that includes interactions and relationships among the father, mother, and children (Becvar & Becvar, 1982, p. 49). However, the family types have extended from established structures over the years to various families. In their literature review, Marks and MacLanahan (1993) note that the kinds of families proposed by researchers are threefold; namely, “divorced and never-married single-parent families, stepfamilies, and cohabiting-parent families” (p. 481). Therefore, it is misleading to describe family from a specific angle since the types above have recently become what family is as an integral part of society.

A family is just a unit, a term coined by humans. It encompasses life. Quoting Wynne’s remarks, Framo (1972) reclaims that the family as the fundamental unit of society is the converging point of all four major conceptual systems of human behaviour—culture, social structure, personality systems, and biological systems (p. 2). Families are basically constructed on these systems. However, what makes it functional or dysfunctional is how the deeds and doings of its components are categorized in society, be it by scholars or laypersons. Thus, any discussion on dysfunctional families should first focus on the behaviours of individuals that comprise a family. If an individual in a family is dysfunctional, it is almost impossible to call the family functional.

Families fall into two groups: functional and dysfunctional in terms of the quality of the interaction. As given above, one can hardly explain the elements that make a family functional or dysfunctional. Therefore, it is more comprehensive to explain the aspects of dysfunctional families. A dysfunctional family, as a unit consisting of individuals’ interactions, undergoes several defecting processes that damage the relationships among these family members. The dysfunctionality of a family member affects other members’ functionality psychologically, physically, and emotionally. Individuals in a dysfunctional family lack some essential needs. Jamiolkowski (1993) points out that dysfunctional families are the ones that cannot

provide “survival, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, growth and opportunity to develop the skills for independent living” (p. 4).

Scholars in sociology, psychology, and psychiatry have proposed a series of different types of therapies to minimize the traumatic conditions of individuals who are harshly treated in dysfunctional families (Bowen, 1978, p. 338; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 101; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 209;). One of the leading theories on individuals’ functioning in the family environment is Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, which originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although it is considered a theory in psychology, the theory is also extensively used as a school of literary criticism.

The psychoanalytic theory is built on the notion that “the structure of the mind is formed in childhood. The mind is not, therefore, pre-given, but built up through a process” (Poster, 1986, p. 3). Our mind or, to be more exact, our mental set is shaped in the process of experiencing the world around us. In the developing stages, both the family and the community surrounding the child influence the child. Therefore, mental processes are heavily shaped by the experiences individuals have in our earliest years. However, the focal point is still on the person’s own urges towards the events taking place around him/her. Thus, Freud built his theory on individuals rather than including each family member as the product of interactions of the nuclear and extended family members. Poster (1986) reclaims that psychoanalysis acknowledges that individuals’ drives, sufferings, disorders, and early experiences are the focus that is taken into consideration; the extended family is not scrutinized or included in therapies (p. 34). However, it does not completely disregard the family. It demonstrates that individuals stand for analysis discreetly. The differences between the theories are explained in the following pages.

The psychoanalytic theory perceives individuals’ complications as a by-product of intrapsychic conflicts and relationships (Knapp, 1997, 2004, 2010; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008; Poster, 1986). Neurotic disturbances of individuals are also developed through interactions among people inside or outside the family; during therapy, sessions are conducted with a focus on patients’ internalized issues (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Knapp, 2010, pp. 3-4). Freud focused the sessions with patients

on resolving “intrapsychic conflicts rather than attempting to change or modify the properties of the family system directly” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 13). In a family unit, children are influenced by the instinctual urge to polarize with one of the parents. For example, Oedipal and Electra complexes deal with parental conflicts as children’s unresolved issues in their families construct the link between themselves and the treatment they get through psychoanalysis. Framo (1972) restates that psychoanalysis presents “a highly sophisticated decoding of the intrapsychic world of the individual” (p. 244). In literary analyses, texts are mainly examined through Freud’s major assumptions, among which these unresolved issues are the leading ones.

Apart from psychoanalysis that sheds light on individuals in the family dynamics, the family concept was brought into the scope of inquiry in psychiatry. Following the improvements in sciences, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, Alfred Adler, Nathan Ackerman, Gregory Bateson, Carl Whitaker, and Murray Bowen were some of the prominent specialists conducting research in family studies. Within the scope of this thesis, Murray Bowen’s Family Systems Theory (henceforth BFTS) is utilized as a tool to investigate significant characters’ familial conflicts in Anne Tyler’s *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*.

Murray Bowen puts forward a ground-breaking theory to conceptualize the family as a unit from an evolutionary perspective. Diverging from the established suppositions of the current psychoanalytic theory, Bowen offers a new set of ideas to examine the family unit. In the late 1950s, BFTS was developed and changed the focus from the uniqueness of humans to humans as evolving animals.

BFTS distinguishes itself from other theories mainly because it aims to define family to be “an emotional unit” and puts forward “an important new set of variables that influence the physical diseases, emotional illnesses, and social acting-out problems... [and] the interrelationship of these newly defined variables could be understood with *systems* thinking” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. viii emphasis in the original text). It perceives the family to be consisting of individuals acting out in a mutual way, living in a shared community or society. BFTS postulates that the family is a unit and consistently shares similar fundamental relationship processes with every other family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 10). The same relationship processes are derived



from an evolutionary base since they have been deeply rooted and handed down from ancestors.

Initially, the focal point of Bowen's works was schizophrenic patients along with the relatives of these patients in the late 1950s. The research Bowen carried out at the National Institute of Mental Health included not only schizophrenic patients but also their nuclear family members because Bowen believed that their relationships and functioning were interdependent (Bowen, 1978, p. xiv; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 6). According to the research, considering each family member as a separate individual would be inaccurate because each and all members reciprocally operate in relationships; as a result, the behaviour of every family member affects the others in the family, which "both contribute to *and* reflect what is occurring in the family as a whole" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 7-9 emphasis in the original text).

BFTS is described as "a theory of human behaviour that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit" (Kerr, 2019, p. 1). In other words, it proposes the notion that every individual in a family is a product of the interactions of the other members. Kerr (2019) adds that deep emotional connectedness in family members is directly related to the nature of a family (p. 1). To provide a thorough definition of the theory, in *Family Evaluation*, Kerr and Bowen (1988) assert that:

[f]amily systems theory is based on the assumptions that the human is a product of evolution and that human behaviour is significantly regulated by the same natural processes that regulate the behaviour of all other living things. A corollary assumption is that clinical disorders are a product of that part of man he has in common with the lower animals. The human's elaborately developed cerebral cortex and complex psychology contribute to making him unique in some respects, but, despite these specializations, systems theory assumes that homo sapiens is far more like other life forms than different from them. (p. 3)

Accordingly, the interactions and relationships of human beings resemble those of their ancestors. Therefore, studying humans as unique individuals, separating from

nature, may not be consistent with life forces postulating every living being has certain urges to exist interdependently (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 28). By nature, all species in a system are prone to interacting to survive. Titelmann (2013) suggests that BFTS contemplates that humans are products of evolution sharing a similar environment in the web of life, and scientific principles applied in the studies of other living organisms can be applied to human functioning as well (p. 263).

The major criticism of and attack on family studies in the first half of the twentieth century presupposed that psychoanalysis pushes individuals to therapy sessions. As an alternative to the psychoanalytic theory and its endless therapy sessions, Bowen aims to broaden some of Freud's ideas to a greater extent. However, BFTS is different from psychoanalysis in some significant ways. The critical difference stems from Bowen's discussion on human beings' relationships with nature. It is emphasized that even though the psychoanalytic theory assumes humans "to be unique as a form of life," BFTS stresses that "human's competent as well as dysfunctional behaviour is a product of that part of the man he has in common with the lower animals" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 20). In the ongoing process of evolution, humans have acquired their ancestors' instinctual traits. In other words, while Bowen gives an ecological model that humans are an integral part emotional ecosystem, psychoanalysis highlights that humans, as a species, are unique in their own way of development and functioning that are different from other living beings (Wayne, 2011, p. 9). Due to sharing the same urges in their environment or natural areas, each living being has some interdependency with others. Another difference between the two theories stems from gender-related complications. Freud's early works focus on treatments of gender-based issues such as treating hysteria in women; however, in Bowen's studies, "no specific patterns, tendencies, and/or neuroses as attributes of one's gender" is observable (Schiff, 2004, p. 5). This difference clarifies the point that Bowen family systems theory does not consider men and women in a different continuum; however, the theory proposes that individuals' emotional systems are biologically acquired regardless of their gender.

BFTS posits that each individual affects the emotional processes of others. As the family is an emotional unit, family members flourish and/or decay, and their interdependent emotional and behavioural patterns are shaped together (Bowen, 1978,

p. 338). Considering that psychoanalysis is the theory that takes individuals into consideration, it is developed through one-to-one sessions between individual patients and analysts. But, since BFTS concentrates on the family as a unit, the therapy sessions are conducted with patients and their nuclear and extended families (Bowen, 1966, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Therefore, it can be said that Bowen places the focal point of the theory on individuals' functioning and interactions in the nuclear and multigenerational context.

BFTS argues that humans are biologically rooted in nature. Living organisms behave interdependently; their functioning affects one another (Bowen, 1966, p. 354). Emotional functioning is derived from the emotional unit. Simply put, the emotional system can be delineated as:

the existence of a naturally occurring system *in all forms of life* that enables an organism to receive information (from within itself and from the environment), to integrate that information, and to respond on the basis of it. The emotional system includes mechanisms such as those involved in finding and obtaining food, reproducing, fleeing enemies, rearing young, and other aspects of social relationships. It includes responses that range from the most automatic instinctual ones to those that contain a mix of automatic and learned elements. Guided by the emotional system, organisms appear to respond sometimes based on self-interest and sometimes based on the interests of the group. (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 27-8 emphasis in the original text)

Considering interlocking communities and families, including each member who is also an emotional unit, it can be said that living beings interact through their instincts that comprise their emotional systems. These instincts serve as habitual processes that formulate interdependence among all community members.

The emotional system is more appropriately conceptualized as operating at a cellular level, leading to behaviour that is reflexive or reactive (Friedman, 1991, cited in Regina, 2011, p. 10). According to Kerr (2019), as evolution occurred over billions of years, it has allowed people to “govern human relationship systems” and to interact

with the environment in a broader way than other animals (p. 2). Even though individuals have developed intelligence to solve problems, think critically, build civilization, acquire knowledge, and live under social norms, “people still do all the ordinary things other forms of life do. The emotional system affects most human activity and is the principal driving force in [humans]” (Kerr, 2019, p. 2). In other words, although people are a step further than the lower animals as evolution is an ongoing process in nature, the instinctual impulses developing in living beings throughout time may still exist in humans. However, the evolution process of human beings is ‘humanly’ set according to our capacity for better understanding of feelings, rationalizing deeds, interacting, and problem-solving. This brings forth the intellectual system in humans, which is the part of the human’s ability to know and understand.

Naturally, the emotional system, just like in every living organism, instinctively drives and guides humans in life. In *Family Evaluation*, Kerr and Bowen (1988) point out that the emotional system in all life forms has three significant purposes. The first purpose is that “the behaviour of all forms of life is driven and regulated by the same fundamental ‘life forces’” (p. 28). This assumption is also considered to be one of the basics of the Bowen theory. The life forces mentioned here are entirely about animalistic and instinctual drives such as breeding, reproducing, rearing children, etc. These drives are seen in each living being in nature. The key feature that humans differ from any other beings is that humans can rationalize their actions and inactions with stated reasons due to their developed brain structure. The second purpose is that “the emotional system provides a way of thinking that may help bridge the compartmentalization of knowledge that presently exists about biological processes” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 29-30). It aims to explain what drives certain living beings to act or behave in that particular way, and how individuals can relate their own urges and deficiencies to their ancestors. To put it simply, the clinical problems of humans are products of their emotional systems common to all living organisms. Kerr and Bowen (1988) point out that disturbances of individuals are tried to be described as concepts, but it would be understandable to search for what causes or drives these disturbances (p. 29-30). Therefore, acknowledging the inherited emotional systems may pave the way to comprehending disorders in human beings. The third purpose of the emotional system is that “it can be easily extended beyond

the individual to include the relationship system ... [since] the emotional functioning of the organism is geared to its relationship with other organisms and with the environment” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 29-30). The emotional system is innately present in human beings to function in any given community.

Integrating individuals’ environment to theorize the functionality of communities and families maintains a broader perspective to conceptualize the functioning of these individuals within a family. In other words, since humans are emotional products of a given society or family, assessing their functionality by excluding the people to whom they are emotionally connected can be misleading (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 30). These demonstrate that just like our emotional systems that are inherited, life forces, urges, and clinical disorders are hereditary in principle and by nature. Examining these postulates their interactions within the familial environment.

Bowen builds upon the family systems theory by putting forward eight interlocking concepts. These eight interlocking concepts are considerably engaged in each other that it is not quite possible to explain one without referring to the others. Bowen (1978) indicates that “these concepts describe some overall characteristics of human relationships, the functioning within the nuclear family system (parents and children), the way emotional problems are transmitted to the next generation, and the transmission patterns over multiple generations” (p. 306). Bowen puts forward the eight interlocking concepts of his theory in two leading works: *The Use of Family Theory in Clinical Practices* (1966) and *Theory in the Practice of Psychotherapy* (1976). He presents six concepts: differentiation of self, triangles, the nuclear family emotional system, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, and sibling position in the former; he adds two concepts: emotional cutoff and societal emotional process in the latter. In the following parts, each concept will be clarified extensively by focusing on the interplay of two emotionally driving forces – individuality and togetherness.

BFTS theorizes that individuality and togetherness are two counterbalancing life forces that maintain relationships between living organisms (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 59). As individuals possess an emotional system, the emotional traits of their

ancestors continue to exist in every aspect of their life. The basic instincts in nature are survival and safety, and individual organisms are typically triggered to sustain these instincts, which lead them to pursue their habitual charges either single or in a group with other organisms (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 59). Therefore, acknowledging humans as evolved beings indicates that people share the individuality and togetherness forces in common with lower animals.

On the one hand, Bowen and Kerr (1988) explain that “[i]ndividuality is a biologically rooted life force (more basic than being just a function of the brain) that propels an organism to follow its own directives, to be an independent and distinct entity” (p. 64). Even though there is no clear evidence of animals having the sense of possessing individuality, it can be assumed that people, as being products of an evolving process, may hence acquire this force “as an elaboration of a capacity that functions as individuals,” and behave towards being distinct individuals in a way to “feel, think and act for oneself and lack concerns about whether others feel, think, and act the same” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 64). On the other hand, it is claimed that “[t]ogetherness is a biologically rooted life force (more basic than being just a function of the brain) that propels an organism to follow the directives of others, to be a dependent, connected, and indistinct entity” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 65). Since individuals are in constant interactions with people in their social environment, the driving urge to live in a community mostly requires fulfilling actions mutually. Individuality/autonomy and togetherness/fusion drives are two-folded, being individual and being together in a shared community. According to Nichols and Schwartz (1995), the theory centralizes “these two counterbalancing life forces: those that bind personalities in family togetherness [fusion/undifferentiation], and those that fight to break free toward individuality [autonomy/differentiation]” (p. 371). Thus, the interdependency of individuals in a family reflects their autonomous or fused functioning. In the sense of autonomy and fusion, Bowen (1976) reports that:

[T]here are differences between the ways feelings and intellect are either fused or differentiated from each other... People with the greatest fusion between feeling and thinking function the poorest. They inherit a high percentage of life's problems. Those with the most ability to distinguish between

feeling and thinking, or who have the most differentiation of self, have the most flexibility and adaptability in coping with life stresses, and the most freedom from problems of all kinds. Other people fall between the two extremes, both in the interplay between feeling and thinking and in their life adjustments. (p. 59)

The counterbalancing forces determine one's level of differentiation of self to a great extent, along with intrapsychic and interpersonal issues. Intrapsychic issues influence individuals that "in the face of anxiety, [individuals] develop the ability to separate feelings from thinking, and to choose whether to be guided in a particular instant by intellect or emotion" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 179). It demonstrates that people may justify their actions instinctually and critically as differentiated individuals. Anxiety driven by external forces is eliminated through one's own inner discernment. In parallel, interpersonal issues affect individuals who "experience intimacy with others but separate as an autonomous individual from being caught up in any emotional upheaval sweeping the family" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 179). Individuals may develop a degree of differentiation towards individually determined goals, or they may not function and justify their deeds instinctually and critically and thus become undifferentiated. In the family relationship system, each member emotionally and intellectually affects the others' differentiation of self. If individuals are considerably dependent on extrinsic factors, the levels of differentiation of self of these individuals may apparently weaken in the end due to their fusion.

If an individual has the capability to overcome anxiety by adaptation, rationalize his/her decisions, operate in self-determined directions, and manage effectively without being under the influence of other parameters, be it external or internal forces, that individual has a high degree of differentiation of self resulting from developing a strong sense of self throughout his life. As Papero (2015) suggests, "families with greater degrees of differentiation of self approach life challenges with a larger arsenal of response and greater flexibility of adaptation to changing conditions" (p. 16). The higher the level of differentiation of self, the better the individuals function in the family.





## 2. EIGHT INTERLOCKING CONCEPTS OF THE THEORY

The following part discretely explains the eight concepts of Bowen Family Systems Theory to provide a more concrete understanding and to emphasize the interlocking features of the theory.

**Differentiation of self** is the leading interlocking concept in BFST that paves the way for every other concept in the theory. Bowen (1978) describes the differentiation of self as people's capacity to differentiate between their emotional and intellectual systems to be able to form a sense of self (p. 362). It refers to acquiring the individual's self-efficacy while having interactions with other family members. It is also loosely defined as "a variety of behaviour is described to represent degrees of emotional strength of self" (Hall, 2013, p. 55). It is crucially vital to note that differentiation of self from the family origin does not mean cutting off from one's family; it means acknowledging one's unique position within the family to be able to think, abstract, react, and operate on one's own principles. It is one of the essential concepts that focus on the individuals' functioning in times of anxiety occurring in relationships and on their adaptiveness to the anxious family environment. Each person can be unique in the level of differentiation; however, one's high or low degree of differentiation of self is determined by the adaptiveness to the anxious atmosphere in the nuclear and multigenerational context of the family. From a broader perspective, Kerr (2019) utters that:

[f]amilies and other social groups tremendously affect how people think, feel, and act, but individuals vary in their susceptibility to a groupthink and groups vary in the amount of pressure they exert for conformity. These differences between individuals and between groups reflect differences in people's levels of differentiation of self. The less developed a person's "self," the more impact others have on his functioning and the more he tries to control, actively or passively, the functioning of others. (p. 7)

Autonomous functioning is the central idea for individuals' degree of differentiation of self. The family as an emotional unit has a massive influence on the members' high or low level of differentiation of self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 54-56). If one person

in a family has a high degree of differentiation of self, that “person can think, plan, and follow their values, particularly around anxiety-provoking issues, without having their behavior automatically driven by the emotional cues from others” (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 180). If one individual is poorly differentiated, that person lacks self-determined goals and depends highly on family members’ togetherness and fuses in relationships.

Having an emotional system that leads to fluctuating feelings, individuals may develop anxiety during emotionally intense situations. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), “[a]nxiety can be defined as the response of an organism to a threat, real or imagined. It is assumed to be a process that, in some form, is present in all living things” (p. 112). It shows that the people’s instinctive urge to grow anxiety in the face of dangers is evolutionarily inherited. Kerr and Bowen (1988) divide anxiety into chronic and acute anxiety as follows:

[a]cute anxiety generally occurs in response to real threats and is experienced as time limited. People usually adapt to acute anxiety fairly successfully. Chronic anxiety generally occurs in response to imagined threats and is not experienced as time limited. Chronic anxiety often strains or exceeds people's ability to adapt to it. Acute anxiety is fed by fear of what is; chronic anxiety is fed by fear of what might be. (p. 112)

Individuals naturally react to anxiety depending on their levels of differentiation of self. While adapting to acute anxiety likely signals high levels of differentiation of self, being unable to adapt to chronic anxiety incites low levels of differentiation of self which is acquired in the family environment. In the familial context, emotionally intense situations trigger these types of anxiety in each family member, and the adaptiveness to the anxiety determines high or low levels of differentiation of self of the family members. Individuals who have higher levels of differentiation experience acute anxiety, and their adaptation to it is likely smooth and successful. Similarly, well-differentiated parents provide a suitable atmosphere for children to have a more concrete and strong sense of differentiation; It demonstrates that, during the times of acute anxiety, these individuals can operate by themselves and that that type of anxiety is successfully adaptable, and the emotional harmony of the family is restored (Bowen,

1978, p. 361; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 113-4). However, if parents have chronic anxiety, children likely develop the similar type of anxiety and acquire low levels of differentiation of self from the family of origin; the chronic anxiety becomes long-lasting and triggers more disturbances in family cohesion (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 113). To illustrate, poorly differentiated families project low levels of differentiation, that is, children are considerably dependent on their parents to make decisions about their lives; however, well-differentiated families lead children to be more independent and have a say in their lives (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 116). The high level of differentiation of self postulates a quick recovery from the anxiety. The higher the family has potential to restore the emotional equilibrium, the better parents and children function.

Differentiation of self does not correlate with emotional well-being, diseases, or pathology, since individuals who possess low levels of differentiation of self may live harmoniously without showing psychological symptoms, or the higher ones may suffer as a result of severely stressful events; however, it correlates with the adaptiveness of individuals to anxiety that disturbs the emotional harmony in the family (Bowen, 1978, p. 472). Anxiety is inevitable in every family; however, the in/ability to recover from the anxiety determines the level of differentiation of self. The high level of differentiation of self signals the ability to speedily restore the emotional equilibrium in the family. The recovery of poorly differentiated individuals from stress is quite slow or even impossible, unlike the well-differentiated ones can quickly adapt to anxiety and find ways to remove the disharmony in the family (Bowen, 1978, p. 472). The differentiation of self of individuals is constructed in the family setting and follows a direction similar to that of the family they are born to. Thus, this view exhibits that every human being, in essence, acquires and develops his/her self, which is the variable extent to be dependent, independent, or interdependent on the support, approval, acceptance, or criticism of other people (Kerr, 2019, pp. 6-7).

As stated above, differentiation of self is the prominent concept in BFTS to determine the functioning of individuals in a family relationship. Bowen developed a theoretical measure tool called the scale of differentiation of self. Bowen defines it as “an attempt to conceptualize all human functioning on the same continuum” (1966, p.

357). The scale postulates that “the variable degree of emotional separation that people achieve from their families of origin accounts for their operating at different levels of differentiation of self” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 97). Bowen (1976) hypothetically assigns 0-100 scores on the scale to individuals to determine their emotional functioning and the capacity of adaptability to anxiety in the family context (p. 67). Bowen’s 0-100 scale of differentiation of self is clarified in detail with its four divisions in chapter 1.

**Triangles** highlight that BTFS conceptualizes family relationships from a three-person emotional configuration perspective. Being the smallest stable relationship system, triangles are anxiety-binding formulations that calm anxiety within the family (Bowen, 1976, pp. 75-6; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 134-5). A two-person relationship, the dyad, is balanced and calm as long as they are less anxious. However, when anxiety increases, the individuals in the dyad tend to involve a third person in the relationship to decrease the tension, and it becomes a triad. Involving the third person in the relationship may not reduce the tension all the time, depending on poor differentiation. In ineffective triangulations, the anxiety increases more, and the triangle brings about a sequence of “interlocking” triangles, as more and more people are involved in the relationship; the tension can be stabilized for the moment, but issues in the relations may remain unresolved (Kerr, 2019, p. 3). In these interlocking triangles, as tension continues to increase, it spreads over every other relationship. The failure of triangles closely relates to individuals’ differentiation. Anxiety and differentiation of self play major roles in forming triangles. As triangulation is an active equilibrium of a triad, in times of low anxiety, the dyad is calm and gets along well; yet, in times of high intrapsychic or interpersonal anxiety in the dyad, the equilibrium is easily distorted (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 135). If individuals whose differentiation of self is high are triangulated in a relationship, they tend to decrease the anxiety of the other two by principles of self-determination; however, if poorly differentiated people are triangulated, they likely fuse and intensify anxiety in the relationship (Kerr, 2019, p. 3). That is to say, the functioning of triangles is interconnected with the adaptability of stress and the level of differentiation of self.

**Nuclear Family Emotional System** is the third interlocking concept that Bowen proposes to determine individuals’ functioning and their reaction to anxiety

within the conflictual nuclear family by putting forward four basic relationship patterns. These four mechanisms are listed as follows: marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, impairment of one or more children, and emotional distance (Bowen, 1978, p. 425). Each of these patterns is closely associated with each other, and one or all of them can be present in a dysfunctional nuclear family. Nuclear family emotional system gives insights into the poor functioning of conflictual spouses in their conflictual marriages.

**Marital conflict:** In the anxious family environment, spouses' poor differentiation appears, and one spouse projects anxiety onto the other spouse. Bowen (1978) describes it as, the basic mechanism that includes conflictual spouses in conflictual marriages. It is defined as, a marriage in which no spouse gives in to the other, and each spouse thinks that it is the other one who needs to change (Bowen, 1978, p. 377; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 187). As no spouse gives in to the other and finds the other one problematic, anxiety gets intensified in the marriage.

**Dysfunction in one spouse:** Bowen (1978) describes it as one spouse giving in to the other; one becoming the submissive, the other dominant in the marriage (p. 204). Even though they keep harmony in their marriage to some extent, one spouse dedicates her/himself more to the relationship and becomes the subordinate one. The higher the level of anxiety, the more anxious subordinate one becomes and develops psychological and physical dysfunction.

**Impairment of one or more children:** Bowen (1978) describes it as poor differentiated parents projecting their emotional immaturity onto their children (p. 379). Depending on their poor differentiation, parents focus their anxiety on children who acquire dysfunctional traits. The more children internalize the familial anxiety, the more they possess undifferentiation, and they become vulnerable to their emotional dependence on their parents (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 193-4).

**Emotional distance:** Bowen (1978) defines it as, spouses and children within the family reduce emotional contact with the other members in order to get rid of anxiety; however, the distance results in either more undifferentiation or isolation (p. 263). The emotional distance is caused by the presence of the other three mechanisms

in conflictual marriages. The mechanisms will be scrutinized and applied in the second chapter of this study.

**Family Projection Process** is the fourth interlocking concept that concentrates on the transmission of undifferentiation from parents to children. It has a close relationship with the previous concept, in which parents contribute detrimentally to children's functioning with their own undifferentiation. Kerr (2019) describes that it presents the ways parents project their emotional immaturity on children (p. 19). The transmission of the undifferentiation has a major influence on children's dysfunctionality. The inheritance of parents' unresolved conflicts chiefly dominates children's emotional functioning since children's level of differentiation is habitually acquired and altered by the family into which they are born (Bowen, 1978, p. 362; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 98; Jakimowicz et al., 2020, p. 3). To put it more clearly, the parents "pass on their level of differentiation to the children in an uneven fashion: some emerge with a higher level than their parents, some with a lower level, and others with a more or less identical level" (Papero, 1995 quoted in Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008, p. 186). If the parents' differentiation is low, their children most likely acquire the approximate level. This does not mean that children's differentiation of self remains the same throughout their lives because differentiation is a lifelong process and can increase or decrease; however, not much change may take place in their differentiation because "emotional systems change slowly" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 193). Children who grow up with the intense support, approval, or criticism of their parents may profoundly grow with a considerable amount of dependency on these in their adult lives. Nichols and Schwartz (1995) summarize that "projection is different from caring concern; it's anxious, enmeshed concern" (p. 373). As the projection of undifferentiation is closely associated with the third mechanism of the nuclear family emotional system, it will be discussed in the third chapter.

**Multigenerational Transmission Process** is the fifth concept in which Bowen sheds light on the family through a multigenerational view, considering the extended family rather than the immediate one. It mainly covers "sequential projections over continuous generations in a family" that reflect the influence of the ancestors from at least three generations on offspring's functioning (Hall, 2013, p. 159). In the light of levels of differentiation of self, Kerr (2019) specifies it as, "how small differences in

the levels of differentiation between parents and their offspring and between the members of a sibling group lead over many generations to marked differences in differentiation among the members of a multigenerational family” (p. 27). The offspring habitually alternate multigenerational dys/functionality of the family. Handing over anxiety through projections paves the way that nuclear family members absorb it to some extent due to the anxiety having a major effect on these members’ levels of differentiation of self. Thus, the un/differentiation of (grand)parents is transmitted onto (grand)children as there is emotional reciprocity between generations. Emotional reciprocity leads to approximate levels of differentiation of self in children. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2008) clarify that chronic anxiety is passed on through a minimum of three generations and poses severe dysfunctioning in each generation (p. 189). In dysfunctional families, individuals’ poor differentiation originates in a multigeneration transmission.

**Emotional Cutoff** is the sixth interlocking concept of the family systems theory added by Bowen in the late 1970s. It is delineated as, individuals manage their emotionally unresolved issues with the other family members “by reducing or totally cutting off emotional contact with them” (Kerr, 2019, p. 33). People try to get rid of their anxiety by drawing emotional or physical boundaries. The distancing between family members is seen as individuals staying away from their families, spending less time with them, or preventing sharing sensitive issues. Kerr (2019) asserts that the emotional cutoff may temporarily bring relief; however, the problems and emotional issues remain unresolved in the relations (p. 33). The issues are superficially handled, which is a sign of a low level of differentiation of self; poor differentiation correlates with intense unresolved emotional attachment (Bowen, 1976, p. 84). Emotional distance has a direct relation with multigenerational in people’s emotional immaturity. Kerr and Bowen (1988) further state that “the greater the undifferentiation or fusion between the generations, the greater the likelihood the generations will cut off from one another” (p. 271). As people inherit the level of differentiation from their parents, they mirror it to their offspring. Emotional distance demonstrates people’s withdrawal from their families because of the low level of differentiation and discarding of unsolved matters. The emotional cutoff will be more extensively discussed in the context of emotional distance in nuclear family emotional system.

**Sibling Position** is the seventh interlocking concept where BFST incorporates ideas proposed by psychologist Walter Toman. According to Kerr (2019), “people who grow up in the same sibling position predictably have important common characteristics... The characteristics of one position are not ‘better’ than those of another position, but are complementary” (p. 37). The family emotional system determines and changes the position of siblings depending on chronology or sex (Hall, 2013, p. 173). It is exemplified that the oldest children have a tendency to be leaders, and the youngest children generally tend to be followers. Therefore, sibling positions offer that an older brother/sister of a brother/sister may get along well with a younger brother/sister of an older brother/sister since they complete each other. Supposedly, an older brother/sister may acquire leadership and responsibility; a younger brother/sister may acquire the role of following. Surely, this is related to the person’s level of differentiation. The lower the level of differentiation of self is, the higher the potential anxiety in the siblings appears. The poor differentiation may cause sibling rivalry (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2008, p. 89). In poorly differentiated siblings, rivalry becomes one of the severe dysfunctions. In the light of the sibling position, sibling rivalry is investigated as a feature of poor differentiation.

**Societal Emotional Process** is the last interlocking concept added by Bowen that places the focal point on the societal impact on family dysfunctionality. Kerr (2019) presents it as the emotional system of each individual may be developed or altered by the occurrences taking place “on a societal level, promoting both progressive and regressive periods in a society” (p. 41). The societal emotional process attempts to show how increasing anxiety at the societal level can decrease individuals’ functioning. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), “high crime rate, a high divorce rate, an incessant clamour for ‘rights,’ and a notable neglect of responsibilities” come out due to the societal anxiety (p. 334). Kerr (2019) extends the symptoms as, “a more litigious attitude, a greater polarization between racial groups, less principled decision-making by leaders, the drug abuse epidemic, an increase in bankruptcy, and a focus on rights over responsibilities” (p. 42). The impact of societal dysfunctionality reveals itself in individuals’ poor functioning under such societally anxious situations.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION TO DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF**

This chapter primarily aims to disclose levels of differentiation of self of selected characters in *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* by Anne Tyler with a perspective on their dys/functional traits and the influence of the functioning of their family of origin on their differentiation of self. It investigates the level of differentiation of self by including its definitions and factors that determine individuals' level of differentiation. In this chapter, the scale of differentiation of self will be applied to determine four selected characters' functioning in Anne Tyler's selected novels. The study centralizes the concept of differentiation of self as the focal point and explains it along with its four loose ranges in detail.

From an evolutionary perspective, individuals inherit the sense of creating communities to survive, and it has become a driving force for them to approximate and seemingly convey similar traits: it reflects the urge for togetherness; on the other hand, individuals instinctually acquire the sense towards being distinctive, which is a significant characteristic of individuals that demonstrates individuality (Bowen, 1978, pp. 218-9; Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 121-3). As mentioned, the level of differentiation of self has a direct relationship with these two counterbalancing life forces. Individuality reflects the high level of differentiation of self; togetherness causes the low level. Yet, it is important to mention that these two forces may not follow a straight direction. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), the counterbalancing forces of individuality that do not imply being a solo individual who pursues life without any external influences and togetherness that does not mean being completely fused in an environment where individuals have no sense of self stem from shaping the self through adaptability and whether the individuals are dependent on others' acceptance, approval, support and criticism (p. 107). Likewise, for any other living organism, being adaptable plays a critical role in individuals' differentiation without being fused in their relationships with others or losing the self. Anxiety intensifies in the time of lack of adaptability in relationships; being unable to cope with anxiety signals a low level of differentiation of self. Dependency on others' emotional support decreases one'

functioning severely and demonstrates a lack of self-directed goals. However, well-differentiated individuals have a strong sense of self in a way that they are emotionally independent within the family cohesion and quick to restore equilibrium.

Being the key concept in BFST, differentiation of self is individuals' self-efficacy to distinguish themselves in a self-determined way and to operate emotionally, intellectually, and socially independent from external forces. The level of differentiation is a continuing process that an individual has obtained from childhood to the elderly period (Bowen, 1966, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Kerr, 2019). It is claimed that "the basic building blocks of a 'self' are inborn, but an individual's family relationships during childhood and adolescence primarily determine how much 'self' he develops" (Kerr, 2019, p.7). Relationships during the process of children's growing have a crucial impact on their functionality. Dysfunctional parent breed dysfunctional offspring. The higher the level of differentiation correlates with the lower potential to develop severe symptoms; the lower the differentiation of self individuals have, the lower emotional separation from their family of origin to build a concrete self is present, and the more stressful they become (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 95-7).

Family cohesion is disrupted because of anxiety that affects family members. The higher the level of differentiation of self an individual obtains, the higher the level of adaptiveness and cooperation, and fewer dysfunctional symptoms are developed; the poorly differentiated individuals have a tendency to behave in a more selfish and aggressive manner that causes a decrease in cooperation and cohesiveness in the family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 93). Well-differentiated people can cope with stress in anxious family settings; the lower the level of differentiation of self is, the higher potential there is to be emotionally cut off to avoid stress because of the lack of adaptiveness skills. Therefore, the lack of cohesion renders individuals to emotionally undifferentiate; they may end up with no self. Individuals who cannot cope with anxiety in the family are dysfunctional and more dependent on others' reactivity and cut off by emotional distancing from the other family members due to the lack of the ability to cooperate.

## **The Scale of Differentiation of Self**

Differentiation of self is the integral interlocking concept in Bowen family systems theory, and there is a theoretical scale to define the level of individuals' functioning and adaptability. The scale of differentiation of self aims to position individuals according to their functionality depending on their interactions with other people from the low to high level: fusion/undifferentiation and autonomy/differentiation. Kerr and Bowen (1988) point out that "the scale defines an individual's *adaptiveness* to stress. People at any point on the scale, if stressed sufficiently, can develop physical, emotional, or social symptoms. The higher the level of differentiation, however, the more stress required to trigger a symptom" (p. 97 emphasis in the original text). However, it is significant to note that assigning a definite level to individuals can be challenging, or even misleading due to both the differentness of human nature and the extent to which individuals differentiate and act autonomously in each of their relationships discretely. It is revealed in the degree to which an individual can differentiate the self towards autonomy, make decisions by themselves and feel responsible for these decisions without being under the influence of others and lead an individually constructed living standards; also called the solid self, it becomes fixed in the early times but can be increased with the individuals' efforts (Papero, 1983, p.149). Therefore, it is an everlasting process throughout life.

The scale of differentiation of self aims to position individuals in a high or low degree of differentiation of self, presumably depending on their emotional functioning. At this point, it is important to note that Bowen family systems theory does not distinguish males and females to evaluate their functioning within the family environment. The theory is hence gender blind; it does not focus on differences between gender. During the application of the scale, every individual inheriting emotional systems is seen as the product of evolution.

The scale of differentiation proposes the values of 0 and 100 as arbitrary. In the higher range of the scale, there are people who have possessed complete differentiation and "fully resolved the emotional attachment to his family...attained complete emotional maturity... [are] responsible for [themselves] and neither fosters nor participates in the irresponsibility of others" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 97). Being

emotionally independent, these individuals are differentiated and not driven by external factors to make decisions and fulfill their responsibilities in the relationship. The higher differentiation of self postulates family cooperativeness and unity, emotional support, and well-differentiated individuals live harmoniously and independently that their decision-making process is based on self-determined goals. On the contrary, in the low range of the scale, people are incompetent to differentiate emotionally from their families, and they are fused or emotionally cut off from others in the relationship and end up with no sense of self. Poorly differentiated people are fused in the family systems; they react dependently towards other people and do not create a strong sense of self (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Johnson & Waldo, 1998, p. 406). These poorly differentiated individuals react to anxiety in a severely dysfunctional way that causes fusion, are inconsistent about their responsibilities in a relationship and are unable to make decisions by themselves.

The highest (100) and lowest (0) degrees on the scale are arbitrary because people are products of evolution that bring up a certain degree of individuality/autonomy and togetherness/fusion (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 97). Thus, the variable degrees that individuals possess increase or decrease as results of critical and life-changing incidents such as extreme anxiety, death, love, and marriages; the differentiation of self fluctuates, and no individual attains complete differentiation and undifferentiation (Bowen, 1966, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Brown, 1999, p. 95). Individuals in all families are naturally situated in various places on the scale. Titelman (2013) highlights that “by observing over time the ‘tracks’ that people have left ... with enough ‘facts of functioning’ to observe, it is possible to estimate a level of differentiation for individuals, families, other natural groups and organizations, or societies” (p. 209). The examination of the degree of differentiation is apparent through the observations carried out on family members in not only the nuclear base but also the multigenerational context. Similarly, in literary works, the observations of characters’ tracks through relationships they have with others can be examined to assign each character a score on the scale.

As it is a lifelong process throughout one’s life, including many fluctuations, the scale of differentiation of self is to be flexible, and so, assigning a static score to an individual may be misleading due to being in relationships with his environment

and under the influence of the degree of others' level of differentiation of self. Therefore, Bowen offers four loosely described categories for describing one's functioning on the scale: complete undifferentiation 0-25, poor differentiation 25-50, high differentiation 50-75, and complete differentiation 75-100. In the thesis, as the characters in Anne Tyler's selected novels are investigated on the scale of differentiation of self proposed by Bowen, the following part roughly focuses on these four divisions.

0-25: People who are situated in the lowest division of the scale are considerably dependent on others' functioning and have very poor differentiation. Kerr and Bowen (1988) explain that these individuals "live in a feeling world... they have lost the capacity to feel; they are numb. Emotionally needy and highly reactive to others, it is very difficult for people in this range to maintain long-term relationships" (pp. 101-2). In any relationship, they are prone to be emotionally manipulated and fused, and these individuals entirely focus on the current relationships' nature led by others. Likewise, according to Bowen (1976), 0-25 individuals' "much energy goes into seeking love and approval and keeping the relationship in some kind of harmony, there is no energy for life-directed goals" (p. 70). Thus, these individuals show symptoms caused by chronically anxious family settings and problems occurring in their comfort zones. These individuals are dependently raised by poorly differentiated parents. As these individuals acquire very low differentiation, their opinions and feelings are highly affected by the environment; they are unable to state their own opinions and "incapable of using the 'differentiated I'" (I am, I believe, I will do, I will not do) in their relationships with others. Their use of "I" is confined to the narcissistic viewpoint, "I want, I am hurt, I want my rights" (Bowen, 1966, p. 357). Thus, the range of 0-25 assesses people having no solid self and being dependent on others. They become quite vulnerable in an anxious family environment, develop severe dysfunctions, and cannot hence function outside of the units as a concrete self. The range of 0-25 will be discussed in Cody Tull.

25-50: Individuals with relatively low differentiation of self are positioned in the second place on the scale. These people have "a budding capacity to differentiate... Lacking beliefs and convictions of their own, they adapt quickly to the prevailing ideology. Highly suggestible and quick to imitate others to gain acceptance, they are

ideological chameleons” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 102). It is important to assert that individuals in the range of 25-50 may variably demonstrate their functioning in a relationship. To illustrate, 30 people possess the lower differentiation in which they are more dependent on others to fulfill their responsibilities and have a rare sense of solid self; being closer to 50 manifests more of a self and only some degree of flexibility and adaptability. That is to say, the range of 25-50 alternates between poor and fairly moderate functioning. Since the solid self is not developed noticeably, these individuals likely create pseudo self.

Pseudo self and solid self are two variables that postulate an individual’s functioning from a fairly low to moderate level. Kerr and Bowen (1988) point out that “pseudo-self refers to knowledge and beliefs acquired from others that are incorporated by the intellect and negotiable in relationships with others. Pseudo-self is created by emotional pressure and can be modified by emotional pressure” (p. 103). These people are considerably dependent on others’ reactions to themselves. This range discusses that “pseudo self is ‘pretend’ self ... [individuals] pretend to be more or less important than they really are, stronger or weaker than they really are, more or less attractive than they really are” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 104). The emotional negotiation may increase these individuals’ level of differentiation in situations like approval and flattering by family members or authorities; however, the emotional pressure may also weaken the functioning of these people in situations such as disapproval or harsh criticism. In other words, these individuals are dominated by supportive traits of the environment. When they are retreated, or anxiety occurs in the relationship, their functioning considerably decreases. Therefore, under adequate stress, they may develop serious emotional, physical, and psychological symptoms (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 104). As Bowen (1976) summarizes, these people’s “life energy is directed more to what others think and to winning friends and approval than to goal-directed activity (p. 76). On the other hand, the solid self is built upon the convictions of one’s own that is not easily manipulated by others’ functioning. It never changes by approval/disapproval of others; as changes can only occur within the individual, the solid self is the principal element that people have to be an independent individual while in emotional contact with other family members (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 105). In contrast to the pseudo self, the solid self is determined and remarkably

independent on others' views of themselves. As mentioned above, the range of 25-50 varies from low functioning to moderate. Macon Leary and Pearl Tull will be good examples of this range.

50-75: People who are situated in the third quarter of the scale have a moderate level of differentiation of self. Individuals possess "fairly well-defined opinions and beliefs on most essential issues" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 106). 50-75 individuals have a fairer balance in their lives and a more sense of solid self. Acquiring a stronger solid self, these people express their opinions more freely, and their attitudes towards a relationship are carried within their own emotional functioning. They construct a solid self through emotional maturity. Kerr and Bowen (1988) indicate that "in contrast to pseudo-self, solid self is made up of firmly held convictions and beliefs which are formed slowly and can be changed only from *within self*. They are never changed by coercion or by persuasion from others" (p. 105 emphasis in the original text). Thus, these people are not easily prone to the reactions of others. They are hardly dominated by other people's supportive or undermined practices. Nevertheless, under sufficient stress, these individuals may develop physical, emotional, and psychological symptoms. However, these symptoms can be more temporary, they can get over these in a faster way than people in the lower level (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 106). These individuals are less fused in the relationship, and more differentiated. This range postulates individuals who have a strong sense of self-determined goals and are independent that their views are shaped in parallel with their emotional well-functioning. This range will be examined in Muriel Pritchett.

75-100: Individuals who are positioned in the highest division of the scale have a high level of differentiation of self. As mentioned above by Brown (1999), possessing a complete differentiation that refers to 100 is hypothetical. Therefore, it would be more convenient to mention 75-90 people. Kerr and Bowen (1988) consider that individuals own their self-determined principles to evaluate issues, express their opinions, and be able to adapt to anxiety, along with their notion of being self-directed (p. 106). As these individuals are well-differentiated, their functioning is not influenced by others' approval or harsh criticism. In this sense, Bowen (1966) conceives that these people "begin 'growing away' from their parents in infancy. They are always sure of their beliefs and convictions but are never dogmatic or fixed in

thinking” (p. 359). Therefore, it is important to say that they are open to new ideas and others’ perceptions about issues, but the evaluation of these occurs within their sense of differentiation. Being autonomous and tolerant as individuals, they have a strong sense of respect towards, and feel no complete responsibility to change others’ people lives; similarly, they do not need other individuals’ functioning, and they are realistic in their expectations of self and others, so, “their chronic anxiety is very low, and [they]he can adapt to most stresses without developing symptoms” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 107). Anne Tyler pictures no well-differentiated characters in the novels.

Consequently, Bowen’s scale of differentiation of self can be considered an effective measure to assess one’s functioning in a relationship for disclosing one’s adaptiveness to emotionally intense situations. However, appointing an exact number to an individual without obtaining much information about that individual’s inner and outer conflict, family/relative relationships and life experiences is misleading. Kerr and Bowen state that the scale does not propose “clinical diagnostic categories”, it rather deals with revealing “an individual’s adaptiveness to stress” (1988, p. 97). The higher the level of differentiation, the more adaptiveness to stress; the lower the level of differentiation, the less adaptiveness to stress. In this sense, differentiation of self needs to be prioritized as it highlights the extent to which people can emotionally function with the family system. Individuals who attain less “emotional separation from their families have the least ability to differentiate thinking from feeling”, on the contrary, “people who have achieved a lot of emotional separation from their families have the most ability to differentiate thinking from feeling” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 107). That is to say, being able to be emotionally apart from family members by being autonomous and responsible for their actions plays a key role in one’s functioning. In later stages of life, the relationships they construct also influence their functioning. To put theory into practice, the scale of differentiation of self is applied to Anne Tyler’s *Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* to find out the selected characters’ functioning within the family as an emotional system.



## 2. *THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST*

### **Macon Leary**

*The Accidental Tourist* is a novel written by Anne Tyler in 1985. As soon it was published, it became a best seller and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and was awarded the National Book Critics Circle Award. It is a story of a man who undergoes a series of actions to find out what he actually desires to have in this world because of the idea that he has been controlled and shaped by the people and actions revolving around him throughout his life. Setting in Baltimore, the plot revolves around the main character Macon who works as a writer of guideline books for businesspeople. Even though he hates it, he needs to travel a lot to make a living. Traveling is challenging for Macon by nature since leaving his comfort zone, and staying away from his house/environment brings uneasiness to his thoughts. He is a complex character in a way that he cannot live with and/or without people around him because he has not created a sense of self in himself due to his unresolved conflicts mostly related to his familial background. Kerr and Bowen (1988) point out that a child's differentiation of self is considerably close to the parents' differentiation of self since the emotional systems are slow-paced (p. 193). It can fluctuate within one of the four divisions of the scale but does not increase or decrease to the next or previous division. Thus, it is seen that Macon's childhood actions predominantly shape his poor functioning in his relationships in his childhood and adult life.

In Anne Tyler's works, it is obvious to witness that each character influences the others' lives, as the common theme is mutuality within the familial context. *The Accidental Tourist* portrays the members of the Learys' interactions. Yardley (1992) explains that it "is filled with the knowledge that life leaves no one unscarred, that to live is to accept one's scars and make the best of them—and to accept as well the scars that other people bear" (p. 121). The scars that the family has marked, and the influence of these scars carry on the ongoing lives of the characters. They are clung to these scars throughout their lives. Characters' functioning and differentiation of self hence are principally formed in the family they are born to. Madden (1993) believes that Tyler touches upon the family institution as a "crucible in which identity is forged. Her characters' identities are the result of inherited traits, childhood experiences,

upbringing, and interaction with parents and siblings. Whether they love or hate their families, they define themselves in relation to them” (p. 58). In *The Accidental Tourist*, the Leary family is delineated to have shaped Macon’s low level of differentiation. It has a direct relationship with the counterbalancing forces. It can be inferred that the force of togetherness is established in the family more than individuality as members are fused within the family. Since the family members have the necessity or instinctive urge to relate themselves with the Leary traditions, it can be said that a low level of differentiation occurs in each; they fuse in the family and are unable to construct concrete and/or solid selves.

In *The Accidental Tourist*, the Leary family is the main source to evaluate the protagonist Macon Leary’s functioning. The family is known as being difficult people, specifically men, Macon, Charles, and Porter, to live with since every one of them is a divorcee (Tyler, 1985, p. 12). As an emotional unit, the Leary family is considerably similar to each other in nature and conventional accordingly. It is suggested the members of the Leary family are “socially maladjusted flakes living with their own peculiar set of rules and emotional ticks” (McPhillips, 1992, p. 150). They are closed to the outer world and dependent on these similarities and the Leary rules to be able to function within the family. Voelker (1989) stresses that the Leary family has come up with their own philosophy “‘Learyism’—a radical distrust of the world outside the walls of their ancestral home” (p. 148). As a member of the family, Macon possesses a great deal of the characteristics of the Learys.

Families are emotional units, and individuals have direct influences on the others’ functioning, especially the grand/parents on children’s. It has been stated that the concept of the multigenerational transmission process brings about the dysfunctionality of generations of the family. It is well-exemplified by the traits transmitted by the Leary family that explicitly conveys on offspring. Taking the Leary family into consideration, a thorough picture is provided by Sarah Leary, Macon’s ex-wife, as follows:

[T]hey [the Learys] always go to one restaurant, the one their grandparents went to before them, and even there they have to rearrange the silver and set things up so they're sitting around the table the same way they sit at home. They dither

and deliberate, can't so much as close a curtain without this group discussion back and forth, to and fro, all the pros and cons. 'Well, if we leave it open it will be so hot but if we close it things will get musty...' They have to have their six glasses of water every day. Their precious baked potatoes every night. They don't believe in ballpoint pens or electric typewriters or automatic transmissions. They don't believe in hello and good-bye. (p. 132)

It is vividly clarified that the Leary family has been static and unchanging in their own standards. Each of the members instinctually follows similar practices that their grand/parents have done. The unchanged way presented in the Leary environment is "taken to an extreme, becomes a deadening cocoon" (Prescott, 1992, p. 117). The closedness to the outer world brings about dysfunctionality at both familial and individual levels. It can be illustrated by Macon's despair after the death of his son Ethan and the breakup of his wife Sarah; his willingness to keep Sarah and his house because Macon cannot leave the house since he feels the need to keep it for stabilizing his comfort. In his/their opinion, to ensure comfort is to be familiar. It is the trait Macon has acquired in his childhood.

As the central figure, Macon is portrayed as a significant representation of the Leary family in terms of routines. As mentioned above, Macon's grandparents are the source of the term the Leary family that mediates the strict rules and unchanging practices. These practices at one place become obsessions: Rose alphabetizes stuff in the kitchen; they play the game called Vaccination, which is too complex for others; the Learys ignore answering phone calls; they always have supper at five thirty (Tyler, 1985, pp. 13, 67, 77, 121). Updike (1992a) puts forward that "[s]ome of the Learys' behavior seems unlikely even for reclusive and order-obsessed eccentrics" (p. 127). Macon's level of differentiation of self is mostly constructed on this base of the Leary family. It shows that Macon following what the Learys have preached to him is poorly differentiated; however, it is seen that he may function to some extent because he tends to form a pseudo self which Macon develops a pseudo self in his relationship with Muriel. However, unlike the solid one, the pseudo-self is only temporary and shows

one's poor differentiation. Macon is situated in this range because of his undifferentiation from his family of origin.

The Leary features portrayed above by Sarah can be said to be the determining point for Macon's less differentiation. He embodies each trait to a great extent. Carroll (1990) claims that Tyler presents a wise pun while picturing the family: "being leery is synonymous with being a Leary" (p. 19). Being leery/Leary brightly shows itself within the context of Macon that he routinizes the family practices. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988), individuals located in the 25-50 are easily "adaptable to the prevailing ideology... [since] they are ideological chameleons" (p. 102). The Leary family has transmitted being leery to children, and they instinctually demonstrate it by being close to the outer world and avoiding communicating with strangers. The children have a low level of differentiation of self and are fused within the family as they have been adapted to the leeriness. In the novel, Macon possesses this in a wide manner as he comprises the prevailing trait of the Learys.

Macon practices the routines that correspond to the Leary philosophy. Stating that he behaves in a totemic perspective to the outsiders, according to Carroll (1990), Macon's view of the world has been slightly built upon totems that base "both a concrete and metaphorical way of representing common identity", which has been handed down through the Learys (p. 19). The common identity of the family members forms a comfort zone for each to stay away from the outside world. The Leary children form their identity through the baked potatoes that they cook every night since it has "always been their favourite food", drinking "six glasses of water every day" (Tyler, 1985, pp. 74, 132). Additionally, according to Carroll (1990), the generationally similar practices show "the preference for comfort and blandness" (p. 19). It can be exemplified by mentioning the restaurant they always go to. It is the Old Bay Restaurant that binds all the family members together, from the grandparents to the grandchildren. The Old Bay Restaurant is the place where "Macon's grandparents used to take the four children on their birthdays" (Tyler, 1985, p. 85). It is specifically significant because the restaurant conveys the Learys' routines because it is believed to "symbolize... the Old Way of life" (Humphrey, 1994, p. 152 emphasis in the original text). It is the location where Macon always visits when he is out for lunch and dinner. Macon exactly follows the tradition; he meets his ex-wife Sarah and his

employer Julian there all the time. It specifies the stiff protection of the comfort zone since being outside of the zone inwardly causes uneasiness. It signals the low level of differentiation of self from the family of origin that he is closed to new windows.

Macon's low level of differentiation of self can be best observed on the basis of his fusion in relationships with his family members including his wife Sarah, Muriel, brothers Porter, Charles, his sister Rose, and son Ethan. Kerr and Bowen (1988) admit that people in the range of 25-50 "have poorly defined selves... adopt viewpoints that best complement their emotional makeup" (p. 102). Tyler presents Macon Leary in the mentioned way that he strives for achieving and keeping his comfort zone in his family environment and carries out the unchanging practices of the Leary family.

Macon scores the division of 25-50 depending on his poor differentiation from the Leary terms. Individuals who are positioned at the low level of differentiation of self scale are prone to keep their comfort zone as much as possible since the zone keeps them secure and closed to the outer world (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 102). As an important trait of the Leary family, Macon carries "the deadening cocoon" in his marriage with Sarah. The feeling capacity has been lost over the period and the practices have become more and more static. It is apparently visible to see the loss of feelings in Macon towards his marriage but unable to state it. Hastings (2014) states that even though Sarah is the one who asks for the divorce in the first place, Macon also feels discontented in the marriage because he is not happy with coupling with Sarah (p. 16). It shows that Macon intends to proceed life as it goes by with no change. He desires to keep what he has in his hands until that point. He has been incapable of telling his opinions due to the reason that that could disturb the equilibrium in the relationship. While Sarah explicitly tells Macon that she wants a divorce, Macon avoids expressing his discontent as he lacks a self-determined voice. His functioning depends on the continuation of the marriage since he is in need of keeping the comfort of having Sarah around.

Macon fits into the Leary traits of being static. He simply hates leaving his comfort. Macon is married to Sarah for twenty years; they had a son Ethan after the seven years of their marriage; they lost Ethan who was murdered in a hamburger event

that he went with his friends, and he was shot to death on his head. Even though the death scene is not told in the novel, it forms and changes its course. Macon and Sarah's perceiving the event causes the marriage to fall apart; not the death itself but how they react towards the death create conflict. In the very first scene where Macon and Sarah return from holiday, Sarah asks Macon for a divorce due to Macon's blasé behaviour towards the death of their son Ethan. Sarah believes in Macon's lack of care for such an issue for a long time and reflects it to him in a way that Macon does not respond as she desires. As Macon is an introverted character who cannot openly express his feelings to others, he cannot respond to Sarah's needs; the closedness trait predominates his dysfunction in the marriage.

Macon is viewed to be totally against the issues that would damage his comfort. He follows the same practices all over the time. Gibson (1983) puts forward that "Tyler's characters [e.g., Macon Leary], with their rootedness, their entanglements, and their inherited predispositions, come up against the possibility of change" (p. 49). This can be exemplified with the result of the divorcing process for the housing as Sarah claims, "you can keep the house... You never did like moving" (Tyler, 1985, p. 5). Kerr and Bowen (1988) tell that people in the second place on the scale of differentiation of self are prone to be disturbed by "emotional disharmony" in times of emotional intensity (p. 102). Macon feels disrupted if the house is taken by Sarah, who is aware of the situation very well. Additionally, this can be seen through his feelings during his business travels. It is said that Macon has a "bad habit" that he begins "itching to go home too early" (Tyler, 1985, p. 37). It has resulted from the discomfort of being in unfamiliar locations. He is unwilling to leave the house can also be an indication of Macon's poor differentiation of self, which demonstrates his lack of exploring new places despite his job as a traveler. This trait can also be associated with the "geographic dyslexia" of the Leary children in which they have difficulty in finding their ways in the city where they have lived all along; they are unfamiliar with the outer world due to the reason that they have never emotionally able to leave the Leary house where all of them have lived their life (Tyler, 1985, p. 122).

The invariability in occurrences of Macon's life and relationships present dysfunctionality to a great extent. Mathewson (1992) remarks that most of the characters in the story believe in keeping their life pacing as it goes by, think of

“change a sort of negative philosophy” and resist it openly (p. 123). Macon is a controlled person who has not accomplished a high level of differentiation of self from his family of origin and its characteristics. Sarah complains about his unchanging activities in which he has adopted a system, and this system is what keeps him alive. Sarah harshly criticizes him, during their talk over the divorce, for the lack of attempts, “You just go on your same old way like before. Your little routines and rituals, depressing habits (Tyler, 1985, p. 4). The Leary characteristics become apparent at this point. These transmitted practices affect his functioning in his relationship with his wife in an unhealthy manner. The routines and rituals are mostly related to the Learys/leery conventionality. Due to poor differentiation, individuals scoring in the range of 25-50 cannot easily change their practices transmitted from the original family. If any change occurs, it brings about anxiety and severely affects his functioning.

The reluctance of changing comfort zones is significantly visible in terms of Macon’s job. He works as a writer of travel guidebooks for businesspeople who are unwilling to travel. Macon Leary’s enthusiasm is not to travel; he is just offered a job by Julian, the publisher of the guidebooks, and Macon accepts it. Betts (1990) claims that the name the Accidental Tourist itself suggests “an oxymoron” in which a tourist has ideally a purpose to travel; “how can a tourist be accidental?” (p. 7). In fact, Macon hates traveling; however, “he loves the writing—the virtuous delights of organizing a disorganized country, stripping away the inessential and the second-rate, classifying all that remained in neat, terse paragraphs” (Tyler, 1985, p. 11). His love of writing delineates the sense of organizing and ordering that shows up itself in principle. Moreover, the logo designed on the anonymous guidebooks profoundly illustrates Macon’s character. It is “an overstuffed chair... [with] giant, feathered wings” and Julian reclaims that “[w]hale armchair travelers dream of going places, traveling armchairs dream of staying put” (Tyler, 1985, p. 85-6). It can be surmised that the guidebooks are for businesspeople traveling to foreign countries with the intention of minimally influencing by its distractions and returning home fast because Macon practically tells what to do, what to eat, where to go, where to stay in the visited city. Even though the logo ironically includes giant wings to symbolize travel and movement, the overstuffed chair in the logo portrays “a seductive image of the inertias

of home” (Zahlan, 1990 p. 86) It is an indication of restoring and reassuring the comfort zone at home.

One of the striking traits of the Learys is that they abstain from communicating with the outer world; as mentioned above, they have no belief in hellos and goodbyes. Macon has taken on the attitude as a principle in his life. It is told that communication is his least favorite word (Tyler, 1985, p. 131). He tries to keep his interactions at a minimum level. Even he does the grocery shopping on Tuesday since it is the day that the shop “is least crowded with other human beings” (Tyler, 1985, p. 54). He keeps the distance between himself and the outsider. Similarly, Sarah states that “if you could live any way you wanted, I suppose you’d end up on a desert island with no other human beings” (Tyler, 1985, p. 47). That shows his undifferentiation from his family of origin, resulting from being leery.

Macon’s travelling method also gives us some hints about his abstention from communication. As an important way to get away from people trying to communicate on the plane, travelers need to carry a book because it provides “protection against strangers” (Tyler, 1985 p. 30). The book Macon carries is *Miss MacIntosh, My Darling*, which is 1198 pages, and it has no plot. Similarly, in the guidebooks, he advises taking some extra “travel-size packets of detergent” so that there is no “fall into the hands of foreign laundries” (Tyler, 1985 p. 30). Zahlan (1990) tells that Macon “has habitually set up as a barrier between himself and all those other people encountered on journeys over the years” (p. 94) it is obvious that he simply hates communicating with outsiders and keeps himself in his cocoon, a well-spotted Leary term. More importantly, because of the lack of established communication skills, Macon cannot express his feelings openly at all even about the death of his son. Sarah even claims that “Macon, I know you loved him but I can't help thinking you didn't love him as much as I did, you're not so torn apart by his going (Tyler, 1985, p. 135). Sarah believes in Macon’s profile she seems to believe it. Macon has never had the courage to tell anyone about his feeling of loss. He suffers from a communication breakdown. It is stated that until he could talk to Muriel, Macon could never tell anyone aloud that his son Ethan was murdered even after one year (Tyler, 1985, p. 188). This shows that Macon cannot communicate with his wife about the loss. However, Muriel,



a person out of the Leary community, is the one to whom Macon can share his feelings to some extent.

Kerr and Bowen (1988) propose that individuals in the second range of the differentiation of self scale have a reasonable level of pseudo-self that is forged and manipulated by the emotional pressure (p. 103). Since individuals with poor differentiation in the family environment are influenced by the other members and fused within the family context, they have little tendency to create a strong sense of self because their habits are shaped according to the family standards; the apple does not fall far from the tree. Macon's self is constructed during childhood as he has adapted to the Learyism philosophy; simply go with the flow of the family essence. Sarah says that Macon is "ossified... encased... like something in a capsule" (Tyler, 1985, p. 136). The capsule is the Learys from which he cannot differentiate. However, Muriel Pritchett shows up on the stage to sway the capsule to some extent.

Muriel is presented as an animal trainer working at the Meow-Bow Animal Hospital. Macon accidentally finds the hospital to leave Edward, Ethan's dog when he is on travel. By his nature, Macon shows the least interest to communicate; Muriel attempts to keep in touch by delivering her business card, asking for his name, and phone number and proposing to care Edward, hence getting to know Macon better. It is inferred that Muriel is different from Macon and the Learys. She has an aura of the outside world. Later, she enters Macon's world through the dog's training and unfits the Leary standards. She becomes a significant figure in Macon's life as they begin spending time more and more and talking over Edward's training. The relationship between Macon and Muriel is built upon the healing of Edward. Macon requires training just like Edward does; Petry (1990) explains that Edward's disability reflects Macon's psychological breakdown as results of a "rigid and 'muffled'" mode of silencing his inner "rage, confusion and frustrations" he has experienced over the years (p. 223). Macon feels quite unable to voice his feelings after the death of his son and Sarah's breakup, and Edward's impaired conditions symbolize Macon's despair. Thus, Muriel not only trains Edward but also therapizes Macon during the process.

Kerr and Bowen (1988) note that "pseudo self usually provides an effective 'rudder' or direction" (p. 103). The dog trainer Muriel mediates the role of being a

rudder in Macon's desperate life. The frequent training meetings bring intimacy between these two. Muriel teaches Macon how to command Edward to calm him down, what he needs when he barks, and when and where to unleash him. Over the time, Muriel tells Macon about herself and her sick, seven-year-old son Alexander and asks him for dinner. Macon feels close to her as well because he perceives her life energy giving a sense of comfort since she is "an open book" (Tyler, 1985, p. 225). Macon feels affection towards her depending on his current feelings.

As their relationship intensifies over the course of the training, Muriel invites him for dinner. Acting leery, Macon is unwilling to resume the relationship and decides to write a letter to explain that their relationship cannot function since he has lost a son and got divorced; therefore, he cannot be there with her. However, Muriel easily persuades and takes him in without refusal. Kerr and Bowen (1988) believe that pseudo self looks for conformity, and their decision mechanism is based on current feelings (p. 104). Macon finds himself driven by the moment's feelings. He is in Muriel's place where they share the same bed and make out. Norton (2003) discusses that "the acute insinuation of certain well-developed extra-familial characters" shifts the characters' consciousness from the family origin towards the newly created environment where comfort is ensured to some extent (p. 38). Muriel's distinctive lifestyle predominantly gives Macon temporal respites to breathe out in a sense. The new atmosphere is where he is flattered and provided with comfort; the comfort he has lost after the divorce. Macon gradually melds in her environment by moving in her place and apparently functions better there. Macon takes Alexander to a shopping store when he used to take his son; he brings Muriel with him to one of his trips. Macon becomes involved with Muriel's folk during Christmas. Thus, their relationship gets stronger. The rudder becomes his relationship with Muriel which consolidates his pseudo self.

Muriel's effect becomes visible in Macon's life through constructing his pseudo self. Muriel is different from him/the Learys by nature; she is open to communicating and lives not on the basis of unchanging practices transmitted from family but enduring life challenges through self-determined goals throughout her life. Muriel's differentiation of self is discussed in the following part. Macon is charmed by her standards. It is told that:

[t]hen he [Macon] knew that what mattered was the pattern of her [Muriel's] life; that although he did not love her he loved the surprise of her, and also the surprise of himself when he was with her. In the foreign country that was Singleton Street [the place Muriel lives] he was an entirely different person. This person had never been suspected of narrowness, never been accused of chilliness; in fact, was mocked for his soft heart. And was anything but orderly (Tyler, 1985, pp. 202-3).

Macon's departure from the Leary house may seem an important stage for attempting to reshape his self. In Muriel's place, he feels himself completely different; being improbably incautious in occurrences, leaving order behind. Macon is driven by Muriel's impact as he follows the prevailing practices. Kerr and Bowen (1988) indicate that pseudo self is quite liable to be manipulated and changed by others (p. 104). He enjoys being around her, dealing with stuff at her house, taking care of Alexander. Muriel's interest influences Macon to a great extent with her surprising existence. However, Macon emotionally cuts off from Muriel because of conflicts related to his ex-wife Sarah. The issue increases Macon's anxiety, and he gradually distances himself from the relationship instead of compromising it. As Macon has a low level of differentiation of self, his pseudo self is constructed through his relationship with Muriel and formed in a way that demonstrates Macon's pseudo self which fairly functions during emotionally calm situations.

By the end of the book, Macon travels to Paris, which is Muriel's most desired city to visit. She asks him to take her as well; however, he refuses because of economic issues. Muriel finds money and secretly catches him on the plane. Macon sees her on the couch and quarrels over her coming. Muriel explains that she can easily survive in Paris thanks to his guidebooks. Muriel is aware that she has become an integral part of Macon's life and claims "you need to have me around" (Tyler, 1985, p. 318). She has been a rudder that Macon clings to. In the disguise of pseudo self, Macon's clinging to Muriel brings about easiness as the anxiety is quite low in their relationship. His poor self is manipulated by Muriel who provides him with comfort. The rudderness of Muriel becomes apparent at this point. The moment Muriel leaves him, his functioning decreases. After all, Sarah vividly summarizes Macon that "you think people should

stay in their own sealed packages. You don't believe in opening up. You don't believe in trading back and forth” (Tyler, 1985, p. 311). It is against his nature to leave his sealed package –the Learys–.

The analysis of Macon’s level of differentiation of self in *The Accidental Tourist* has been an attempt to emphasize the crucial role of the family on individuals. The repressed matters of his life lead to poor differentiation in his both early family and marriage lives. Macon’s poor differentiation and lack of concrete self are considered to be the results of his fusion within the Leary family that functions at the low level of differentiation. It opens up itself firstly by following similar practices of the Leary family like unchangeability and lack of leaving the comfort zone. Losing both his son and wife, Macon functions at the low level until the moment that he meets Muriel who plays an integral role in shaping his pseudo self. As a result, it is demonstrated that Macon’s low level of differentiation of self highlights the importance of the family on the individuals’ development of differentiation of self. As the Leary family is a dysfunctional family due to the aforementioned traits along with its closed system, Macon is a dysfunctional character as well. Macon has acquired less differentiation from the family; he is moved by the other people’s functioning. Therefore, Macon has scored 25-50 on the scale of differentiation of self.

## **Muriel Pritchett**

*The Accidental Tourist* hosts Muriel Pritchett who tremendously changes the course of the novel with her distinctive characterization, traits, and lifestyle. She is one of the most significant characters pictured as vivid, eccentric, and colourful. Muriel initially comes to the stage as an animal trainer when Macon looks for an animal hospital to leave Edward, his late son's dog. The moment Macon arrives there, she grows interest in and feels sympathetic toward him. Bail (1998) writes that when they appear at the first moment, the scene is "the collision of two radically different styles" (p. 123). In contrast to Macon, she is open to communication, socializing, and novelties. She is differentiated from her family to a moderate extent. She is seen as the trainer of Ethan's dog that becomes quite disobedient after Macon moves to the Leary house where his siblings reside. Through the dog training, their relationship improves, and their interaction and affection increase.

The relationship between Muriel and Macon gets more intense over the time of their training of Edward. She introduces herself to Macon with her own standards along with her sick son Alexander. Carried away with his inner of apparent peace, Macon moves to her house and begins dwelling in a socially lower-class environment, which is quite different from his. Muriel lives in Singleton Street with "its poverty and its ugliness ... [that it is] so dangerous" (Tyler, 1985, p. 224). Despite that, her relationship with Macon intensifies in a way that he admires her struggles and appreciates her for rearing an ill boy by herself, her liveliness, and her fight against life (Tyler, 1985, pp. 170-1, 269). She is resilient. Having got divorced and started living separate from her family with her son, Muriel deals with life by standing at her own feet; she has worked in many different jobs, trying to survive decently in Singleton Street.

Muriel Pritchett is the most distinctive individual in the novel with her characteristic and peculiar traits that differ from Macon/the Leary family; she is dynamic and unorthodox. She is presented as a strong character with a disadvantaged child allergic to even air. Prescott (1992) utters that she is "a ragged young woman with a damaged child, she's as appalling as she is appealing. Muriel embodies what Shaw call[s] the Life Force" (118). She has experienced a lot over the years in life.

Her raggedness has shaped her present character, accomplishing life alone. Thus, she recognizes both the surprises and dangers here. She pursues Macon to contemplate what nature proposes to her according to the standards that enforce the Life Force. Prescott (1992) continues that “[t]here’s something heroic about the way she exposes her mangled past as if it were a book from which she must read aloud at once” (118). Shaw’s concept of the Life Force “intends in its experiments to develop contemplative intelligence in mankind” (Bailey, 1973, p. 49). Being a satisfactorily differentiated individual, Muriel has attained a moderate degree of differentiation. It points out her fair level of differentiation of self; as it is explained, the higher the level of differentiation, the higher individuals can function well in anxious situations and adapt themselves to stressful situations (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 99). In this way, it can be claimed that there is a correlation between Shaw’s Life Force and Bowen’s differentiation of self in which both convey individuals’ personal development through self-determined goals.

Influencing Macon with her quirky way of life, Muriel is mentioned as “the man-chaser and the man-saver” who completes her role with achievement since, at last, Muriel is claimed to therapize Macon successfully (Hoagland, 1992, p. 144). She relives Macon in a way to bring about his pseudo-self. As it is told, one’s pseudo-self is formed by the other’s solid self; it is a trait achieved with a high level of functioning of the partner who establishes the concrete self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 103). Thus, the crucial point here is that Muriel has acquired the capability to perform the role of being what she is in her nature; as a result, she constructs a strong solid sense of self by differentiating from her family. She is differentiated from her family of origin in her decision-making mechanism and standing strong in anxious times. In her earlier years, she had a short period of marriage with Norman; Alexander was born with some defects that required them to stay at the hospital for a long time. Norman left her with the child. She has strived to manage to look after her son solely. Kerr and Bowen (1988) voice that individuals having the concrete self are the ones who possess “firmly held convictions and beliefs which are formed slowly and can be changed only from within self” and build adequacy of standing firmly by principle (p. 105). It can be seen through her self-constructed standards with principles. The principles she lives by determine her high level of differentiation of self.

It is visible that Tyler portrays Muriel with a more different look than the other characters in the novel since the atmosphere of the novel progressively alters with her entrance. Askew (1991) stresses, “Muriel is the electricity” of the novel by articulating her effect on Macon by becoming the changing force in his disturbed life (p. 57). She represents what “the Learys are not: talkative, confrontational, an eccentric dresser, casual about word choice” (McMurtry, 1992, p. 134). Askew continues that “[w]ithout her, *The Accidental Tourist* would be stuck in neutral, peopled with polite, conservative folks whose engines run only on idle” (1991, p.57). Being “the most conventional people” and surviving in their cocoon, the Learys are obsessed with unchangeability, control, and constraint (Tyler, 1985, p. 122). Muriel is distinguishable from these in terms of her life with self-assuring events, which have made her what she is now: a strong and moderately functional character. It has resulted from openness to the outer world and the surprise of life.

The Leary family is dysfunctional with their closed system, Muriel is noticeably functional in terms of openness towards change and unconstraint about her comfort zone. It is seen that Muriel is not strictly attached to her comfort zone. She desires to get involved with other people, other places, and the surprise of life (Tyler, 1985, p. 202). On the other hand, the dysfunctionality of each and every Leary family member shows itself with the sense of being completely closed to the outer world, living in their own capsules, not answering the phone calls at all, and enclosing themselves with a sense of keeping connections with the outer world at the rare level. However, Muriel is a differentiated character in the sense of forming her own principles. She is an individual with a moderately high level of differentiation of self. She has established her life without being fused within the family of origin. Muriel has sailed to openness in Singleton Street, a place that “brings... a receptivity to the vicissitudes of existence” (Shelton, 1990, p. 45) She has grown her character in the house on Singleton Street where she peacefully lives with Alexander. Her strife of building a sense of self is reflected in her spikiness towards life challenges.

Despite being portrayed rarely in the novel, the characterization of the Pritchett family demonstrates the family’s fair level of functionality. Mr. and Mrs. Dugan, Muriel’s parents, and Claire, Muriel’s little sister, are residents of Timonium, a place similar to Singleton Street. It is told that Muriel has separated from the family at an

early period because of her marriage to Norman. Norman was her lover for whom she considered the best match. Yet, due to family matters of Norman, the marriage lasted very shortly, during which they had Alexander. She has been the only one committed to the child. Muriel has inventively accomplished the vitality of life on her own, raising the child, working in many jobs, earning her life, and being an independent woman:

I've had to be inventive. It's been scrape and scrounge, nail and knuckle, ever since Norman left me... I've lain awake, oh, many a night, thinking up ways to earn money... I've got about fifty jobs, if you count them all up... Like those lessons at Doggie Do, or another time a course in massage at the Y.  
(Tyler, 1985, pp. 179-180)

It is inferred that Muriel has been an individual and free spirit character since her teenage years. By herself, she has selected to separate from her family; she has not been cut off from it; they have an ongoing relationship with her parents and sister. In the end, she “has [cultivated] an appealing fierceness and incredible energy that set her apart from” the others in the novel (Saxton, 1994, p. 75). It is seen that the Pritchett family has not been hindering Muriel to differentiate; they do not antagonize her self-directed route to building her life. Perceiving Muriel as a distinct individual, Mr. and Mrs. Dugan are aware of her interdependency with the family and accepts her as an autonomous offspring. Mr. and Mrs. Dugan are rarely seen in the story; therefore, their functional traits can be examined through the characteristics and deeds of Muriel. Muriel is a character demonstrating the individual forming the self through self-determination, which is shaped through developing the self. It is concluded that such people convey the message: ““this is who I am; this is what I believe”” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 105). Therefore, 50-75 on the scale of differentiation of self is the division she scores. The self-determination is analysed more in the following paragraphs.

To better analyse Muriel's differentiation of self, it is necessary to talk about her intense relationship with Macon by making comparisons and contrast between them. Muriel has grown a concrete sense of self through life experiences. She married once, got divorced, and has a diseased child. With a powerfully emotional tone, it is followed, mentioning Macon's pain over his lost son, by Muriel that “*I'm scarred, too. We're all scarred. You are not the only one* (Tyler, 1985, p. 191 emphasis in the



original text). The scars she bears are seemingly caused by the caesarean birth of Alexander; however, they are also used as a metaphor for the pain and loss she has suffered and her struggling efforts, which have shaped her current self now as Voelker (1989) implies that the scars are “wounds that support life” (p. 157). They reveal the process of developing fair functioning resulting from the differentiation from the family of origin.

Moreover, it cannot be said that Macon resembles Muriel in terms of losses since Muriel has been more dynamic in her way through the way to overcome these. Unlike Macon, she can communicate. Macon has always lived by Leary’s principles; Muriel can openly state what she feels, unlike Macon, as mentioned, who hates communicating. Kerr and Bowen (1988) emphasize that people in this range have a developed sense of expressing their opinions (p. 105). Muriel achieves strong communication skills. It is visible when they first meet at the very first session of the training, she talks about herself in detail, whereas Macon passively listens to her (Tyler, 1985, p. 95-8). In contrast to Macon, Muriel believes that one needs to express themselves well to manifest opinions and feelings and relate to others. It is in fact a trait she has acquired from the family. It is noticeable in one of the scenes they appear on the stage: when Macon and Muriel pay a visit for Christmas. The family members have a strong tie of communication: Macon observes that everyone at the table has some stuff to share with him and each other. Mrs. Dugan talks about Muriel’s childhood; Mr. Dugan tells his interest in cars; Claire mentions her school. Thus, during the training, Muriel encourages Macon to communicate. It can be seen that Macon has, at last, some attempts -thanks to Muriel’s pushes- as well to say what he feels; for the first time when he talks about his late son, “*it felt good to say his name out loud*” (Tyler, 1985, p. 219 emphasis in the original text). Muriel accompanies Macon to therapize his scar caused by the death of Ethan. Her companionship heals his loss and “aid[s] him in the redirection of his life” (Medvesky, 2008, p. 16). Muriel gives a clear portrayal of the reverse side of life to Macon to pull him out of the Learyism philosophy. Therefore, she possesses a higher functioning level of differentiation of self than Macon.

Muriel’s appearance on the stage brings fresh air to the novel. She has some speech errors, an unusual wearing style, “aggressively frizzy black hair”,

“preposterously high-heeled sandals” (Tyler, 1985, pp. 27-8, 39). According to the Learys’ terms, she is unlike and bizarre; however, she is self-made according to our terms. At this point, it is important to tell what the Leary family thinks of Muriel. Macon’s oldest brother who is a divorcee with no child, living with his siblings, Charles is the one on the stage to uncover what the Learys consider about her. He supposedly warns Macon about Muriel and her misfit to him. Charles tells,

[t]his Muriel person... [is] not your type of woman... [T]his Muriel person’s a symptom. Everybody [Porter, Rose, Charles] says so... Macon, face it. She's not worth it... [S]he doesn't even speak proper English! She lives in that slummy house, she dresses like some kind of bag lady, she's got that little boy who appears to have hookworm or something. (Tyler, 1985, pp. 237-239)

The Leary family formulates the unlike differentness of Muriel as an outsider to the Learys. She does not belong to an environment that requires strict order and routines. Norton (2003) argues that “Muriel’s very non-Learyness (that is, her non-leeriness) turns out to be her most liberating quality” (p. 43). She owns her own standards settled to determine who and what she is, not who and what she is supposed to be. The speech explicitly shows how any other person outside of the family can be disregarded from the Leary standards. Muriel has no place in the Learys with her unconventional look and unconstraint nature. Tyler (1985) pictures the Learys as “how they always had to have everything just so, always so well thought out beforehand, always clamping down on the world as if they really thought they could keep it in line” (p. 12). Unlike Macon/the Learys who believe/s no spontaneity, she welcomes the surprising occurrences of life. Muriel’s free spirit allows her to welcome them.

Considering Singleton Street where she dwells as a “suburbanites”, Gilbert (1990) restates that Charles looks down on Muriel from “his social vantage point [that] the woman... [h]as no place among the families and their social strata” (p. 140). It demonstrates that Muriel does not fit into the Leary context due to her background; she is an unsuitable match to Macon since Singleton Street is alert and socially disadvantaged, whereas the Leary environment is static and substantially upscale. In parallel, Yardley (1992) puts forward that Muriel’s place “is not Macon’s natural

territory” (p. 120). Furthermore, due to their obsession with language, the Learys cannot stand mistakes such as “disinterested” [sic], “a nother” [sic], “nauseous” [sic], “eck cetera” [sic] (Tyler, 1985, pp. 180, 275, 278, 300). However, Muriel with her fierce nature survives in Singleton Street. The language she speaks is the one spoken on the streets with errors; her clothing style resembles no one; she has a fatherless child. Despite all these features, Muriel has managed to cultivate the self-made individual she is at the moment: resilient, bold, and tough. Voelker (1989) highlights that “Muriel’s grounded speech ...[is] tied to her fearlessness” (p. 160). In the very first scene, for instance, when she talks to Macon about her specialty of the dogs that bite, Macon tells her it is not dangerous, she says, “I’m not scared of a thing in this world” (Tyler, 1985, p. 40). She has learnt how to stay firm with a sense of securing herself and others. Through struggling experiences, she has developed a fearless world for herself. It is claimed to be “her survival strategy” (Saxton, 1994, p. 74). The strategy is pictured in the novel; when Macon and Muriel visit the grocery store where they are snatched by a young boy. Even though Macon is reactionless and seemingly afraid, Muriel easily wards off the boy by holding his jaw; she says, “[y]ou get on home this instant or you’ll be sorry you were ever born” (Tyler, 1985, p. 269). Unlike Macon, she acts out as if nothing particular has occurred. It shows her bravery towards the dangers of life. She has been accustomed to these, which have grown her up as a strong and fearless individual.

The level of Muriel’s differentiation can also be commented on the basis of her self-determination as a significant trait of moderately functional characters. She is presented to have “a voice that wander[s] too far in all directions” (Tyler, 1985, p. 95). Muriel’s emotional functioning has satisfactorily grown in a way that leads her to forge herself in what she asks for, unlike being conventional. Muriel acts on her own principles and takes pleasure in these. Even though the conventional Learys describe her as, “a flamenco dancer with galloping consumption” because of her outlandish clothing, she presents herself with her own standards. These standards are the principles she lives by. Drawing attention to her attire from a similar perspective, Saxton (1994) claims that Muriel’s outfits serve as “her ‘self’, energy and life spirit ... [her appearance displays] a larger-than-life vitality” (pp. 68-73). It symbolizes Muriel’s nature that follows what she desires to do. She is individualistic and differentiated in her vivid

dresses and full of energy for being eager for new adventures. It is claimed that Muriel “has a zest for life and a willingness to go after whatever she wants ... she does not impersonate others” (Saxton, 1994, p. 74). Muriel has developed a solid self; she is unique in that term in the novel

Kerr and Bowen (1988) discern that the high level of differentiation postulates people who have an established sense of self-determined goals and form self-made decision mechanisms (p. 106). In this sense, Muriel takes the front role in the novel. The variable occurrences in Muriel’s life have led her to create the sense to stand firm and shape her life accordingly. In the earlier time, she had married Norman, a marriage caused by the birth of Alexander who has turned out to be a sick child having allergies to even air. Muriel has worked more than fifty jobs. Alexander is currently a seven-year-old son; Muriel is a specialist in the dogs that bite. When their relationship goes beyond training the dog, Muriel invites Macon to dinner. Even though Macon is unwilling to attend and writes a letter to deliver her at the very entrance of her house, she persuades Macon because she desires him to be with her. She takes him in comfortably. They share not only the same bed but also their scars. They are remains of the past sufferings and representatives of the present day: who they are. In parallel with this, Muriel prepares a surprise calendar for Macon to imply a marriage proposal. She looks forward to marrying Macon in June, the time that she has always wanted to have a wedding. She goes after what she wants.

Kerr and Bowen (1988) indicate that “the solid self is not negotiable in any relationship system” (p. 104). In the relationship between Muriel and Macon, it is seen that Muriel is alert about her role. Muriel’s self is not the pseudo that is easily changeable or fused in the relationship. She does not passively maintain silence. Instead, she actively expresses her ideas. She is aware of the scenario that Macon can leave her and Alexander. Talking about Alexander’s poor academic success, Macon proposes that he needs to go to a private school to receive better education; however, Muriel takes the charge here and claims,

What are you saying, Macon?... Alexander's got ten more years of school ahead of him. Are you saying you'll be around for all ten years? ... I can't just put him in a school and take him out again with every passing whim of yours” ...Maybe

tomorrow you'll be here, maybe you won't... All I'm saying  
...is take care what you promise my son. Don't go making him  
promises you don't intend to keep. (Tyler, 1985, p. 270)

The scene illustrates the dichotomy of Muriel's power and Macon's laxness. Muriel has the conscious that she is the one who can take care of her child, not anybody else. Kerr and Bowen (1988) assume that people who have a high level of differentiation of self are "never changed by coercion or by persuasion from others" (p. 105). At this point, although Muriel is emotionally reactive to Macon's attitude towards Alexander, Muriel is sure of herself that Alexander grows up with her efforts, not Macon's. She behaves cautiously instead of emotionally fusing within the relationship in the sense of acknowledging what Macon proposes. If she just accepted it, it would be a signal for developing the pseudo-self. However, she expresses her opinions clearly to Macon. Muriel's claims reflect the emotional and economic independence she has acquired after separating from the family and having Alexander. She does not fuse in her relationship with Macon. Stating in a "serious tone" of voice, "Muriel empowers herself" (Carro, 2015, p. 80). Thus, it shows her moderately high level of individuality and sense of high functioning through acknowledging the self-determined role as a mother. Schneiderman (1996) notes that Muriel is characterized as a figure who "is not only a loving and protective mother toward her sickly little boy... [but also] strong and wise" (p. 77). As a mother figure, Muriel flourishingly looks after Alexander with all her strength and is aware of the necessity of fulfilling her responsibility at any cost. Muriel mentions Alexander as,

[h]e was never an easy baby... For starters something went wrong while I was carrying him and they had to do a Caesarean and take him out early... And then Alexander was so teeny he didn't even look like a human, more like a big-headed newborn kitten... All that time Alexander was in the hospital seemed so awful, seemed it would go on forever, but now when I look back, I almost miss it. (Tyler, 1985, pp. 162, 170)

Muriel has tried hard to fulfil her mothering role. Despite the situation that Norman left her alone with the baby, she intensely looks after him as a solo parent. Her

resilience needs to be put forward which shows her tenacious nature. Muriel reminds her that she is the committed one to Alexander. The process has been hard; however, the progress is made well.

Muriel's inner-directed traits and being open to new adventures are significant to be analysed within the scope of differentiation of self. Tyler presents her as a struggling but successful character with a free spirit. The struggles have made Muriel feisty and independent. Muriel has no obsession with staying in her cocoon. She can leave her comfort zone and believes that she can find her way out. It is quite visible in terms of resigning her occupation. She observes that working at the Meow-bow animal hospital has become a bit exhausting; she cannot spend enough time with Alexander and Macon at home. Muriel is occupied by her emotional system, which is interdependent on Macon's at the moment because Macon lives with her and Alexander and helps her out with the grocery and rent. Kerr and Bowen (1988) assert that 50-75 may posit temporary "periods of laxness in which people in this range permit the automatic pilot of the emotional system to have full control, but when trouble develops, they can take over, calm the anxiety, and avoid a life crisis" (p. 106). Muriel is criticized by Macon due to her sudden resignation. He feels that she had to warn him about it and tells her, "Muriel, you're so imprecise. You're so sloppy. And how could you quit your job like that?" (Tyler, 1985, p. 267). At first, it is seen that Muriel inattentively neglects her position and is responded harshly. The situation portrays an anxious prodding period in their relationship. As it is shown, Muriel is currently not a fully functional character in which there may be sometimes sufficient stress; and reactions as symptoms may be developed. But later, she directly stops him by saying, "Oh, don't make such a big deal about it, ... [d]on't you know Muriel can always take care of herself? ... Don't you know she [Muriel] could find another job tomorrow, if she wanted?" (Tyler, 1985, pp. 267-8). It may show not only her unconstraint about her comfort zone but also her being aware of the notion of her self-efficacy. Thus, Muriel has the courage to step outside of the cocoon; she is self-assured that there are opportunities around, and she can get them when she needs them. The tension increases in their relationship; however, the recovery is fast. It supports the reason of Muriel who scores the range of 50-75.

The inner directedness of Muriel stems from her high level of differentiation of self and ability to be self-reliant. Kanoza (1990) points out the importance of Muriel's autonomy as "freewheeling behaviour" (p. 38). The highlighted trait is related to being autonomous and self-reliant in terms of adapting to new circumstances and overcoming challenges. It can be observed through the talk she and Macon have over the travel to Paris. When Macon first mentions Paris, she exclaims, "if I could go anywhere I'd go to Paris... I'd walk along the Seine, like they say in the song"; Macon immediately warns her, "Paris is terrible. Everybody's impolite" (Tyler, 1985, p. 99). She has no fear of travelling to new places. Thus, she follows her dream and travels to Paris; she pursues her happiness in both the city and Macon, as she goes there right after him. She reads Macon's guidebooks about Paris since it is an unknown place to her. In Paris, "she [is] entirely on her own...Because she [feels] like it" (Tyler, 1985, pp. 318-320). Muriel has an open nature; she is adventurous and is thought to be self-sufficient. She is quite enthusiastic to mingle with the city. While they are in Paris, she stays at the same hotel with Macon, wanders around the city, meets new people from other cities, has lunch with them, and does shopping; she can survive in the new city with ease (Tyler, 1985, pp. 322-323). It demonstrates Muriel's individuality to adapt herself to new environments well. As a result, it can be said that, unlike Macon, Muriel is eager to walk out of her comfort zone to discover unknowns around. Being fierce, Muriel is a moderately differentiated individual because she has the self-efficacy to survive to a sufficient extent.

The analysis of Muriel has shown that she has scored the range of 50-75 on the scale of differentiation because of the traits she possesses and the paths she has been through. To construct the solid self and acquire a fairly high level of differentiation of self, one needs to have self-determined and inner-directed life goals, build the self without fusing within the family context. Muriel owns the abovementioned characteristics to a satisfactory extent; she recognizes her unique position in life; she is aware of the others' functioning as well; she does not fuse into the relationships and can adapt to anxious situations without developing severe symptoms that influence her functioning. From the narrator and Macon's perspective, Muriel is the sole strong individual resulting from his observations on how she handles issues related to her life, occupation, and her son Alexander. He begins living with them, sharing costs,

spending time with Alexander, and getting involved with the Pritchett family; he admires her efforts on overcoming life challenges with a sense of high self-determination and vitality. Her exploring and resilient nature along with self-determination convey her fairly high functioning. Bail (1998) metaphorizes Macon's view of Muriel as, "the stubborn persistence of the cat, which tried to enter the house by working her way down the exhaust vent of the clothes dryer, her eyes *pressed into slits*, her ears flattened back by the lint-filled gale" (p. 125 emphasis in the original text). Similarly, Askew (1991) insists that "Muriel is the antithesis of the passive Learys— a spiky, scrawny bulldog of a woman who has the world clenched in her teeth, and will still be shaking it when she draws her last breath" (p. 57). As a result, it is well-put to conclude Muriel's fairly high level of differentiation of self with a quote from the novel, "[i]t was her fierceness—her spiky, pugnacious fierceness as she fought her way toward the camera with her chin set awry and her eyes bright slits of determination" (Tyler, 1985, p. 219).



### **3. *DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT***

#### **Pearl Tull**

*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* is a novel written by Anne Tyler in 1982. It received much attention from various critics that it was awarded with the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. It is a conscientiously authentic but unforcedly ordinary story of the Tull family, which is believed to be one of the most strikingly dysfunctional families pictured in Tyler's fiction. It encircles the treatment of familial relationship from various perspectives: the mother, father, and children. The novel revolves around the conflictual relationships of Pearl Tull and her children Cody, Ezra, and Jenny, each of whom voices narratives at their own pace. The novel includes multiple points of view and begins with a retelling of Pearl's memories about her past, marriage to Beck, and upbringing of her children; it continues with each child's perception of important events that occurred in the family. Differing in points of view, there are linked stories that contain characters' personal views of these events in each narrative. Pearl is deserted by Beck and brings up three children by working in a grocery store. She is a complex character in a way she aims to rear her children within her own ideally shaped worldview that is unpredictably concerning and controlling. In parallel to Kerr and Bowen's statement, individuals situated in the range of 25-50 "are in lifelong pursuit of the ideal close relationship" for the most of their lives (1988, p. 102). Being closed to the outer world and cutoff from her family of origin, having poor communication skills, acquiring a domineering approach, and lack of self-fulfilment, Pearl is believed to be a well-fit character to be evaluated within the range of 25-50 on the scale of the differentiation of self proposed by Bowen. Thus, the present analysis is carried out to reveal Pearl's low level of differentiation of self, mostly resulting from developing pseudo self, and the influence of her poor differentiation on people around her family.

The setting of the story is mainly Baltimore, and it covers sixty-year time span, from the marriage of Pearl and Beck to Pearl's death. The novel begins with Pearl in her sickbed narrating her memories of her times before Beck, her marriage to him, and raising children all alone. It extends through the children's adulthood and ends with her death. During the marriage, she has always been on the move as Beck has been

constantly transferred from one city to another. They don't have any children for six years; later Cody is born, followed by Ezra three years later, and lastly, they have Jenny. When Cody is fourteen; Ezra is eleven; Jenny is nine, Beck deserts the family, saying that he has no intention to return and visit the children. Pearl keeps Beck's leaving as a secret from her children and her people so that they believe they have a proper marriage with Beck who is only away for business. For thirty years Pearl solely upbrings the children, working in a local store and completely separating the family from the outer world, eventually sending Cody and Jenny to college and, keeping Ezra who is running the homesick restaurant by her side to take care of her.

Parental influence on children's functioning is crucial as they are the first encounters to observe. Therefore, children's dysfunctionalities are traced back to parents' dysfunctionalities. The impact left by the parents is crucial as the offspring individually begins shaping their differentiation in their earlier times within the familial context. In the novel, Pearl herself states that "[s]omething was wrong with all of her children. They were so frustrating—attractive, likable people, the three of them" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 22). To a great extent, this is related to Pearl's ill-treatment of children during Beck's absence. Pearl tries to shoulder both the mother and father role: the role she is required to compensate for but has no readiness/fitness (Gerstenberger, 1994, p. 144). With this in mind, it is quite valuable to discuss the mother's level of differentiation acquired in childhood: Pearl.

While analysing one's differentiation of self, it is crucially important to look at their earlier experiences within the family environment. As it is told above that even though individuals innately possess a sense of self, their relationships within the family context considerably shape and determine the extent their sense of self develops, and it is not easy to change it. Being an orphaned child, Pearl Tull was grown in an environment where the social norms are mostly patriarchal, "[b]orn into in Raleigh of good family, small and intelligent" she was brought up, offered college education by her Uncle Seward, and manipulated by her cousins (Updike, 1992b, p. 108). It is significant to say that Pearl's narrative includes only her uncle, aunts, cousins, and grandparents; she has no place for her father and mother. It may offer us to claim that she lacks parental involvement in childhood. Similarly, Spector (1997) puts forward that the lack of mentioning parents is a valuable hint since Pearl has little

understanding of what family is, which leads her to be “homesick” (p. 313). Homesickness extends all throughout her life and her children. Thus, it highlights Pearl’s undifferentiation from the unresolved conflict of emotional homelessness that impairs herself and her children.

Being cutoff from the family of origin shows one’s undifferentiation. Pearl has psychologically and verbally separated from her original family. Having little chance to create a solid self, Pearl acquires a budding capacity to differentiate; the capacity brings about the quick adaptation to the current ideology. This is visible in Pearl’s earlier interactions with her extended family members, uncle, aunts, and cousins. She follows the trend as it is: marriage. She is offered a college education, but she refused it because she thought that “it would be an admission of defeat” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 6). As the people in the range of 25-50 have a tendency to seek approval, they follow the trend as it is and their functioning can rise “with praise or approval or [can] be dashed with criticism or disapproval” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 102). Instead of going to college, Pearl is supposed to marry someone because she is about to be in her spinster years and people around her begin to call her an old maid, “they [Pearl’s cousins] had grown insultingly tactful (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 6). Pearl is under emotional pressure within the family environment. When she turns to thirty, she meets Beck Tull who is “lean and rangy... Some might say he [is]... well, a little extreme. Flamboyant. Not quite of Pearl’s class. And certainly too young for her (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 6). Being dashed with her cousins’ unfavourable judgment, even though she is inwardly aware that Beck is an unsuitable suitor to her, Pearl accepts to marry him to prove herself. Beck’s courting is followed by an unhappy wedding ceremony in which Pearl has no time “to show off...her two gold rings...a set with a pearl, inscribed *To a Pearl among Women* Everything seem[s] so unsatisfying (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 7 emphasis in the original text). Pearl’s low level of differentiation is delineated in a way that it is dependent on seeking her people’s approval and that she is quite emotionally sensitized to prove herself. In addition to her seeking the approval of her relatives, it can also be depicted in the case of Beck. Before their marriage, when Beck moves to Raleigh, he is a strict follower of the Charity Baptist Church where he meets Pearl. Then Pearl, who is only visiting her friend Emmaline there, happens to be a member of the church as well, though she is not a Baptist but a nonbeliever (Tyler,

1982/2008, pp. 6-7). It is seen that Pearl is converted to Baptism for the sake of gaining acceptance from Beck. Consequently, it demonstrates that she has developed pseudo self because of seeking approval.

Emotional dependency on other people's opinions symbolises a great deal of poor differentiation due to manifesting a lack of self-fulfilment. Within the context of her marriage to Beck, Pearl expects that marriage ought to bring her a sense of gaining approval from the environment despite her unfit husband since she is directed not to respond to her inner self but others' and to escape from the tactful insults of her cousins. It is closely related to her urge to get rid of the pressure in a way to please people around her. However, Pearl, to her, cannot succeed in showing off her marriage, attaining others' acceptance, and being satisfied due to Beck's urgent transfer to another city. In the communal sense, she has no satisfaction in her wedding, an institution to which high importance is attached. Pearl suffers from the lack of self-fulfilment because she has the idea of being accepted by her uncle and cousins demonstrating that she has finally achieved the marriage task. It can also be stated that Pearl's lack of self-fulfilment traces back to her unmentioned parents. No closest relative is there to appreciate her. No parents that she can lean on from the beginning are present to her. It is the feeling that extends through all her life. She constantly strives for compensating the feeling of satisfaction and aims for the ideal self. If not successful, the sense of failure of self-fulfilment dominates and decreases one's functioning severely. Pearl explicitly expresses this type of failure at the very beginning of the novel. At the of eighty-five in her deathbed, Pearl claims, [y]ou should have got an extra mother" in the presence of her children (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 3). She concludes well that she doesn't accomplish a sense of self-fulfilment as an individual and mother.

People characteristically pursue others' thoughts, and they don't hence create a concrete or solid sense of self since it requires self-determination and invulnerability to emotional pressure. As poorly differentiated individuals are short of the solid self, these people tend to develop pseudo self which is attributed to the range of 25-50 (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 102-3). As it is mentioned above, the pseudo self is formed and can be changed in an emotionally intense environment. In Pearl's case, it is seen that the pseudo self is first constructed as a result of marrying Beck rather than accepting

a college education for avoiding disapproval from her people. Pearl's pseudo self stabilizes the intense environment with marriage to some extent. After their wedding, they move to another town due to Beck's business which requires constant travelling. Being on the move results in establishing no strong bonds with the community; in fact, they move and move for fifteen years until Cody is fourteen and then they settle in Baltimore (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 7). Beck's business transfers significantly impair Pearl due to perpetual relocation. Beck continues travelling but recently alone; Pearl stays there and takes care of the children by herself until he permanently leaves. She takes infinite care of children. In the absence of Beck, she is "too burdened, too much alone... [P]reoccupied with paying the rent and juggling the budget and keeping those great, clod-footed children in new shoes" (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 19-20). As for pseudo self, the tendency is to keep the relationship in balance, they avoid telling their own ideas. Pearl tries to maintain silence in order not to disturb the emotional harmony by pretension as she hides Beck's absence from her cousins, and children. However, it is only possible in situations that are not emotionally intense because it reveals itself in the form of anxiety that damages the family's emotional harmony to a great extent.

The permanent movements of the Tull family intensely affect Pearl. As they cannot connect to the communities they live in; they gradually become closed to the outer world. As it is known, being closed to the outer world indicates dysfunctionality not only in familial but also individual layers. In parallel to the lack of sociability, Gilbert (1990a) points out that the Tull family is short of sense of "neighbourliness ... [B]elonging to a larger social order" (p. 252). It can be seen that the Tull family hence gradually shrinks with their own deadening cocoon. It increases anxiety in the family. Being alienated in an unfamiliar environment, Pearl's functioning severely decreases. Even she turns out to be "an angry sort of mother" to her children (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 19). Due to the burden of loneliness resulting from being ashamed of Beck's desertion and the necessity to feed children, Pearl starts working in a grocery store without mentioning any remarks about Beck to anyone. Croft (1994) consequently states that Pearl increasingly becomes "pessimistic because of her heavy burdens" of children (p. 146). Therefore, it brings about the feeling of more closedness as she has no emotional support. It can be closely associated with Pearl's urge to isolate the

family emotionally and physically in order to portray an ideal family, which signifies a significant lack of emotional togetherness in the group/community.

The Tull family is deliberately driven to isolation from the environment. It is stated that Pearl doesn't have any friends around her, and she prevents her children to make friends as well. As mentioned above, pseudo self constructs an effective rudder to make up for dealing with anxious situations that create pressure on people. Pearl's rudder is to prove herself to be an independently prosperous and happy individual in her own family to her folks and neighbours. She claims that "we Tulls depend on ourselves, only on each other. We don't look to the rest of the world for any help whatsoever" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 94). The motto Pearl expresses leads the family to be a deadening cocoon. Pearl herself has no one to talk to about her feelings about Beck's abandonment and the overwhelming responsibilities of the children. In the grocery store, she is called "Sweeney Meanie", attributing her lack of communication to people, or even disliking mingling with them (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 45). It is an obvious consequence of being closed to the outer world that leads to poor communication. The scene in which Beck announces his leaving Pearl and the children properly embodies the inadequate connection between them. When she asks for the reason why he is leaving, Beck says that she knows it very well; however, it is told that her failure to understand him and her children is "the purest fact of her life: she did not understand him, and she never would (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 10). The lack of communication between spouses will be investigated in detail in the nuclear family emotional system. Emotional isolation brings more dysfunctionality for the Tulls in the way of Pearl's challenging but failed attempts to create the ideal family norms.

Emotional detachment from the community breaks down the functionality of the family. In order to form an ideally self-sufficient family, children are disfavoured by the oppressive mother. Bail (1998) supports that Pearl "wavers between" accusing herself and the children by being "tyrannized by the image of the ideal family" (p. 111). She is forcedly in search of replicating what she has needed; however, she ends up being deprived of the idealized family notion. She is aloof from the community. Similarly, she hinders her children to socialize. To illustrate, Cody has always been forced to keep "his friends in one half of his life and his family in the other half. His mother hate[s] for Cody to mix with outsiders" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 48). Pearl's

treatment of Ezra's relationship with Mrs. Scarlatti also provides a valuable example of her rudder. Ezra, her favourite child, works at Mrs. Scarlatti's restaurant and is bid to take the restaurant by the owner as a gift for his hardworking personality since Mrs. Scarlatti is about to die and has no one to run the restaurant. Pearl strictly criticizes Ezra for accepting such a gift (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 94). Or, when she sees Jenny friendly kissing Josiah, one of Ezra's close friends and colleagues, she loses her temper instantly and never lets Jenny meet him again (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 79-80). These actions are resulted from her instinctual sense of isolation and the transmission of the emotional detachment from the family of origin.

Undoubtedly, Pearl's emotional cutoff from her folks demonstrates itself in her domineering approach towards her children. Due to constant movements over years, it is seen that she has lost track of her relatives throughout the novel, receiving no letters, communicating with none, or paying no visits to anybody (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 5, 26). Being cutoff from the family of origin is conceptualized as Pearl's differentiation on the basis of her own family. That's why Pearl's poor differentiation of self can be best observed through her relationships with her children. As Beck's leaving deteriorates her functioning, she stresses reciprocal dependency that worsens relationships within the family. Her perpetual pressure on Cody, Ezra, and Jenny to create an ideal family that she lacked in her childhood displays her poor differentiation. Since poorly differentiated people are governed by unresolved conflicts during childhood, they are apt to failingly replicate the desired connections. In an emotionally calm environment, these people demonstrate love or care depending on their pseudo self; however, in anxious times, their behaviour alters, and their functioning severely declines. Pearl is portrayed well in this case. She believes that none of the children has slightly felt the absence of Beck in their lives because she has recompensed the role of "the invisible man" without a doubt; Pearl considers that this is actually her "one true accomplishment... [G]reatest triumph of her life" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 20). However, it is inferred that it is only applicable to Pearl's perspective. It is inferred that children's perspective, especially Cody's, about her traits during their childhood is quite different; she is repressive to a great extent. As a matter of fact, they enormously feel the father's absence. As Pearl's emotional functioning has lessened over time, her attitude towards her children changes, especially during their unaccepted actions.

From the abovementioned quote related to Pearl's hindering children from socialization, it is seen that Pearl treats children in a restrictive manner. Its effects are seen in every one of them discretely. Coleman (2000) emphasizes Pearl's destructive influence on children as follows:

[e]ach child is affected in different ways, and with varying results, by her anger - Ezra by its overemotional nature and Jenny by its ferocity - and by her lack of emotional warmth. Like his siblings Cody, as a child, suffered from Pearl's anger and her severe nature but also from her preference for Ezra.  
(p. 520)

Pearl's dominant and destructive childrearing approach is highlighted in a way that she leaves physically and psychologically damaging marks on her children. To illustrate better, Cody and Jenny's remarks on the repression can be quoted. Cody tells that "Pearl has hit the warpath" when she is frustrated at any of his mischievous acts; Jenny, knowing that Pearl is a dangerous and short-tempered woman, witnesses her "hurl[ing] Cody down a flight of stairs... [hitting] Ezra ducking, elbows raised, warding off an attack... [and calling Jenny] 'serpent, cockroach, hideous little snivelling guttersnipe'" (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 49, 70). These indicate the two sides of the coin; one part is how Pearl perceives; the other is how the children experience. Being excessively keen on Ezra, Pearl sentimentally deters Ezra. His overemotional nature lasts all through his life. It can be seen in his never-ending trials to gather the Tull family for dinner at his restaurant, as he ends up failures. Similarly, her jealousy of Ezra for being loved and acknowledged just like a son by Mrs. Scarlatti shows her emotional dependency on him. When Mrs. Scarlatti offers Ezra a partnership, Pearl rigidly rejects it because she dislikes Ezra running a restaurant instead of going to college. Pearl's jealousy is mainly caused by her favouritism towards Ezra. However, her favouritism impedes Ezra to be self-fulfilled and set his own way towards what he desires to do. And it is a triggering point for Cody's dysfunctioning. The issue that dramatizes sibling rivalry between the eldest child Cody and middle child Ezra is discussed in the following part, Cody's level of differentiation of self. Cody's final words about Pearl's treatment of them give us a lot of insights into her poor



differentiation. When he eventually faces his father Beck, he openly contemplates that Pearl has been an unsuccessful mother and exclaims:

[s]he [Pearl] slammed us against the wall and called us scum and vipers, said she wished us dead, shook us till our teeth rattled, screamed in our faces. We [Cody, Ezra, and Jenny] never knew from one day to the next, was she all right? Was she not? The tiniest thing could set her off. 'I'm going to throw you through that window... I'll look out that window and laugh at your brains splashed all over the pavement. (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 294)

Pearl's domineering approach leads children to experience a sense of motherly deprivation of her. Cody, Ezra, and Jenny tremendously suffer from losing the father figure in the family and raising by Pearl. Disapproving outside contact, Pearl strives for showing that her family is happy and prosperous, and they are not needy of anyone and portray an ideal family. It should be noted that the ideal or functional family is not the one that is not needy of anyone, but it is the type of a family that achieves emotional harmony within and is not dogmatic and fixed on its own terms. Considering this, what Pearl aims for results in dysfunctionality. She suppresses children by dismaying the formation of any outer relationship. The ideal she clings to is a form of dependency upon only each other, not anyone outside of the family. However, the Tull family self-harms itself instead of being a self-sufficient one because the leader of the family is not self-sufficient. She is controlling and dominant over children.

The poor differentiation of Pearl is visible through the relationships with her children that cause injury in their lives. This is closely associated with her family of origin. As Pearl has suffered from the lack of emotional attachment to her original family, she cannot transmit this essential need or feeling of attachment to her children. It is evident that her inclination towards forming pseudo self is present during calm situations. Yet, she has unreasonable rages and carries out physical and verbal assault to her children during emotionally intense situations. These are signs of her poor functioning. Therefore, her character analysis has shown that she scores the range of 25-50 on the scale of differentiation of self. Overall, the analysis of Pearl Tull has presented a good deal of poor differentiation of self within the family context. Being

cutoff from the original family, poor communication among in the family, and becoming a deadening cocoon by detachment from the community are visible in Pearl's nature. As Pearl believes in complete isolation from the environment to create an ideally self-sufficient family, she discourages her children to make any outer preferences. It hence results in obvious dysfunctionality of the Tull family.



## Cody Tull

*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* hosts Cody Tull who is grown up in an unwanted family environment and has been enormously affected by the family dysfunctionality. Tyler pictures Cody as one of the most conflictual and troubled characters in the novel. Being the oldest one, Cody is the most vicious and troubled child in the Tull family. He has a competitive personality shaped during her childhood and behaves in an antagonistic manner towards his mother Pearl and brother Ezra. Having a lack of a concrete sense of self due to being quite reactive to his family of origin, Cody is portrayed as a difficult baby and troublemaker character. Cody is brought up by his mother singlehandedly in the absence of his father Beck of whom he often dreams. As it is told that the novel is narrated from different perspectives, Cody mostly concentrates his narration on Pearl and Ezra whose influences are predominant in his development of dysfunctioning. He thinks of Pearl “as a raving shrieking, unpredictable witch” and of Ezra as his “oldest enemy” (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 294, 151). Kerr and Bowen (1988) put forward that people who are very much sensitized to the environment and emotionally needy of others are situated in the division of 0-25 on the scale of differentiation of self (p. 100). Feeling frustrated by but emotionally needy of these people, Cody possesses a very low level of differentiation of self. Being ambivalent and prone to unreasonable rage, self-destructive and emotionally needy (of love), and having an immature personality, Cody is the most impaired child of the Tull family and the most poorly differentiated character in the *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Therefore, the analysis reveals that Cody scores in the range of 0-25 since he has no sense of self-determined goals, feels chronically anxious and rivalrous, and is in constant reactivity towards others.

As one’s level of differentiation of self is planted during childhood and lasts throughout one’s life, it is crucial to examine children’s interactions taking place in early times within the family context. The novel provides keen glimpses of Cody’s early familial experiences in a way he has been a problematic individual. Cody is the first child of Pearl and Beck and develops croup –an illness associated with the early death of babies during the nineteen-thirties– and Pearl asks for extra children since Cody is severely sick of a fatal disease, and Pearl gets desperately frantic with Cody’s situation. Ezra and Jenny follow Cody after three and five years. As Beck is constantly

away on business transfers, she solely takes care of children whom she believes making her life challenging. When finally, Beck deserts the family, fourteen-year-old Cody is left with a raged, angry mother, the mother's favourite, clumsy Ezra, and hard-shelled Jenny. Deeply influenced by the desertion of Beck, Cody suffers from the emotional deprivation of the fatherly care for all the rest of his life. During high school education, he is mostly on the edge. He is weirdly interested in gathering his girlfriends at home and lets them go through Pearl's bedroom and belongings most of the time when Pearl works at the grocery shop. According to Pearl's understanding, he acts disgracefully by carrying "a pack of Camels in the street in front of the Barlow girl's house" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 51). Pearl is surely aware of these mischievous acts and warns him harshly, as revealing family secrecy likely destroys her trust. Later, he is sent to college and rarely sends letters to his family; he starts working outside of the city and hangs out with different girls. Cody finds a good job that is an efficiency consultant travelling around. He eventually becomes rich and physically cuts off from his family by marrying Ezra's fiancé Ruth in the end. Even though he pays short visits to them, his physical presence is hardly seen in the family, but his emotional neediness is visible throughout the novel. His absence temporarily ceases when he learns that Ezra, his oldest enemy, is prepared to marry Ruth. Cody inwardly requires himself to claim his brother's fiancé in order to hurt Ezra deeply rather than his interest in marrying Ruth who is a "hardly educated", "scrappy and hoydenish" girl (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 217, 140). Cody is in never-ending competition and rivalry with his brother Ezra. Surely, this rivalry traces back to their childhood. That's why, it needs to be scrutinized extensively because it shows Cody's poor functioning related to his deprivation of love, which inclines his self-destruction.

As it is told, Bowen family systems theory attaches significant importance to relationships between siblings. It is thus critical to mention the influence of siblings on one another. Provided that siblings have high levels of differentiation, it is claimed that the oldest sibling may acquire a sense of leadership and responsibility ideally, and the younger one follows him; if siblings acquire possess low levels of differentiation of self, they are easily apt for developing emotionally severe symptoms during their interactions (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 315-6). In the case of Pearl's children, the roles are reversed to a great extent. And it is predominantly visible through the relationships

between Cody and Ezra. Starting in childhood, Cody is continuously compared to Ezra who is more earnest, dutiful, and silent. During any wrongdoings of Cody, He is told by everybody in fact to behave well like his brother Ezra, “[w]hy can’t you be more like your brother?” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 59). Driven by these temperamentally exploiting comparisons, Cody has grown to be the opposite character of Ezra. As a result, having poor differentiation, Cody has developed a rage towards his brother Ezra. Ezra, the most sympathetic of all, is his mother’s favourite. Witnessing this, Cody behaves ambivalently and harms Ezra not only emotionally and physically but also psychologically. The basic feeling of love and caring towards the younger one that is supposed to be possessed by the older sibling is absent in Cody; therefore, he internally competes with Ezra.

The opposing characters of Cody and Ezra result in their differing worldview. Wagner (1990) points out that “[t]he hostile Cody and the passive Ezra” embody controversial personalities (p. 75). And these opposite personalities have their traces in the childhood relationships with the mother figure. To put it on a concrete basis, it is beneficial to emphasize the influence of parents on the sibling position in terms of differentiation of self. The concept of the sibling position contemplates the influence of parents on children. As being highlighted earlier, family is perceived as an emotional system, there is a close relationship between parents and children in terms of the transmission of parents’ traits to children. Poorly differentiated parents may likely breed poorly differentiated children. And the low level of differentiation of a parent presents dysfunctional characteristics like domineer childrearing approach, emotional pressure, and favouritism of a child among the others. Most of these dysfunctions demonstrate anxiety that leads to competition among children. It is believed that favouring one child over the others is one of the main factors of sibling rivalry. It leads children to be abusing one another to some extent. In Cody’s case, Pearl’s effect should be taken into consideration since her treatment of children, especially Cody, is not a well-appreciated type of mothering. There is surely the destabilizing effect of being the only provider of the family in the absence of Beck. To clarify Pearl’s positioning better, in his narrative, Cody mentions Pearl as “the witch of Calvert Street”; in her narrative, Pearl herself acknowledges that she is “not a tranquil woman; she often lose[s] her temper, snap[s], slap[s] the nearest cheek, say[s]

things she later regret[s]” (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 16, 14). Pearl’s physical abuse engraves a destructive influence on children. Thought as a witch mother by Cody, Pearl beats her children; most of the time, the nearest cheek is Cody’s cheek, and she slams him hard. Also, when she is on the warpath, she calls all children “neighbourhood savages”, but Cody is aware that he is mentioned without mentioning his name (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 51). She cannot communicate with children, especially during anxious times. He has the one on the edge most of the time and needs her caring.

The influence of Pearl’s unmotherly mother traits is quite visible in Cody’s case since he is portrayed as the most severely affected child by Pearl’s emotional detachment and severe nature. It is transmitted as the emotional neediness that results in unreasonable rage towards life in general. To exemplify, as it is told, Pearl discourages any social relationships with the outside environment with regards to creating her ideally independent family. All the children suffer from it to a great extent. However, Cody, who oppressively felt the necessity to hide his friends from his family, consequently, is stricken that he is “an outsider, unfamiliar with the neighbourhood” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 58). Cody knows well that Pearl is the reason for this unfamiliarity. It is quite ironic that even though Pearl prescribes her children not to form any outer relationships, she is unable to provide them with the nourishment they have needed. Suffering from emotional detachment seriously, Cody believes that he has not received special nourishment from his mother and claims Pearl to be:

a nonfeeder, if ever there [is] one. Even back in his childhood, when they’d [children] depended on her for nourishment. why, mention you were hungry and she’d suddenly act rushed and harassed, fretful, out of breath, distracted. He remember[s] her coming home from work in the evening and tearing irritably around the kitchen. Tins toppled out of the cupboards and fell all over her—pork ’n’ beans, Spam, oily tuna fish, peas canned olive drab. She cooked in her hat, most of the time. (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 159)

Pearl has never shown enough careful warmth to the children because she is also the one who has suffered in her childhood. Feeling the burden of raising three children, Pearl reacts angrily and fails to nourish the children. Spector (1997) reinforces that

Pearl fails in providing nourishment for children and establishing a harmonious home environment (p. 319). As an acutely inadequate homeliness, the Tull children sketch a prisonlike and insecure shelter. It necessitates Ezra to open the homesick restaurant, Jenny to marry three times, and Cody is led to be craving for others' mothers. As it is seen, longing for a more maternal mother, Cody enviably compares Pearl with his friends' mothers and exclaims:

[w]hat he wouldn't give to have a mother who acted like other mothers! He long[s] to see her [Pearl] gossiping with a little gang of women in the kitchen, letting them roll her hair up in pincurls, trading beauty secrets, playing cards, losing track of time—'Oh, goodness, look at the clock! And supper not even started; my husband will kill me. Run along, girls'. (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 59)

It clearly shows his deep wish for a motherly picture of Pearl. However, urged on complete isolation and aloofness to the community, Pearl displays the opposite of the wished mother and would even despise every activity he mentions. The emotional neediness of the mother figure is truly visible in Cody's view. His childhood along with adulthood happen to be miserable due to his family anxiety. In fact, the non-feeding is transmitted to his own family as well. It is seen that his son Luke experiences Cody's lack of parental caring in his life greatly by being told that he is very much similar to his uncle Ezra, or even he is not his child, but Ezra's child. This is emphasized with regards to Cody's self-sabotaging related to his rivalry with Ezra and guilt for the absence of the father.

In addition to being an unwished mother, Pearl's preference towards Ezra is what mostly triggers Cody's dysfunctional nature. Coleman (2000) suggests that Pearl's inclination towards Ezra is closely related to his "docile, loving nature", and Ezra is "the easiest [child] to love", and observing this partiality, Cody abuses Ezra rather than "trying to become loving and kind", which provokes Pearl to distinguish them more: protecting Ezra, neglecting Cody (p. 521). During childhood, Cody always witnesses that Pearl favours Ezra above all because of his radiant and meek nature, even known to everyone that Ezra is "Pearl's pet" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 37). Being the most favourite and privileged child of Pearl brings Ezra not only motherly love and

caring but also the sibling's intensely rivalrous hatred. It is observed that there is an oppositely tight correlation between his mother's love and his brother's hatred towards Ezra; the more Pearl loves Ezra, the more Cody hates Ezra. Bail (1998) takes the relationship of Cody and Ezra one step forward to deadly sibling rivalry and even resembles the relationship of Cain and Abel and claims that while Cody is in continuous jealousy with Ezra because of succeeding without trials, Ezra has no intention to compete and ignores him (p. 108). The more Cody cruelly torments him, the more Pearl's protection of Ezra intensifies.

As mentioned, Ezra is considerably different from Cody in nature. Wolten (1997) stresses that Cody always acknowledges that Ezra is his nemesis (p. 141). Each of his actions has a slight relevance to Ezra. To have a closer look at Cody's personality, it is vital to mention his competitiveness. Bail (1998) reveals, "[being] unable to feel happiness from within, Cody looks for some external indicator of success—some competitor to measure himself against" (p. 110). It can be stated that the monopoly games of the Tull family give a lot of hints about Cody's personality. Cody, who has always been competitive and driven "by sheer fierceness and caring the most" always insists on winning every gaming activity they do; he is known to be the swindler of the family" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 55). However, Ezra plays the game passively and leaves the game to Cody without much effort; Ezra simply quits the game. To their mother, Ezra is the golden boy and everyone's favourite; Cody is the mean one (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 146, 64). It reaches the point of discarding the other children for the sake of Ezra. Pearl acknowledges that Cody has always "batted her away [and] Ezra was all she had. He [Ezra] was the only one who would let her in...[S]he had worried that he would die young—one of life's ironic twists, to take what you valued most" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 171). Unlike Cody, Ezra is the sided one with Pearl in a close relationship. Cody cannot receive emotional support from his mother who is the mere nurturer in the family, and his rage has increased extensively. The need for emotional attachment shows itself as a form of bitterness and torture mostly drawn to his meek and passive brother Ezra.

Pearl's partial treatment of Ezra is the most significant source of Cody's dysfunctional characteristics. He develops a high level of chronic anxiety in the unfavourable family environment, and the conveyance of anxiety fuels sibling rivalry,



and it leads to harm the closest and available person around: Ezra. Cody's life motivation is built upon a continual search for maintaining a rival and ambitious relationship with Ezra. His raging and degrading treatment of Ezra is based on the lack of emotional attachment from his parents; it necessitates him to replicate them with his brother. Interestingly, the sibling rivalry between Cody and Ezra is one-way: only Cody-way; Ezra is not even aware that "he [is] a contestant" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p.152). Cody's ever-lasting rivalry with Ezra is seen through various mischievous and emotionally damaging incidents. He plays practical and dirty jokes on Ezra. He does these in order to receive Pearl's attention by discrediting Ezra and elevating himself to receive more attention. To exemplify, Cody turns the hot water when Ezra takes the shower, sends his death card and burial place, plays with his bed so that he falls down when he sits it on, takes photos of him drinking like a heavy drinker, and puts some inappropriate pictures next to his bed (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 42-3, 63-4, 46). Cody's aim is to prove to Pearl that Ezra is not worth caring for that much since he is not the perfect child but "a derelict, a common drunk" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p.63). In order to fulfil his neediness for love and caring, Cody seeks ways to discredit his brother for getting his mother's affection. The more he suffers from this lack of affection, the more he cruelly reacts against Ezra.

While Cody goes to college, Ezra is enlisted in the army. Both boys are far from the family. Their distance can be closely examined through their interactions with the family, which reflects their functionality. It is told that cutoff from the family implicates a low level of differentiation of self since people have a tendency to lose the emotional closeness with the family of origin, and it majorly decreases their functioning. In the case of Cody, it is seen that his low level of differentiation of self manifests the cutoff in terms of communication through letters. One may observe that Ezra writes letters in a very detailed way that he describes each of his actions and feelings in an enthusiastic manner, even including postcards. However, after Cody leaves the family for a college education, his absence in the family becomes very much apparent. He rarely sends letters to his family to tell that he works and has no time to visit. Unlike Ezra, his letters are in short forms of telling what he does and how he is. And he only sometimes telephones on birthdays and holidays. Pearl admits that Cody becomes "not a very cordial acquaintance" (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 70, 179). Even

though he physically cuts off from the Tull family in a selfishly way to a great extent, He is still unable to construct a concrete sense of self that requires favourable relationships with the family. It is displayed in his one of major dysfunctions: being cutoff from his family of origin.

Cody's strong sense of rivalry towards Ezra is also apparent in his relationships with the girlfriends he brings home to intendedly meet Ezra. Interestingly, each girl grows interest in Ezra and compliments him greatly despite Ezra's little or no attention to each of them. Cody believes that his girlfriends are stolen by Ezra because of his monkish nature (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 131-2). Among all of Cody's lovers, only Karen dislikes Ezra since she thinks Ezra is a motherly man. Seeing this, Cody loses his interest in Karen and leaves her immediately. The reason that Cody stops seeing her is that she does not find Ezra attractive and appealing. This continues for a long time until Ezra finds one affectionate. Cody breaks up with every one of his dates without a second chance since Ezra finds none of them likable. Cody's criteria to maintain any girlfriends' relationships is depended on if Ezra likes them. It is essentially his only criterion, and it is justified by Ruth Spivey.

Being consumed by hatred towards Ezra, Cody sets himself the ultimate task to hurt Ezra: stealing the only girl Ezra has ever loved. As Croft (1994) highlights, Cody's jealousy escalates when they are adults, and the final competition between them takes place when Jenny tells Cody that Ezra is going to get married too soon (p. 148). Cody notices that Ezra loves Ruth Spivey, who is a cook at his restaurant, with all his heart. He hence obsessively courts Ezra's potential wife with flowers, gifts, beautiful words of compliments, and letters just before their wedding. Cody is in fact after whatever or whoever Ezra adores. It is told that "[w]hat he [Cody] like[s] [is] the competition, the hope of emerging triumphant from a neck-and-neck struggle with Ezra, his oldest enemy" (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 151-2). This chase is very similar to the one they have had during childhood. Cody tries hard to receive Pearl's love just like Ezra receives by discrediting him in her eyes with improper jokes. Being unable to acknowledge that Ezra deeply loves Ruth and gets her affection, Cody constantly wanders around the restaurant to attract Ruth. She initially rejects his courtship, since she knows that men like Cody have always ignored her until now. However, Cody convinces Ruth of his seeming affection, and they get engaged immediately. Even

though both Cody and Ruth are inwardly aware that they are not in the same league, they pursue an affair because of Cody's continuous attempts to win her. And Ezra is never aware of their relationship because he naively does not think of Cody to court his lover. When they announce it to Ezra, he is speechless and witnesses that Ruth elopes with Cody. He still is not alert to Cody's never-fulfilled rivalry that is only one-way. Told within Ezra's perspective of life, he tries to "get through life as a liquid" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 166). He lives his inner pain by running his homesick restaurant; he stays with Pearl and never attempts to marry again.

Cody ingloriously accomplishes the task and damages Ezra by stealing away what he loves the most. After Cody and Ruth marry and leave Baltimore, they dwell in a distant city, away from the others. Although Cody succeeds in eloping Ruth from Ezra, he never fully believes in her faith in him. Cody doubts Ruth that she still loves Ezra, and their child Luke is not from him but Ezra. Thus, on their short visits to Baltimore, Cody is always suspicious of any interactions between Ezra and Ruth. Cody's suspicion is hurting both him and his family because he accuses Ruth of having feelings towards Ezra, even Luke is Ezra's child. He thinks of it because Luke has a similar look and tastes to Ezra: he is blond and has grey eyes, loves playing the tonette, and plays monopoly just like Ezra (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 224-5, 228). These similarities are not natural according to Cody, and he distrusts Ruth whom he thinks may have a secret affair with Ezra. He is driven by the urge of self-destruction due to his ever-lasting rivalry with Ezra. Cody cries out that Ezra has carried out every one of his wishes without even a trial; he has never deserved to be the favourite and nicest one just because of his "goddamn forgiving smile" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 225).

Self-sabotage is a valuable indicator of dysfunctional characteristics that brings about low self-esteem. It is very much visible in Cody's life. In his emotional development period, Cody is fourteen when Beck deserts the family, and considerably feels the father's absence. Trying to understand the reason behind his father's leaving, Cody begins interrogating his own behaviour in their relationship in a destructive manner. He even criticises himself for any mistakes that may cause him to leave the family. He blames himself, "[w]as it something I[Cody] said? Was it something I did? Was it something I didn't do, that made you [Beck] go away?" (Tyler, 1982/2008 p.

47). Cody goes unanswered by his mother and tries to find the answer by dreaming of his father's return and his would-be reactions to his devastated childhood.

As it is mentioned, Cody's self-destruction trait also bursts in his relationship with his own family: his wife Ruth and son Luke. As Cody's relationship with his wife Ruth is constructed on the basis of his rivalry towards Ezra, their marriage life, according to Cody, goes on the wheel of distrust, which is transmitted onto Luke as well. Cody always has the second thought about Ruth whom he steals from Ezra. Even though they are completely faithful to him, Cody doubts Ruth and Luke's commitment to him and behaves disruptively which causes Luke to leave the house. Cody accuses Ruth of still thinking of Ezra, and he blames her, "[m]arried or not, you've always loved Ezra better than me... Admit it... Isn't Ezra the real, true father of Luke?" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 226). Witness Luke's love for music by playing the tonette, Cody claims, "I can't stand it [playing the tonette] ... Are you doing this on purpose?... Are you determined to torment me?" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 225). It can be seen that Cody's resentments originate from his rage and competition with Ezra. He has been miserable both as a child and an adult through self-sabotaging himself caused by his lack of emotional support from his parents.

It has been examined that 0-25 Cody significantly presents dysfunctional traits acquired within the family context. Having a low level of differentiation, Cody has the trademarks of his family dysfunctionality to a great extent. His dysfunctioning originally stems from the emotional neediness for parental love and care. Deserted by his father, Cody suffers from his mother's severe nature; the lack of motherly nourishment that leads him to be a closed individual to the environment. His low self-esteem is the sign of dysfunctional traits in the family. As a result, Cody develops and escalates anxiety towards his mother and brother. Seeing that Ezra receives much attention, he develops hostile attitudes towards him. Cody has internally aimed at hurting or abusing the vulnerable and meek Ezra at all costs. He has acquired complete undifferentiation due to his unresolved conflicts that originated in childhood. Eventually, by treacherously stealing his fiancé away from his brother, Cody has supposedly beaten Ezra; however, his doubt ever continues and turns out in the form of self-sabotaging. It shows his very poor differentiation and functioning depending on the others.

## CHAPTER IV

### NUCLEAR FAMILY EMOTIONAL SYSTEM

#### 1. INTRODUCTION TO NUCLEAR FAMILY EMOTIONAL SYSTEM

This chapter sheds light on the nuclear family emotional system along with its four subdivisions in Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Nuclear families pictured in the studied books present dysfunctional traits in which the conflictual spouses have acquired and projected onto their children. The analysis centralizes that the low level of differentiation of self brings about anxiety within the family, and each of the family members internalizes this anxiety that results in emotional immaturity. The dysfunctional family members eventually end up with in emotional and physical cutoff from the family. Nuclear family emotional system is one of the most significant concepts in BFTS because it is directly related to the other interlocking concepts and broadens them extensively.

Nuclear family emotional system is divided into marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, impairment of one or more children, and emotional distance; these mechanisms govern how problems arise in a nuclear family (Bowen, 1978, p. 376; Kerr, 2019, p. 13). The analysis is carried out to reveal the individual and reciprocal dysfunctionality of characters within nuclear family emotional system that brings about the subdivisions generated by anxiety. The symptoms developed as results of anxiety lead the families to be fused or both emotionally and physically cutoff. Being the most inclusive concept in BFTS, nuclear family emotional system encompasses other interlocking concepts greatly. It has direct connections with the differentiation of self, family projection process, sibling position, multigenerational transmission process, and emotional cutoff. In the light of these, the present chapter focuses on the dysfunctionality of the nuclear families in *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*: the marriages of Macon and Sarah Leary, and Beck and Pearl Tull along with their child/ren. With findings in the studied books, it is identified that the mentioned nuclear families are disintegrated and undifferentiated, and spouses reflect their dysfunctionality to each other and children.

It is important to tell that the nuclear family, also called as family ego mass, mentioned here refers to Bowen's description of the nuclear family that consists of the father, mother, and children (Bowen, 1978, p. 161). The nuclear family is defined as "the patterns of emotional functioning in a family in a single generation. Certain basic patterns between the father, mother, and children are replicas of the past generations and will be repeated in the generations to follow" (Bowen, 1978, p. 376). The characteristic features of a family are handed down from one generation to the next one. The higher the family is functional, the higher it passes on differentiation and emotional maturity. The lower the family has differentiation, the higher potential it passes on chronic anxiety and emotional tension (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 164-6). The undifferentiation of self of the family members within the nuclear family leads to four aforementioned patterns developing in family members individually or reciprocally. In a nuclear family, these subdivisions can be seen discretely, or all can be present.

The concept is initially named "*undifferentiated family ego mass*" which refers to "a fused cluster of egos of individual family members, with a common ego boundary" (Bowen, 1978, p. 107 emphasis in the original text). That is to say, the anxiety causes the phenomenon that nuclear family ego mass acquires little or no sense of functioning in the conflictual marriages. It is later renamed as nuclear family emotional system. Bowen (1978) continues that some of the individuals/egos are "completely fused in the family ego mass", and some are "less fused...The ego fusion is most intense in the least mature [poorly differentiated] families (p. 107). Thus, as an interlocking concept in the Bowenian family system theory, it has a direct relation with the individuals' differentiation of self and anxiety within the family context.

In this concept, it is crucial to consider levels of differentiation of self and anxiety of each member of a family to conceptualize the extent anxiety influences marriages and the emotional, physical, and psychological symptoms the family members develop. The developed symptoms demonstrate dysfunctions in the family and are resulted from "particular pattern[s] of [family members'] emotional functioning that predominate[s]" the anxious familial atmosphere (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 163). The functioning of each family member affects the others reciprocally; the reciprocity of individuals stems from individuality and togetherness. The intensity

of togetherness causes families to be undifferentiated. The force drives the members to be fused within the family. As it is stated before, anxiety has two divisions: chronic and acute anxiety. Chronic anxiety occurs as reactions to “imagined threats” and can be permanent, whereas acute anxiety occurs as reactions to “real threats” and is likely to be temporary (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 113). The emotional equilibrium of families is disturbed as consequence of individuals’ less differentiation and the anxiety that increases the tension. Planted during childhood, the undifferentiation spreads throughout one’s life. Bowen (1978) stresses that poor differentiation is the principal source of the potential family problems in marriages (pp. 376-7). The poor differentiation brings about the poor functioning to handle anxiety in emotionally intense environments. In the sense of the mechanisms of the nuclear family emotional system, according to Kerr and Bowen (1988), if both spouses convey their anxiety into the marriage, it is presented as marital conflict; if one of the spouses or a child internalizes the anxiety that increases dysfunctionality to develop severe symptoms, it is seen as dysfunction in a spouse or impairment of a child; members emotionally cut off from each other in the end in order to the intensity of the anxiety because of the lack of adaptiveness to anxiety (p. 163). Each of these patterns displays the emotional dysfunctioning of parents and children regarding their low levels of differentiation of self. In the following, these four patterns are illustrated with specific references to the conflictual spouses and their impact on children in *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*.

## **2. THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST**

The nuclear family of Macon and Sarah presents the marriage conflict that intensifies their emotional distance. Having low levels of differentiation of self, both suffer from emotional immaturity due to undifferentiation from their family of origin. The anxiety is not much present at the beginning of their relationship, but it is spurred when they experience the loss of their beloved son. The death of their son intensifies anxiety in the family; their differing responses to the incident increase each other’s anxiety and lack of adaptation. Their emotional immaturity comes to the fore in the anxious family atmosphere, and as they cannot adapt themselves to anxiety; in the end, they emotionally and physically cut off from the family.

## Marital Conflict

The marital conflict is the first pattern of the nuclear family emotional system that occurs in conflictual marriages of undifferentiated spouses. Bowen (1978) defines it as the basic mechanism that includes conflictual spouses in conflictual marriages “in which neither gives in to the other or in which neither is capable of an adaptive role” (p. 377). It refers to the disturbance caused by and of basic concerns and problems of the marriages connected with spouses who are not pleased with each other’s actions that cause the conflict in their marriage. The marital conflict existing in conflictual families results from the excessive amount of emotional stress caused by the spouses’ quarrelling over the issues. In times of tension, each spouse thinks that “it is the *other* spouse who needs to do the changing” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 187 emphasis in the original text). Since each of them believes that the issue can only be solved if the other spouse gives in, the tension increases and leads to breakdowns. The idea that the other spouse needs to change is closely related to the family patterns that cause the conflict since spouses increase emotional intensity towards changing the other partner. It considerably decreases their functioning. It is hence important to underline that the extent to which spouses can differentiate themselves and form a concrete self shows their emotional maturity. The way spouses react to quarrelling issues gives insights into their level of differentiation since, in the nuclear family, spouses’ reactions towards issues create conflict, not the issues themselves. The way conflictual spouses handle these issues in emotionally tense situations demonstrates their emotional immaturity. Therefore, the marital conflict stems from their poor differentiation; neither of them tries to adapt by giving in, and it brings the conflict into the marriage more and more. In *The Accidental Tourist*, the marriage of Macon and Sarah is taken within the scope of the analysis to point out the family tension revealing anxiety and how their conflictual marriage is fallen apart due to their low levels of undifferentiation of self, and anxiety they suffer from. The following analysis concentrates on situations that neither spouse gives in to the other in their marriage.

By nature, Macon and Sarah are emotionally different from each other in terms of their differentiation of self from the family and handling emotional disequilibrium in life. Bail (1998) claims that “the basic conflict in the marriage is between Macon’s obsessive, superior, intellectual style and Sarah’s more passionate, feeling nature” (p.



120). They represent two sides of life; one is strict and unchanging, and the other is free and open. The differences in these spouses reflect dysfunctionality and anxiety in the marital conflict. Just like Macon, Sarah has a low level of differentiation of self but conceives of life from a different perspective as a dynamic and volatile place. Her treatment of the issues is conflictual because of her emotional inaccessibility towards Macon. Being obsessive and living in a cocoon, Macon perceives that one must live by abiding rules and have unchanging practices. It is the characteristic trait transmitted in childhood is the key component that undifferentiates him from his family of origin and emotionally cuts him off from his wife.

The chronic anxiety that is related to the Leary family as having unchanging practices and being closed system shows itself in Macon's undifferentiation to a great extent. That trait is the leading reason for the marital conflict that disturbs Macon and Sarah's marriage. Macon's dysfunctioning that he has acquired from his family of origin is reflected in his own marriage in a way that it determines how he responds to familial conflict. It is important to note that there is no record of Sarah's family history. Thus, her relationship with Macon is taken as the base for the analysis. Considering that the Leary family is poorly differentiated, it is evident that Macon traces his undifferentiation which results in anxiety in his marital issues. Their poor differentiation is seen as:

[d]uring the twenty years of their marriage there'd been moments—there'd been months—when he [Macon] didn't feel they [Macon and Sarah] had really formed a unit the way couples were supposed to. No, they'd stayed two distinct people, and not always even friends. Sometimes they'd seemed more like rivals, elbowing each other, competing over who was the better style of person. Was it Sarah, haphazard, mercurial? Was it Macon, methodical and steady? (Tyler, 1985, p. 16).

The question proposed here shows the basic conflict and pictures that Macon and Sarah has been surviving under the same roof by struggling with each other. With Macon's fusion and Sarah's pushes, their marriage turns out to be conflictual with issues that increase anxiety. Due to Macon's aloofness in the marriage, Sarah has attempted to be

the spouse who drives the wheel of their marriage. It is visible that Macon has the intention of keeping the marriage steady at any cost despite the conflict. Sarah makes plans for meetings; she carries out dinner parties; Macon just exists where he is needed to be despite believing in an exactly opposite way. It is told that, before Ethan's death, Sarah is a social person who would cheerfully wander around shopping malls, she is interested in crowded places where she can meet new people, and she is quite keen on cocktail parties; unlike Macon who thinks of parties as trivial and unreasonable and finds crowds quite irritating due to the possibility of any strangers' shoulders tapping on his (Tyler, 1985, pp. 47-8). Macon passively follows what Sarah writes for him. Macon can be adaptive in emotionally stable situations. However, the death of their son considerably changes their reactivity towards the incident.

Ethan's death considerably increases emotional tension in their marriage, and Sarah is unable to bear Macon's seeming aloofness about it. In Sarah's view, Macon never shows any reaction towards not only the incident but also any point related to life, he hence needs to change his attitude about these. The anxiety arises at this point between these spouses since they believe that the other shows little or no emotional responses to the other one. To illustrate, at the very beginning of the book, when they are on the way back to Baltimore, Sarah mentions life's meaninglessness after Ethan's death to figure out how Macon would react, if he would comfort her by showing empathy. He only tells her, "[h]oney, to tell the truth, it never seemed to me there was all that much to begin [life]" (Tyler, 1985, p. 3). Despite his honest answer, it does not serve as comfort for Sarah's feelings, and she finds it quite irritating. A year has passed after the death; Sarah has suffered a lot and cried out her feelings, Macon has been seemingly unresponsive to her calls.

Another prominent difference between Macon and Sarah is the perception of keeping order in life, especially in domestic issues. As it has been emphasized, in the earlier analysis of Macon's differentiation of self, Macon contemplates that one needs to live in an orderly manner, he believes in systematic formations of occurrences in which every action is supposed to be carried out according to methods as he underlines, "I've got a system, Sarah" (Tyler, 1985, p. 4). He has a system of driving, organizing the wardrobe and bedsheets, grocery shopping, speaking the language, ordering the same meals, and avoiding communicating people on travel. Macon's methodical

endeavour opposes Sarah's haphazardness. Macon has acquired a system that keeps him steady. Voelker (1989) affirms that his "reversion to system... is deeply inscribed in his character" (p. 149). It demonstrates the acquisition of the family trait in his functioning. In Macon's opinion, he would put himself in danger if he "falls behind with [his] system" (Tyler, 1985, p. 15). The systematic traits Macon possesses attach to the Leary family tradition; as he is poorly differentiated, he practices them as they are. What defines his undifferentiation is the system: his family of origin.

The Learyism principles are extensively practiced by poorly differentiated Macon. He has excessively engaged in these principles, by which Sarah is disturbed. Kerr and Bowen (1988) comment that each partner happens to be "allergic to particular comments and actions by the other spouse; paradoxically, however, each spouse says and does things that invite the very comments and actions from the other spouse to which he or she is most allergic" (p. 189). Macon is presented as a man of constancy; Sarah is more of casualness. The difference stimulates stress. It is clearly seen in times they are home. Macon hangs the laundry and sets up the breakfast table all the time as fixed and methodical. Witnessing such actions of Macon, Sarah "nod[s] at some lengthy explanation of his... [with] the telltale tuck at the corner of her mouth" (Tyler, 1985, p. 9).

Macon's system refers to the extremely regular domestic practices and unchanging activities of everyday life. According to him, one needs to have a system of organizing the household similarly. For instance, Macon makes use of his system of organizing seven bed sheets for seven days: "Macon Leary Body Bag" that allows him to adjust them systematically; he flosses his teeth every night with no exception—even the night their son was killed—; he postulates that accidental travellers ought to carry *Miss MacIntosh*, a plotless and trivial book, to protect themselves from conversating with strangers (Tyler, 1985, pp. 10-15-30). These irresistible regularities and Macon's nonsensical –for Sarah– attitudes are what make her irritated towards Macon, what she complains about and inwardly asks him for change. It is also clearly visible in terms of dealing with house chores. As it is mentioned, Sarah's casualness opposes Macon's system, and it leads to the disorganization of stuff at home. For Macon, "running a house require[s] some sort of system, and Sarah ha[s] never understood that" (Tyler, 1985, p. 8). He dislikes Sarah's lack of system as, "[h]e ha[s]

always disapproved of her messiness” (Tyler, 1985, p. 8). It is seen that Macon, as a man of methods, is quite keen on organization, unlike Sarah. The systematic difference between Macon and Sarah increases tension in their relationship, and he is naturally – systematically– incapable of adapting himself to these.

In nuclear families, spouses ideally need each other’s comfort. Sarah is emotionally in need of Macon’s understanding of her feelings. When a spouse does not meet this need of the other spouse in a marriage, discomfort emerges (Bowen, 1978, p. 311). Sarah and Macon picture an opposite situation at this point as a result of the growing conflict caused by the death of Ethan. On the one hand, Sarah tells him, “[y]ou are not a comfort, Macon... Your little routines and rituals, depressing habits, day after day. No comfort at all” (Tyler, 1985, pp. 3-4). Sarah receives no emotional support and relief from Macon, and, as a consequence, their marriage has gradually fallen apart. On the other hand, Sarah is not a comfort for Macon as well. Macon responds “[s]houldn't I need comfort too? ... You're not the only one, Sarah. I don't know why you feel it's your loss alone” (Tyler, 1985, p. 4). Obviously, the marriage provides comfort for none of the spouses since Sarah thinks that she needs his support; Macon thinks that he needs her support to overcome the grief. Wooten (1997) highlights that the stress developed by Ethan’s loss adversely decreases their bearing and transforms Macon and Sarah “not as a hurting couple but as two hurting individuals” (p. 177). They are habitually enforced to happen hurting-each-other-individuals. It brings out the marital conflict generated by the lack of adaptiveness of these spouses. Kerr and Bowen (1988) note that when each spouse approaches the problem from their own perspectives, they both equally contribute to the conflictual issue increasing instead of resolving it (p. 189). Both Macon and Sarah propel the discomfort in their marriage because each of them expects the other to give in. It increases the emotional reactivity to each other, which leads to cut off in the end.

### **Dysfunction in a Spouse**

Dysfunction in a spouse is the second pattern of the nuclear family emotional system that emphasizes the overfunctioning and underfunctioning or dominant and submissive roles of spouses in a marriage. Bowen (1978) describes it as “the pattern in which one spouse becomes the adaptive or the submissive one, and the other

becomes the dominant one” (p. 204). In other words, the mechanism explains that one of the spouses gives in to the other in order to stabilize their relationship and get rid of anxiety. Reflecting dysfunctionality, the submission may end up having no-self, and the submissive one develops emotional, social, psychological symptoms. The dominant spouse hence steers the marriage. It is crucial to say that both spouses have a low level of differentiation that brings about the urge to construct a pseudo self.

Dysfunction in a spouse poses that the less differentiated spouse in the marriage is fused and his dysfunction arises; similarly, the lower the level of differentiation of self the spouses have, the more they are vulnerable to develop symptoms and the more potential to form pseudo self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 180-4). In conflictual marriages, the adaptive spouse tends to construct the pseudo-self to stabilize the potential anxiety; the dominant spouse develops the pseudo self to control the marriage for both. “The pseudo-self of the adaptive one merges into the pseudo-self of the other, and the dominant one becomes responsible for the twosome” (Bowen, 1978, p. 204). In calmer periods, the pseudo-self does not clash, and there is harmony in their relationship; whereas, in anxious times, the submissive spouse is “inclined to underfunction becomes ‘weaker’ and more subordinate” and the predominant one is “inclined to overfunction becomes ‘stronger’ and more dominant” (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 180). As submission and domination are dysfunctional traits, the spouses characterize their pseudo selves: what they are not in nature. The subordinate or adaptive spouses become dysfunctional in the relationship due to the low level of differentiation that leads them to be fused in the relationship; however, the dominant spouses are also dysfunctional because of adapting the role for which they are not eligible. During emotionally intense situations, both spouses thus reflect these dysfunctional traits. In the following part, the situations that Macon gives in to Sarah are discussed to reveal the dysfunctioning occurred as a result of his giving in.

In *The Accidental Tourist*, Tyler’s characterization of Macon and Sarah’s marriage presents dysfunction in a spouse: Macon is the submissive or adaptive underfunctioning one, and Sarah is the dominant overfunctioning spouse. Macon possesses the unchanging practices of the Leary family; he carries out these in his marital life. The integral characteristic of the Learyism is being a closed system to the outer world, and Macon displays it in the earlier time and marriage with Sarah;

Macon's fusion in the familial context provides a clear portrait of dysfunctionality. Therefore, it is aimed to investigate Macon's dysfunction with specific references to his level of differentiation of self and his attitudes and reactions towards occurrences in anxious settings in the marriage. It is observed that Macon's dysfunctionality stems from his undifferentiation from the family and results in his submission to Sarah. And Sarah is initially seen as driven by pseudo self and becomes dysfunctional in the emotionally intense situation: their son's death.

The spouses' dysfunction in the nuclear family emotional system context is directly related to their low level of differentiation of self. The lower the level of differentiation of self they have, the higher the dysfunction of individuals occurs in nuclear families. Taking Macon and Sarah's marriage into consideration, it is seen in earlier times of their relationship that Sarah steers the relationship and marriage. Kerr and Bowen (1988) assert that "when a member of a relationship system is physically, emotionally, or socially dysfunctional, the relationship processes that contribute to that dysfunction are traceable to the beginning of the relationship" (p. 169). The dysfunctionality at the individual level displays itself even in Macon's early relationship timespan with Sarah such as the time they met, got engaged, and married.

The closedness of Macon is traceable to the time he first met Sarah at the high school party. During that time, both were seventeen; Sarah was quite attractive and social; Macon was aloof and secluded –the same characteristics they hold on to until the death of their son. Despite the other boys' interest in Sarah, Macon felt distant from her since he thought she was not in his league, and he couldn't talk to or pursue her, but only stuck up in a corner: the trait is related to his family of origin. Thus, "it had to be Sarah who first made the first move... [Because] [I]f he hadn't looked stuck-up she never would have noticed him" (Tyler, 1985, pp. 48-49). Bail (1998) says that "[w]hat attracted her [Sarah] to Macon was his aloofness, which posed a challenge. Macon quickly realized that he needed to feign a degree of indifference in order to keep Sarah's interest" (p. 123). Their relationship was started by Sarah's contact. They got better acquainted throughout Macon's three year-college. And they got married after three years of engagement. Even though Sarah thought of Macon's indifference as a posed challenge in early times, the same trait is seen to develop anxiety in their relationship: being seemingly indifferent to the death of their son (Bail, 1998, p. 123).

Surely, the aloofness trait in the twenty years of marriage results from his dysfunctionality since he does not communicate; even if he communicates, he cannot accommodate his thoughts. That is a specific trait of Macon that Sarah stresses.

During emotionally calm situations, the reciprocal functioning of Macon and Sarah indicates that Sarah is ambitious, responsible, and full of energy, while Macon is submissive with limited energy generated by his undifferentiation from his family of origin. As a result, Macon's dysfunctional underfunctioning is tried to be balanced by Sarah's overfunctioning, who assumes responsibility for the pair in the timespan before Ethan's death, which causes the divorce. As Sarah has been the one who drives the wheel of their marriage, Macon accustoms himself to her functioning. On the other hand, during the emotionally anxious atmosphere of the death, their reciprocal functioning decreases. In spite of Macon's indifferent behaviour originally appealing Sarah when they first acquainted, it has turned out to be the fundamental reason for their separation, especially his reactionless towards the death of their son.

Kerr and Bowen (1988) explain that some of the attitudes of a spouse do not necessarily create a problem or develop anxiety in the early stages of the relationship, but "pressures internal and external to the relationship can [gradually] intensify these [dysfunctions] ... The lower the level of differentiation, the more likely this intensification will occur" (p. 169). For Macon and Sarah, the intensification of the anxiety partially results from Ethan's death. However, it can be traced back their communicating by letters during Macon's college years. While Macon talked only about his studies, Sarah mentioned love, desire, and affection, "[d]on't you miss me a little? I can't go anywhere we've been for fear I'll see you looking so mysterious across the room. She signed her letters *I love you* and he signed his *Fondly*" (Tyler, 1985, p. 50 emphasis in the original text). Macon was occasionally acting uninvolved and tried not to show his feelings towards her for the sake of appearance. As it is told, Sarah was quite fond of socialization before their son's death. Yet, Ethan's death considerably changes this perception of Sarah: she believes the world is a complete evil that a twelve-year-boy is shot for no reason (Tyler, 1985, p. 133). Macon's aloofness about the devastating accident results in distancing feelings. It is uncovered in the time that Sarah tells Macon that he is "not a comfort" to her anymore, and she

asks for a divorce (Tyler, 1985, p. 3). She breaks up with him and moves out to another place. Macon begins living lonely, which intensely increases his anxiety.

After separating from Sarah, Macon finds it quite difficult to carry on and develops psychological symptoms as a result of staying alone at home. The physical breakdown is that Macon has an accident at home and his leg is broken and put in a plaster cast; the psychological one is his grief over the loss of both Ethan and Sarah. Unlike the physical ones, the psychological symptoms are not directly revealed through Macon but Ethan's dog: Edward, a Welsh corgi. It is believed that Tyler may select, due to his appearance, the Welsh corgi on purpose to associate it with Macon and his family's closed system of lifestyle. The dog is presented as, "very shortlegged, but he did love to sleep in a bed" (Tyler, 1985, p. 15). Edward is present where he is and stays in his comfort zone as he cannot move easily. Thus, it parallelly symbolizes Macon's unwillingness to leave his comfort zone (Zahlan, 1990, pp. 88-89). Furthermore, the indication of Macon's psychological disturbances is Edward's traits. Petry (1990) states that Edward is selected to be the mediator to convey to the readers Macon's articulation of "the rage, confusion, and frustration he feels over the tragedies in his life, so it is the dog who effectively responds on his behalf... His psychological crippling is reflected in his physical disability, with Edward" (p. 223). The representation of aggression through Macon's most loved one is an indicator of his symptoms. These all are caused due to the fact that Sarah deserts Macon because Edwards begins attacking, barking, and snarling in parallel to their divorce; it is seen in the questioning of "[c]ould a dog have a nervous breakdown?" (Tyler, 1985, p. 27). Macon's psychological collapse is delineated in Edward's frustrating behaviour towards his environment.

The breakdowns lead Macon to recall his memories with Sarah; he deeply feels attached to her since Sarah's existence gives him the power to function as he has inwardly acknowledged the role of submission. The power he gets from Sarah consistently perpetuates his dysfunctioning. It becomes clear that his functioning has been dependent on her activeness. Kerr and Bowen (1988) claim that dysfunctional spouses have a high tendency towards "los[ing] most of their self-confidence and becom[ing] very dependent on their spouse" (p. 180). Over the years of their marriage, Macon has gradually happened to act in Sarah's way. She dominantly but in a stitching



way encloses Macon. To illustrate, Macon's submissive role is openly portrayed in his dream of the Grandfather Leary. In the dream, the Grandfather openly tells, "[y]ou've lost the centre of your *life*, Macon" (Tyler, 1985, p. 142). When she deserts him, his functioning decreases; the decrease brings out bodily and mental disturbances. Macon explains, "I'm the only one in the house... I'm all alone; it's just me; it seems everybody's just ... fled from me, I don't know, I've lost them, I'm left standing here saying, 'Where'd they go? Where is everybody?' Oh, God" (Tyler, 1985, p. 55). It shows his suffering from Sarah's detachment. In her presence, Macon finds comfort to some extent; in her absence, he feels lost. It reveals Sarah's overfunctioning role in the relationship with Macon. Especially during nights, Macon goes through hard times:

Macon always [takes] comfort if he [finds] a light. Someone else [has] trouble sleeping too, he [assumes]. He [does not] like to consider any other possibility—a party, for instance, or a heart-to-heart talk with old friends. He [prefers] to believe that someone else [is] on his own, sitting up wide awake fending off his thoughts. That [makes] him feel much better. (Tyler, 1985, pp. 18-19)

The unbearable thought of Sarah's absence increases Macon's anxiety. And, in anxious times, individuals tend to disclose dysfunctional traits acquired within the family context. As Macon is a member and representative of the leery Leary family, he is a naturally withdrawn character due to his low level of differentiation of self. In his marriage with Sarah, it becomes apparent that "[n]o matter how he [tries] to change his manner" ... [he is] "locked inside the standoffish self" (Tyler, 1985, p. 51). The undifferentiation from the family of origin and his standoffish self have a direct relationship with the basic characteristics of the Learys: isolation, living in a cocoon, and leeriness to the outer world. Therefore, it can be told that Macon's submission role traces to his family of origin and his low level of differentiation of self. According to Bowen (1978), the dysfunctional traits along with the marital conflict postulate divorce in conflictual marriages (p. 379). Macon and Sarah's marriage hence does not work well at all, as two distinct natures do not hold up in the same cocoon. Specifically, the driving force of the divorce is the death of Ethan. That's why it is critical to focus on the projection of the spouses' dysfunctionality on the child: Ethan.

### **Impairment of one or more Children**

Impairment of one or more children is the third mechanism of the nuclear family emotional system that stresses the visibility of the parents' dysfunctional transmission in children. Kerr and Bowen (1988) say that children of a dysfunctional nuclear family tend to develop physical, and emotional symptoms resulting from "the same two variables that influence symptom development in adults: level of differentiation and level of chronic anxiety. The lower a child's level of differentiation, the greater his vulnerability to clinical dysfunction" (p. 193). In a nuclear family, the role of the parents' level of differentiation of self is particularly critical due to the projection of the dysfunctional traits to children. Considering family as an emotional unit that any change in one member affects the others, children function in accordance with the parents' level of differentiation and intensity of anxiety that is present in the family environment. Along with differentiation of self, the mechanism has a close relationship with the family projection process and multigenerational transmission process that take place in nuclear families.

All nuclear families have their own unique heavy and light emotional atmospheres created collectively by each member, and the heaviness or lightness of the emotional atmospheres determines children's level of differentiation of self and the extent they can adapt to stress; if there is a heavy atmosphere in the family, each member feels needier of others' approval or more distant due to the lack of understanding; however, if the emotional atmosphere is light, each member is more connected to each other but has enough space to be oneself (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 194). The extent which children possess a relatively similar level of differentiation to their parents and display it in their present and/or future lives has a direct relation to the parents' anxiety level in the marriage. As poorly differentiated parents have a tendency towards developing symptoms resulting from chronic anxiety, their children are also highly prone to these symptoms. It is highlighted that children's level of differentiation can be slightly higher or lower than their parents; however, not a great amount of change may happen in their levels because "emotional systems change slowly" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 193).

The spouses transmit undifferentiation onto their children in various ways. Kerr (2019) states that dysfunctional parents place their anxiety on one or more children causing them to be socially, psychologically, and physically impaired in two ways: “they worry excessively about the child and usually have an idealized or negative view of him” (p. 14). The parents’ idealized or negative view of children influences children’s level of differentiation; it leads them to be less differentiated members by acquiring little sense of self and developing symptoms in relatively anxious times. These parents surely project dysfunctionality onto their children in some other ways like abandonment and emotional detachment. In *The Accidental Tourist*, Ethan – Macon and Sarah’s late child– is taken within the scope of the analysis of impairment of a child being influenced by their low level of differentiation of self transmitted generationally.

*The Accidental Tourist* presents the murdered child of Macon and Sarah: a twelve-year-old boy Ethan is accidentally killed by a gunman in a Burger Bonanza restaurant where he goes after he leaves the camping area. Ethan is pictured as, “a tall blond sprout of a boy with an open and friendly face” (Tyler, 1985, p. 17). After thirteen years of their marriage, he was born; nonetheless, “he only [brings] out more of their [Macon and Sarah’s] differences. Things they [have] learned to ignore in each other resurfaced” (Tyler, 1985, p. 16). As mentioned earlier, Macon’s methodical and steady, and Sarah’s haphazard and mercurial traits are seen to be conflictual in the twenty-year marriage, and it leads them to quarrel over “the better style of person” (Tyler, 1985, p. 16). The marital conflict extends towards the impairment of a child at this point. The controversy goes on after the birth of Ethan. The described features of the mentioned spouses hence dramatically demonstrate themselves in the way they raise the child. The distinctive characteristics of Macon and Sarah show themselves more and more in the ways they upbringing Ethan until his age of twelve. The parental position that Macon and Sarah have controverts each other. They focus on bringing up Ethan in their own way, which is posing the conflict into the leeriness of Macon and the laxness of Sarah. Ethan’s death leaves an incurable wound in their marriage and eventually drives them apart. It is significant to highlight that Ethan is presented as an already-lost character that shapes the plot of the book partly. McMurtry (1992) mentions that “Ethan remains mostly a premise”, and Tyler does not describe him

“very confidently” (p. 135). His characterization is mostly viewed through Macon’s point of view, in fact, his memories. Thus, the analysis of the impaired Ethan mostly evolves around his earlier relationships with his parents. Due to the lack of individual and detailed description of his own actions, it is claimed that Ethan’s dysfunctionality results from his parents’ dysfunctionality as a result of the projection of familial patterns/characteristics of the Learys.

Kerr and Bowen (1988) claim that when parents “teach responsibility or ‘differentiation’ to [children], they generally preach it, which defeats differentiation in both self and others [children]” (p. 203). In other words, as differentiation is a lifelong process and acquired starting from childhood to oldness, poorly differentiated parents’ teaching of differentiation results in the low level of differentiation of self in children. It is closely associated with children’s observing each parent discretely. What parents are supposed to do is to work on their own differentiation; it gives insights into their children to observe and construct their own differentiation. As the parents’ functioning may likely increase, they provide more spaces for children to see them as they are, and children less likely have an idealized or degraded view of each parent. This can be observed in highly differentiated families. However, if parents fail to show children a stable view of parenting, it is more likely that children have an imbalanced view of them and reflect it in their own lives as well. That is to say, children develop poor differentiation because of the parents’ poor functioning since they observe them as the closest ones and acquire the relatively approximate degree of functioning.

Parents’ low levels of differentiation of self transmit onto children and prompt children’s distorted view of themselves and the world. It is related to how dysfunctional parents view their children, shape their characters, and whether to accept them as individuals in theory and practice. In the upbringing of Ethan, Macon takes the front stage. Macon aims to raise Ethan in an idealized view of the child, in which Macon strives for equipping him with any consequences. In contrast, Sarah believes in the spontaneity of life events with good and bad consequences that end up being one’s experiences. It is said that “Sarah never got their son [Ethan] on any kind of schedule at all, was lax and unconcerned. And Macon (oh, he knew it, he admitted it) [has] been so intent on preparing him [Ethan] for every eventuality” (Tyler, 1985, p. 16). Unlike Sarah believing in simplicity somehow, Macon obsessively struggles to

involve in Ethan's upbringing, even superficial to some extent. It is narrated that Macon "spend[s] twelve years imagining Ethan as a sort of exchange student, a visitor from the outside world (Tyler, 1985, p. 66). Macon feels the burden that he is supposed to be responsible for shaping Ethan. The idealized view of the child is also exemplified as: Macon fiercely tries to teach Ethan how to swing a bat at sixth age since Macon is instinctually afraid of Ethan being the last chosen one in a team. And Macon vows to collect Wacky Packs for months for Ethan so that he can have them more than anyone in the entire school. Witnessing these, "Sarah tolerate[s] with amused irritation" of these obsessions (Menon & Hemalatha, 2013, p. 60). By nature, Sarah believes more in life adventures and uncertainties. And one naturally needs to experience these when they happen to happen. The spouses' differentness in the method of bringing up Ethan has direct relevance to their own differentiation from their family of origin.

Macon's low level of differentiation from the Leary family is transmitted to Ethan at an early age. The multigenerational transmission process interrelatedly takes place within the Leary family. As Macon is a poorly differentiated individual, he conveys the Learyism philosophy to his son as well. Being leery of the outer world, Macon keeps Ethan within the closed system of the family. Kerr and Bowen (1988) remark that children develop their emotional functioning, and it is considerably influenced by the parents' individual and together urges that demonstrate the dys/functional features of the family (p. 195). The lower individuality the parents have in a family, the lower the differentiation of self children acquire. Being very concerned about Ethan, Macon holds strong ties with his family background in his practices of rearing Ethan: he instils the danger of the outer world. It paves the way to be thus excessively worrying about him. Finger (1997) supports that Macon's treatment of Ethan has been considerably overprotective (p. 47). His instinctual concern for controlling every action of the child is illustrated with a strong feeling –enclosure. In an incident taking place in Ethan's earlier childhood, when he tries to catch a ball and falls, Macon stands motionless and is "frozen with horror... [Macon pictures] an immeasurably bleaker future [in which Ethan doesn't exist] (Tyler, 1985, p. 136). It can be thought that it is quite normal that parents may have these feelings towards their children; however, Macon's case is slightly different since he thinks of outside brings catastrophes to the harmed child. It shows his overprotection of Ethan, which blocks

Ethan from experiencing and being fused in the family context. He is reared to be a Leary.

The undifferentiation of parents has a noticeable –damaging– impact on children’s level of differentiation of self. In the context of Ethan, it can be seen that he grows up under the heavy burden of leery Macon/Learys. He is impaired by the closed system and routines; the father’s overprotection and idealized perception of him and the mother’s laxness cause him to become a potential dysfunction member. His parents’ undifferentiation thus leads him to be dysfunctional. As Ethan is already told to be dead in the story, there cannot be clearly seen how dysfunctional he is in the following path of his life; however, it can be applicable that children likely display parents’ dysfunctionality in their lives: Ethan is thought a to-be-impaired child.

### **Emotional Distance**

Emotional distance is the last pattern of the nuclear family emotional system that is strongly related to previously explained patterns in conflictual marriages of conflictual spouses. The reason(s) for emotional distance is one of or all the above-mentioned patterns of the nuclear family emotional system. If one of them is present, marriages may have relatively low potential to continue because of clashes between spouses, one spouse’s fusion in the relationship, or impaired children; however, if all three exist, marriages do not function and likely falls apart. If both spouses are intensely dysfunctional in terms of failing to give in to each other and believe that it is the other spouse to change to get rid of anxiety; if one of the spouses is the submissive one and vulnerable to developing symptoms resulting from his fusion into the relationship and forms a pseudo-self; if both project their undifferentiation or immaturity to children causing more anxiety in the marriage, then the relationship of these ends up with the emotional and physical distance between the spouses. In brief, in most marriages consisting of poorly differentiated spouses, there can be a blend of these patterns (Bowen, 1978, p. 263). The distance thus is seen as an evading way to flee, to some extent, from the anxious atmosphere of the marriage instead of compromising within the family environment. Kerr (2019) justifies that most individuals “distance from each other to reduce relationship intensity [and fusion]” (p. 14). In the light of these, the following analysis focuses on Macon and Sarah’s

conflictual marriage that includes all the other three nuclear family emotional system patterns and reveals that the dysfunctional spouses cut off to lessen anxiety in the marriage.

*The Accidental Tourist* epitomizes the emotional distance between Macon and Sarah who experience a great loss in their marriage: the death of their lovely son Ethan. The death and the differentness in the parents' reactions towards it constitute the main reasons for their emotional and physical distance, resulting in divorce. The marriage paves its way for a score of years with the pushing of Sarah. In this path, Sarah has taken the front stage; Macon mostly adapts. They have differing views that bring about discordance. Thus, it is important to highlight that spouses' incompatibility results from their low level of differentiation of self from the family of origin (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 170). Similarly, Bowen (1978) underlines that the intensity of nuclear family dysfunctionality in the conflictual relationships of most spouses is directly related to their original families due to their poor differentiation (p. 203). During the calm times of their marriage, Sarah becomes the dominant spouse in the earlier times of their relationship so that she manages to keep the equilibrium in the marriage. However, as there is an increase of tension in the emotionally intense situation –the death of Ethan; it brings out the emotional distance of Sarah who asks for a divorce. Their separation has been basically built on the distinctness of their nature. It is told that “[m]aybe all these years, they’d been keeping each other on a reasonable track” (Tyler, 1985, p. 10). However, the way they treat the conflictual issue of the death regenerates anxiety in their marriage.

The tragically accidental killing of Ethan accentuates the timely concealed anxiety in the marriage of Macon and Sarah. Macon has been standoffish and leery from the beginning and constrained to show his feelings; Sarah has been a more explicit and bald character. These slight differences in them are exposed more in times of high anxiety. When Ethan is dead, she experiences complete deprivation; Macon cannot respond to her pain. This is what Sarah complains about him and gradually leads to emotional and physical separation from Macon. Sarah gives a thorough understanding of the conflict in their marriage can be seen as:

Macon, I know you loved him [Ethan] but I can’t help  
thinking you didn’t love him as much as I did, you’re not so

torn apart by his going. I know you mourned him but there's something so what-do-you-call, so muffled about the way you experience things, I mean love or grief or anything; it's like you're trying to slip through life unchanged. Don't you see why I had to get out? [Macon says,] Sarah, I'm not muffled. I . . . endure. I'm trying to endure. I'm standing fast, I'm holding steady. [Sarah says,] If you really think that... [T]hen you're fooling yourself. You're not holding steady; you're ossified. You're encased. You're like something in a capsule. You're a dried-up kernel of a man that nothing real penetrates. Oh, Macon, it's not by chance you write those silly books telling people how to take trips without a jolt. That traveling armchair isn't just your logo; it's you. (Tyler, 1985, pp. 135-136)

It is demonstrated that Sarah's description of leery Macon is based on her experiences during their twenty-year marriage. As it is mentioned earlier, Macon is a character who is unwilling to leave his comfort zone, dislikes connecting and communicating, and lives by basic routines similar to his family of origin. McMurtry (1992) supports that Macon aims to pursue his life with his devised methods and systems and is never in favour of the unfamiliarity in order not to leave where he resides and to lessen any potential disturbance in his life (p. 133). Being muffled in his own way with the inability to reflect his pain, Macon shows no needed reaction towards the dreadful incident of the killing of the son. Kerr and Bowen (1988) indicate that if one of the spouses feels insufficiently responded to, overcoming "the isolation and lack of support" alone becomes highly challenging, and it often results in cutoff (p. 188). Receiving no emotional response from Macon, Sarah inwardly believes that she emotionally needs to cut off from the marriage so that she can reduce the emotional intensity of her pain. Even though Sarah used to steer the wheel in the marriage before the divorce, she basically gives up on it now because of Macon's aloofness towards Ethan's loss.

At the very beginning of the story, Sarah tells Macon that she finds no comfort in the marriage and needs to find a place of her own (Tyler, 1985, p. 4). Sarah wants to separate from Macon in order to reduce the anxiety in their relationship after the



tragic event because of Macon's indifference towards it. Sarah thinks that the pain is not mutual; Macon shows less pain than hers. She cannot thus stand his apparent aloofness. Sarah exclaims, "I don't have enough time left to waste it holing up in my shell" to emphasize that Macon's cocoonlike nature provides no relief (Tyler, 1985, p. 134). The major reason for Macon and Sarah's emotional distance in the marriage is the lack of emotional response: poorly differentiated Macon cannot respond to Sarah the way she is ideally needed.

Overall, anxiety in their marriage is driven by the incompatibility of Macon and Sarah in terms of their low level of differentiation of self; it leads to emotional separation in order to get rid of anxiety instead of compromising it. They are short of emotional maturity to provide emotional responses to each other. Therefore, what Macon and Sarah do is that they withdraw themselves from the relationship. Due to being poorly differentiated partners, they find it challenging to adapt themselves to the anxious family environment, and they hence avoid emotional attachment and physical contact in order to get rid of the anxiety.

### **3. *DINNER AT THE HOMESICK RESTAURANT***

*Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* features a realistic picture of the complex Tull family with its conflictual spouses and children. The novel portrays dynamic relationships among each of the members within the anxious family environment. The family sketched in the story presents dysfunctional traits associated with their levels of differentiation of self. As the undifferentiation of the family forms the nuclear family emotional system, the emotional disequilibrium within the family surfaces and influences every member discretely. The Tull family presents dysfunctionality that predominantly impairs spouses and children. Being the protagonist of the novel, Pearl Tull is portrayed as an abandoned wife with three children whom she grows singlehandedly. Due to being in constant movements because of her husband's business, Pearl has not created a sense of belonging to any community that spurs fusion in her relationship with her nuclear family, and that develops anxiety. Suffering from emotional detachment to her original family and husband, she transmits the dysfunctionality resulting also from her poor differentiation onto her children extensively.

The nuclear family presented in the novel holds on the notion of creating an ideally accepted nuclear family driven by the mother's urges. Pearl fancifully imagines forming a homely home for her husband and children. Being the only provider, Pearl strives for managing a fulfilled and self-sufficient family in the absence of a husband figure. Deserted by her husband, Pearl insists on receiving no outer emotional closeness and fantasizes about the fanciful wishes about her family. Her concept of the ideal family is constructed on the delusions of living in a harmonious and prosperous family environment; however, the Tulls fail to form a familial order that sustains itself and provide homeliness to its members (Shostak, 2020, p. 57). As the novel's title suggests, the homesickness is one of the central themes that shape the narratives. The absent presence of Beck and the present absence of Pearl bring about the feeling of homesickness within the family since the construction of the homeliness is conducted with futile attempts. In the novel, events in the chapters are separately told by four significant characters: the mother and three children. There is no separate chapter that the father Beck tells the story; the parts including Beck are recounted in Pearl's partial narrative. By focusing on Tyler's view of the Tull family, Shostak (2020) comments

that the absence of Beck in the story gives us hints that “the ideal home is a nostalgic invention”; the nostalgia that Pearl longs for a family that “has never existed” (p. 57). The family has structurally broken apart. It is very much visible in the way Tyler gives voice to Pearl.

As the Tulls, specifically Pearl, fail for the fantasy of the ideal family, its impairment is predominantly visible in the children. Cody, Ezra, and Jenny separately demonstrate unhomeliness in their lives as each of them has been deeply influenced by the parental absences and has turned out to be homesick in the end. The theme is treated from various perspectives. In *Understanding Anne Tyler*, Petry (1990) explains the multifaced meaning of “homesick” discretely:

[a]t one level, “homesick” can mean “sick for home,” longing nostalgically for the warmth and security associated with the locale and group with which one is most familiar... On another level, “homesick” can mean “sick *of* home,” yearning to break free of the strictures which are the underside of that security while not denying either the attractiveness or the value of it. On a final level, “homesick” can mean “sick *from* home” – psychologically debilitated as the result of “home” not just in the sense of one’s childhood domicile, but more obtusely in the sense of the traumatic experiences, dubious parental examples, and even the genetic legacy that are so often visited upon hapless offspring. (pp. 186-7)

Pearl and Beck leave homesick trademarks on Cody, Ezra, and Jenny. Cody, sick of home, becomes frustrated with the idea of home and desires to go free from it; at his homesick restaurant, Ezra, sick for home, strives for setting up a Tull family dinner that each member attends and finishes all together. And Jenny, sick from home, tries to have her own family by marrying twice but not cutting her bonds with the family of origin. Every child has implacably suffered from homesickness. The scars left behind

are the consequences of the parents as the parents take centre stage in children's emotional development.

The anxiety that leads to dysfunctioning in the family mostly stems from spouses' poor differentiation. Considering this in mind, the Tull family exhibits the emotional dysfunctioning of parents and children regarding their low level of differentiation. Due to not having well-formed senses of self, the marital conflict in the marriage of Pearl and Beck ends up with the spouses' emotional cutoff that leads to children's impairment. Therefore, the Tull family presents dysfunctioning for the mechanisms: marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, impairment of children, and emotional distance. The following analyses centralize the patterns of the nuclear family emotional system in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* as it provides a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the family.

### **Marital Conflict**

Conflictual marriages are products of low levels of differentiation of self that spouses have acquired from their family of origin and convey it in their own families. As it is told, the marital conflict is visible in dysfunctional families in which each spouse takes up the role of being the right side; they believe that the other spouse needs to change to get rid of the conflict. Issues that bring conflicts into the marriage are treated differently and unagreeably since each side perceives that the conflicts result from its treatment of the other side. In the anxious family atmosphere, spouses' undifferentiation becomes apparent in their way of treatment of the conflict. As both spouses contemplate that the other partner is supposed to give in to solve the conflict, none of the spouses agrees to adapt, and anxiety increases. In a family, the more anxiety increases, the more undifferentiation comes into sight. Since emotionally intense environments bring about the inability of the spouses to be adapting themselves to the stressful solutions that cause conflicts, these conflicts gradually destabilize their marriage. When the spouses have crucial issues that create conflicts in their marriage, they expect the other spouse to change their view to be able to find solutions for them; different views on the issues cannot be simply appreciated by the other side to resolve the conflict. They are driven by emotional reactions to which they feel compelled. Having the lack of accepting others' views or differences displays the poor

differentiation of the spouses because it is a valuable sign of emotional immaturity. It can be extended to the lack of communication that drives the spouses to react without listening. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, the marriage of Pearl and Beck is examined within the marital conflict mechanism to reveal the family tension resulted from emotional immaturity that both spouses discord functionality as a result of their poor differentiation. The following analysis focuses on situations in which none of the spouses gives in to the other in their marriage.

The marital conflict is initially presented with poor differentiation. Having low levels of differentiation, Pearl and Beck contradict on various issues within the family. The marital conflict in the relationship stems from their different understanding of the ideal family, inability to communicate, and lack of understanding of each other to provide emotional responses. To provide a concrete basis, it is helpful to have a brief look at the background of the spouses and the setting that their marriage begins. Pearl is grown up in a family that lacks immediate members and was raised by her uncle and aunts. Reaching her thirties, her relatives call her, “an old maid who babysits [her cousins’] children, a spinster” (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 300, 6). When they get married, Beck is twenty-four; Pearl is six years older than him. Pearl trying to flee, recklessly accepts Beck’s proposal and marries him. Beck works as a salesman for the Tanner Corporation which requires him to travel around a lot. Pearl has initially got little concern related to their marriage due to her husband being constantly away on the move, many times alone. After they have had children, their relationship gets more challenging; emotional intensity increases in the way they attempt to resolve the challenges children bring. As these challenges surface anxiety in the family more and more, each of them starts to complain about the other spouse.

The basic conflict in their marriage is shown as their different views on the family institution. Pearl ideally postulates that the family is the one that holds up together without any outer contact and lives in harmony. However, Beck is away from the family due to his business and leaves them alone most of the time. It contradicts Pearl’s understanding of that institution because each member needs to support one another. The more Beck gets away, the more her ideal view of the family heightens. The heightening increases the anxiety that leads her to create inner pressure on Beck since he is not there to support her at all. In conflictual marriages, when one of the

spouses feels overwhelmed with too much responsibility, that spouse “feels ‘entitled’ to more ‘support’” from the other side than they receive (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, pp. 189-90). In the absence of this entitlement, they are prone to react in a dysfunctional way. When Pearl revisits her past, she recounts:

[o]h, those [Beck’s] transfers. Always there was some incentive—a chance of promotion, or richer territory. But it seldom amounted to much. Was it Beck’s fault? He claimed it wasn’t, but she didn’t know; she really didn’t know. He claimed that he was haunted by ill-wishers... She pursed her lips and studied him. [Beck said,] ‘Why do you look at me that way?... ‘What are you thinking? At least...I provide for you. I’ve never let my family go hungry’... She admitted that... This [Beck] was not a person she could lean on. (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 8)

It is deduced that Pearl charges Beck’s transfers that brings about the conflict within the family because he has not been there to support her and the children. The responsibility of children overwhelms her, and it necessitates him to be present more in the family. She feels neglected in a way that she inwardly expects him to brace her and her children. However, Beck’s perception of the issue is slightly different. He puts forward that the family can work out as long as he provides them with meals. And as his business is travelling around, which he likes a lot, he needs to leave. His sense of the family is related to the provision of food, which he does but partially. The matter for him is only money, not emotional nourishment. Both hence expect each other to change their view. Each of them reacts to the issue in an emotional manner that does not solve the conflict here. Pearl’s idea is that the parental duties need to be done fully in order to have a well-established and strongly tied family. Beck’s idea is that these duties are conducted well if he can supply them well; he emphasizes the importance of provision in a materialistic way, unlike Pearl. It becomes much clearer in the scene that Beck deserts the Tull family. He tells her, “I’m not an irresponsible person. I do plan to send you money” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 9). Beck believes that finance is the only concern, and he clings himself to it. Pearl knows well that her ideal family structure which requires Beck’s physical presence is the only way that can work for

them. As none gives in to the other by thinking that one is right, the conflict happens to be unresolved.

Another conflictual pattern in Beck and Pearl's marriage is the lack of understanding of each other. As it is said, Pearl's low level of differentiation of self is closely associated with her closedness to the outer world to form an ideal family that she lacked in her childhood. Her nature of being aloof presents itself in the form of the inability to communicate and understand people around her. Being quite similar to Pearl, Beck has been keeping himself closed to Pearl throughout the marriage. This issue generates anxiety in their relationship. Since the constant travels cause them to be stuck in their own deadening cocoon, it does both internally and externally cut off them. They cannot link up with any community to which they have moved, and they cannot be together as a very close-knit family that functions well, either. Pearl feels estranged from her family of origin. And she discourages any outer contact for her children as well. The relatives are gone due to Beck's business movements that she has lost their tracks; the children are disapproved of making friends outside. Their functioning decreases as they are emotionally undernourished not only from their family of origin but also from the relationships outside of the familial context. Within the inner circle, Pearl's relationship with her husband is also damaged, and they have lost emotional attachment to each other.

Suffering from emotional detachment each, Pearl and Beck have not accomplished the basic spouse necessity: understanding. Neither of them can suffice to emotionally respond to each other. The emotional discomfort upraises when Beck announces that he "[does] not want to stay married," he sets out for business in Norfolk, and it is the "best if he [goes] alone" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 9). Being confused by his disclosure, Pearl stays motionless. It is claimed that spouses create many other conflicts for the sake of avoiding conflict; as a result of a lot of actions and inactions conceived to avoid conflicts, when the conflict finally bursts out, they can get "much more polarized", and spouses tend to behave that the conflict comes out of the blue rather than think that it has been resulted from "unspoken resentments" (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 189). The lack of understanding can be well-exemplified in Pearl's own narrative saying that she doesn't understand him just as, "[t]here ought to be a whole separate language, she thought, for words that are truer than other words—for

perfect, absolute truth. It was the purest fact of her life: she did not understand him, and she never would” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 10). Pearl behaves in a stunned manner towards the news; however, it is seen that his leaving has been caused by the unresolved conflict caused by untold words (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 9-10). Beck puts forward, “[n]o matter how hard I tried, seemed like everything I did got muddled. Spoiled. Turned into an accident” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 300). Being unaware of Beck’s unspoken resentments that cause his departure, Pearl insists on the reason for his leaving immediately. Beck feels retreated and claims that he has already told her about his deeds. Having no clues at all about what Beck tells her, Pearl thinks of his saying as a sort of mood through which he passes. She cannot make any sense of his words. In fact, it has been like that all through time. Beck has been closed; Pearl has been aloof; they have parallel sides to each other in terms of understanding themselves. Without any justification, Beck deserts her.

In nuclear families, emotional attachment is significant to provide comfort for spouses. Especially, in anxious situations, the spouses need to be emotionally accessible to each other. If not, the disequilibrium arises between them. The relationship between Pearl and Beck has been conflictual because of being emotionally distant and providing no emotional support to each other. For instance, Beck’s favourite song –Nobody Know the Trouble I’ve seen– significantly embodies this lack of emotional attention. Hearing Beck touchingly singing the song, Pearl admits, “[n]obody knows but Jesus... What [are] his private thoughts, inside his spreading face, under the crest of black hair? She [does not] have the faintest idea” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 9). She provides him with no emotional access. Similarly, Beck himself acknowledges that he has been “away from home too much and not enough support to her” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 300). As a consequence, it is visible that they take no comfort from their company because they are emotionally inaccessible to each other. It has been clarified that Pearl, going through a difficult childhood, and Beck, suffering from emotional detachment from his wife, have poor differentiation. Having different perspectives on the familial issues, Beck figures out that he cannot meet Pearl’s standards related to family principles. Their conflictual marriage displays emotional separation that is resulted from the inability to emotionally access to each other. It has



also been revealed that the marital conflict habitually incites changes in one of the spouses and eventually leads to cut off at the end of the day.

### **Dysfunction in a Spouse**

In nuclear families, one of the spouses sometimes gives in to the other spouse in order to get rid of anxiety. When a spouse gives in to the other, s/he becomes the submissive or underfunctioner partner in the family; the other spouse takes the role of being dominant and henceforth controls the marriage. The submissive spouse suffers from this submission because of giving too much self in the marriage, and it results in being fused by forming a pseudo self for him/herself. It leads him or her to be more dysfunctional by fusing into the relationship in a way that the dominant has control of their emotional functioning. As the overfunctioners are the controller of the family, they hold themselves responsible for both of the partners. As the functioning of the submissive ones decreases, they become vulnerable to developing symptoms. These symptoms are gradually displayed as physical and psychological dysfunctions. In the marriage of Pearl and Beck, the nuclear family goes through Pearl's futile attempts of creating an ideal family image by being aloof, which lead the spouses to be fused into the relationship. Its impacts can be observed as the emotional and physical distance of one of the partners: Beck. It should be noted that most of the events related to Beck in the novel are told from Pearl's partial view. Beck's narrations of these events are quite limited. That's why, the analysis is conducted with a limited attempt to conceptualize the dysfunctioning of Pearl's idealism of the family and its impact on Beck. In the following part, the situations that Beck gives in to Pearl are explained to find out the dysfunctioning occurring due to giving in.

In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, the portrayal of Pearl and Beck's marriage presents dysfunction in a spouse: Beck is the submissive or adaptive underfunctioning one, and Pearl is the dominant overfunctioning spouse. As it is previously highlighted, Pearl's level of differentiation of self is determined in the range of 25-50 on the scale due to her poor functioning resulting from her family of origin and transmitting to her own family. Beck's level of differentiation of self is relatively lower than Pearl's in terms of fusion into the relationship and not providing emotional reinforcement for the family. Pearl has the idea of forming the exemplary Tull family;

she carries out that in her marital life that increases anxiety. The predominant characteristic of Pearl is being a closed system to the outer world, and Pearl displays it in her marriage with Beck by forming no connection with any relatives or friends in the community they dwell. The Tulls are in their own deadening cocoon. Having a poorer sense of self, Beck agrees with her in earlier times of their marriage, and he has not formed any connection with the communities they have lived. It is important to note that no record of Beck's family history is provided in the narratives; therefore, he is generally portrayed in Pearl's partial description. However, his undifferentiation is apparent in his relationship with his present family. Beck's emotional fusion in the familial context provides a clear portrait of dysfunctionality until the point of his leaving the family. Pearl's dominant role results in his emotional distance that increases anxiety in the family. Therefore, it is aimed to investigate Pearl's dysfunction with specific references to her low level of differentiation of self. It is revealed that Pearl's dysfunctionality is resulted from her lack of self-fulfilment and poor differentiation from the family.

The dysfunctional traits of the spouses trace back to the start of their relationship in terms of their differences in view. In Pearl's retrospective narrative, the incidents are told from her partial point of view. In the earlier time of Pearl and Beck's relationship, Pearl is portrayed as an old maid who needs to immediately marry someone because of the emotional pressure she feels from her environment. Being in her thirties, Pearl is constantly called a spinster, being fit to babysit her aunt's children. Influenced by this, Pearl somehow longs for escaping. Beck thus is the way. Even though Pearl is quite aware that Beck is not a well-matched suitor for her, she accepts to go with the flow. Beck is an unfit husband to Pearl because he is younger, extravagant, and not even in her league; Pearl, bursting with all these features, agrees to marriage (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 6). Despite these differences and how little they know each other, their marriage speedily takes place. Pearl cannot take her revenge on her folk for treating her with an insulting look. In the early times of their marriage, these differences do not pose a concern to them; however, as these intensify more, they become important factors of their separation. To exemplify, Pearl admits, "this slangy, loud-voiced salesman [Beck] peering at his reflection with too much interest when he tied his tie in the mornings ... [He is] not a person she [can]lean on" (Tyler, 1982/2008,

p. 8). Having been captured by these, Pearl feels that Beck needs to change in order to fit into the ideal criteria she contemplates. To achieve this, a higher level of functioning is required, which Beck does not possess, like Pearl. In fact, the idealism of the family stems from her pseudo self on which she holds.

Pearl has always dreamed of an overly idealized view of a family where each member supports and loves each other. Despite her continuous efforts, the family has evolved into a conflictual one in which each is emotionally split. Kerr and Bowen (1988) put forward that a spouse's poor functioning can be observed in his or her idealistic view of a concept in which s/he makes decisions and believes in what s/he does is best for their marriage without complementing the other spouse (p. 171). Holding the role of being the overfunctioner of the marriage, Pearl does deeds into which Beck passively adapts himself to some extent. She tries to mould him to be an ideal husband who meets her expectations: staying at home by leaving his job. Due to his low level of differentiation, Beck develops symptoms more and more, and he gradually cuts off. The point that increases anxiety is in fact that Pearl lacks the sense of communication or sharing feelings, which was previously discussed in the marital conflict. Beck notices that Pearl herself does not fit into her criteria. He is eventually fed up with her standards related ideal familial life, and he completely deserts her and the children. It is seen in Beck's justification of his desertion at the end of the story, "[s]he [wears] me out...Use[s] up my good points. Use [s] up all my good points" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 300). This clearly shows that Beck has been the one who adapts himself to the emotionally anxious situations in the marriage so that the conflict can be resolved. However, the more he strives to do the rights, the more Pearl witnesses that he fails. Being worn out by his wife, Beck explains that however hard he tries to please her, he has always failed since her ideals are not aptly described for him. Beck suffers from the lack of emotional reactivity from his wife. In these times, his functioning likely decreases. He is expected more than he can.

Beck's fusion in the relationship with Pearl is emphasized by Pearl's strife in the hypothetical family portrait. Acquiring low levels of differentiation of self, Pearl and Beck go through an unsuccessful marriage that leaves marks on them and their children. It is seen that their marriage has been built upon groundless expectations. Pearl, aiming the unrealistic for her family, possesses the functioning of the dominant

role in the marriage. Submitting himself to some extent, Beck struggles to reduce anxiety to some extent. Beck's dysfunctional underfunctioning is tried hard to be balanced by Pearl's overfunctioning, who assumes responsibility for the ideal family, which causes the ultimate cutoff. Limited to Pearl's view, he functions poorly at the wheel of the marriage and cannot provide emotional reinforcement for the family, which he himself lacks. He conceives the marriage as consumed by Pearl and finds a way to escape by abandoning her. It becomes clear that they are not responded to and accepted as they are. In fact, he claims that he has been consumed by Pearl who does not communicate. As they have started as mismatching spouses, they end up with disintegration. In the end, he emotionally separates from the family by claiming that it has worn him out. Emotional detachment led by emotional reactivity results in cutoff.

### **Impairment of Children**

Parents are the cornerstones for children in the path of building a concrete sense of self and high level of differentiation. In nuclear families, individuals possess an emotional system that is shaped over time and transmitted through generations. The higher the levels of functioning parents have, the higher the levels of differentiation of self can transmit to their children as children are thought to be the products of the same emotional systems. If parents have poor functioning resulting from anxiety, children, instinctually parallel, acquire a relatively low level of differentiation. It is important to emphasize that children acquire differentiation within the nuclear family; differentiation is not an attitude or trait that parents teach children. However, it is known that most of the characteristics of a person are formed during childhood and under the parents' influence most of the time. They hence play crucial roles in their functioning afterwards as well. It is examined as the projection of dysfunctionality onto children, and these children transmit it onto their children; it occurs in a multigenerational way that at least three generations may carry a relatively similar level of functioning. The poorly differentiated parents tend to cultivate poorly differentiated offspring. The anxious family atmosphere is best to look at the transmission of the poor functioning. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, the anxiety stems from the absent father and the controlling mother figure who raise three homesick children with poor differentiation of self.

The impairment of children is closely knitted with the presence of anxiety in the nuclear family. The Tull family is a typical dysfunctional family that portrays physically and emotionally disintegrated members. At the beginning of the story, it is revealed that Beck is constantly away from home, dealing with his business. He is pictured as the “invisible man” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 20). Being unavailable to his wife and children, Beck does not provide his parental duties to his children. Therefore, Pearl needs to hold the responsibility of being the mother and the father of the family. Being the only provider for children after Beck’s desertion, Pearl, who suffers from emotional detachment from the family of origin, struggles to continue to create the ideal family portrait. Her continuous attempts towards it result in a more anxious family environment where three children feel emotionally homeless. The failures and emotional suffering of home for children are evident in Pearl’s narration. She admits that “[s]omething [is] wrong with all of her children... [S]he sense[s] a kind of trademark flaw in each of their lives. Cody [is] prone to unreasonable rages; Jenny [is] so flippant; Ezra [does not] really live up to his potential” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 22). Each of the children suffers from parental deprivation from both parents: Pearl’s present absence, and Beck’s absent presence. Therefore, it is best to investigate the impact of these parents on their children separately.

One of the significant signs of children’s poor differentiation results from the lack of parents’ physical and emotional nourishment for children. Pearl unsuccessfully feeds Cody, Ezra, and Jenny as each turns out to be acquiring a different sense of food. Suggesting that food is essential –as the novel’s title emphasizes– in the novel, Croft (1994) supports that food is given as the “central metaphor for the emotional status” of the family members (pp. 147-8). During their childhood, working in a grocery store and being fed up with responsibilities, Pearl has difficulties in preparing food for them, what they eat is meals that are uncarefully cooked suppers by a frustrated mother many times. The shortage of feeding and emotional nourishment considerably affects children. Cody rarely eats his meals on a regular base; Jenny suffers from anorexia, and Ezra owns a restaurant with the name homesick.

Pearl acknowledges that Cody, Ezra, and Jenny have some flaws and each of them grows up with a severe defect: the absent father. Wanger (1990) explains that “the father hunger” in the Tull family affects each child discretely: Cody, being highly

aggressive, cuts off from Pearl; Ezra passively attaches to Pearl; Jenny emotionally detaches from Pearl and fails to achieve a satisfying marriage in her three trials (pp. 74-6). Furthermore, within the nuclear family, all the Tull children suffer from an angry mother. Cody talks about Pearl in a disgraceful manner that she has been a “witch”; Jenny knows that she is “a dangerous person”; Ezra feels the controlling and jealous way of her (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 294, 70, 94). It becomes apparent that when Cody flees away from home, he cuts off by rarely sending letters to or visiting them. As it has been highlighted in the previous section, along with growing up as a fatherless child, Cody’s undifferentiation mostly stems from Pearl’s inability to provide him emotional mothering and self-destructive attitudes caused by low self-esteem. And it leads him to dream of a proper motherlike picture of Pearl. That’s why it is beneficial to focus on the influence of Beck’s departure on Cody.

The most intensely visible impairment is that he suffers from low self-esteem. When Beck leaves the family, Cody is only fourteen and tries to find some excuses for his father’s desertion. He contemplates that his wrongdoings make Beck leave. Because of the unresolved conflict in childhood, his thoughts are centred around the yearning for his father. Unable to understand the reason behind his departure, Cody grows aggression and jealousy towards his mother and brother. And Pearl deepens his hostility with her harsh treatment of beating, and slapping him. Ezra passively becomes the victim of his practical jokes. These are inwardly caused by his guilty thoughts of being the reason for Beck’s leaving. Cody himself emphasizes that Beck has “uprooted the family continually... [R]uined their lives... [f]irst in one way and then in another” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 59). He is aware that being a fatherless child brings nothing but misery. In his understanding, Beck is the one who is responsible for his miserable and destitute childhood. In a complaining manner, he cries out “I’m in trouble; it’s all your fault. I’ve got a bad name, I need to leave town, you’ll have to take me in” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 59).

The emotional destitution of being a fatherless child also shows in Cody’s own marriage. As he has grown up with self-destructive attitudes and low self-esteem, he cannot trust his mother and brother. Similarly, he has no trust in his wife Ruth and his son Luke. Even though Cody intentionally set his family apart from Pearl and Ezra, he doubts his partner Ruth –stolen from Ezra– haunts him all the time that she still loves

Ezra. The dysfunctional trait is transmitted within the multigeneration transmission process that they cannot rely on their family of origin. The impact of growing as a fatherless child is seen through Luke's relationship with Cody. Cody's remarks about Luke whether Cody is his actual father highlight his low self-esteem and the inability to construct strong bonds with his own child. That he has lost the feeling of trust towards others is transmitted from the impairment resulted from his absent father. He has been incapable to establish strong family ties with his closest ones. The same trait is visible in Luke as well. As Luke's taste in music and appearance are alike to Ezra's, Cody inwardly grows hatred towards him as well. It is seen that Luke leaves the family and sets off to Baltimore to Ezra to flee away from Cody's rage and rivalry towards him and Ezra (Tyler, 1982/2008, pp. 230-4). Cody transmits the traits of his family of origin onto his own family.

In Jenny's case, the unmotherly treatment of Pearl and Beck's departure are influential in her development of emotional functioning. The lack of the emotional nourishment of Jenny can be best seen in the reaction of Slevin –one of Jenny's adopted children– towards Jenny's childhood picture. Slevin immediately frowns at the picture of when she is thirteen-year-old. He glances over the picture and unbelievably says, "[l]ook at it! Why, it's like a . . . concentration camp person, a victim, Anne Frank! It's terrible! It's so sad!" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 203). His claim is crucial to observe the lack of emotional treatment of Pearl and Beck towards children. Just like Cody and Ezra, she has been raised in an insecure environment in which the parents project their dysfunctioning on them to a great extent. When she becomes an adult, Jenny observes that she has acquired her mother's way of failing in marriages and treating children.

Jenny, the youngest child of the Tull family, also grows up with Pearl's rage. She leaves the family for college, becomes a paediatrician, and marries three times. As she has been raised by a fearful mother who has a tendency towards injury and by a missing father who makes her emotionally vulnerable, she seeks emotional attachment from other people. During childhood, she suffers from Pearl's severe nature and lack of emotional nourishment. In Jenny's view, Pearl is:

a dangerous person—hot breathed and full of rage and unpredictable... She[Jenny has] been called ‘serpent,’ ‘cockroach,’ ‘hideous little snivelling guttersnipe’ ....But she never feel[s] entirely secure, and at night, when Pearl place[s] a kiss on the centre of Jenny’s forehead, Jenny [goes] off to bed and dream[s] what she ha[s] always dreamed: her mother laugh[s] a witch’s shrieking laugh; drag[s] Jenny out of hiding as the Nazis tramped up the stairs... [In Jenny’s dreams] Her mother [tells] her, in an informative and considerate tone of voice, that she [is] raising Jenny to eat her. (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 70)

After Cody –for the college– and Ezra –for the army– leave the family, Jenny is left alone with their mother and inwardly feels quite unwell in the house. Thus, she tries hard to achieve a college degree outside of the home. And during her college education, she rarely visits home because of Pearl’s oppression as college is the way out for her freedom. While away from home, Jenny tries to replicate what she is short of: emotional attachment through a series of unsuccessful marriages. When she is at the college, she finds Harley Baines to get acquainted with and married to him. Observing his obsession and unloving attitude, Jenny breaks up with him and quickly remarries Sam Wiley. Sam acting disloyally also deserts her before their daughter Becky is born. In her two failed marriages, she senses the departure of Beck leaves the mark of being unloved and emotionally detached, and she has acquired the emotional feeling of rejection. Jenny admits her failures in marriage and claims that she is somehow short of the quality that allows her to keep a husband because she is “doomed to fail... [U]nlovable” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 208). Just like her mother, she fails in forming familial relationships with happy a husband that provides her with emotional support. The impact of lack of fatherly caring is a conflictual matter as she seeks emotional attachment that she has missed throughout her life. Jenny is in dire need of affectionate affairs to replicate the emotional detachment from her father.

The emotional damage is also caused by Pearl’s undernourishing treatment of Jenny, and she presents somehow similar characteristics of her mother to her own child Becky. After Jenny is abandoned by her second husband Sam, her anxiety increases to



a great extent. Being in an emotionally intense situation, she transmits her anxiety on her child by physically abusing her. To exemplify, while trying to feed Becky who rejects consuming, she “slam[s] Becky’s face into her Peter Rabbit dinner plate and [gives] her a bloody nose. She yank[s] a handful of her hair. All of her childhood [has] returned to her: her mother’s blows and slaps and curses” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 209). When Jenny finds it hard to feed her child, she does exactly what her mother used to do; she hits her child. Being emotionally and physically impaired by Pearl, Jenny abusively projects the dysfunctionality onto her own life as well. Interestingly, Becky suffers from the same disease as her mother does: anorexia.

Undoubtedly, the most severely impaired child from the emotional detachment is Ezra Tull who is the most favoured and least separated child of the Tulls. Being unaware of his sibling rivalry, Ezra is continuously competed and victimized by his older brother Cody, who is jealous of Pearl’s overemotional treatment of Ezra, does dirty jokes, and finally steals his fiancé away. He continuously attempts to gather all the family members at his homesick restaurant to emotionally nurture the Tull family which they suffer throughout their lives. Every one of his attempts results in failures that each time one of the members leaves the dinner table out of the blue. Being the child with whom Pearl is most involved, Ezra is the least separated emotionally and physically from his mother. The favourite child Ezra is always haunted by Cody as the mere rival to receive more attention from Pearl. Ezra is meek as a child and adult who goes through life as a liquid. Being deserted by Ruth the only woman he has ever loved, Ezra never leaves his mother, never marries, and carries on managing a restaurant partnered by Mrs. Scarlatti. Ezra takes the role of being the nurturer for his folk and others to sense food and home.

As it is told that Pearl is ineffective in providing food for her children in her angrily prepared dishes, Ezra has grown interest in being a feeder from his childhood and chooses a career of being the restaurant owner instead of going to college. He deeply enjoys preparing fanciful dishes for the family, which never manages to eat. He has therefore devoted his life to feeding people. In fact, he has been driven by the urge to fulfil the Tull family’s neediness for emotional nourishment. Spector (1997) claims that the outstanding trait that Ezra has is that he strives for providing people “with what they themselves have needed but never received” (p. 318). Thus, Ezra becomes

the feeder of the family, seeing that Pearl used to struggle with preparing food for them. Being the nurturer, it is told that Ezra is:

a feeder. He would set a dish before you and then stand there  
with his face expectant, his hands clasp tightly under his chin,  
his eyes following your fork. There [is] something tender,  
almost loving, about his attitude toward people who [a]re  
eating what he cook[s] them. (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 161)

It is extensively visible in his choice of naming the restaurant. His deliberate selection openly comes out from the lack of emotional attachment caused by the overly responsible mother and invisible father. The name homesick is deliberately selected to highlight that the restaurant serves “what people feel homesick for” (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 122). What Ezra serves for is what people need from their childhood: emotional attachment and family support. If anyone longs for home, the restaurant is the most homelike place where they can sense the homeliness. However, it is portrayed that Ezra’s constant trials to reunite the Tulls at the restaurant to demonstrate the complete family picture unavoidably result in failures due to some trivial quarrels among them. As they cannot have a mere dinner finished together, the failed dinners at the homesick restaurant display the Tulls’ emotional detachment and impairment transmitted onto children.

It is observed that the parents who have poor differentiation breed poorly differentiated children. As the transmission process goes along with generations, the dysfunctionality of the nuclear families that results in impaired children stems from the dysfunctional and non-nurturer parents. With three homesick children that each is attributed by various connotations, the Tull family presents a good example of dysfunctionality in terms of lack of emotional attachment and support. The lack of emotional nourishment is the basic dysfunctional projection of the poor differentiation in the Tull children. Cody, Ezra, and Jenny are intensely influenced by the severe nature of Pearl and the absence of Beck. Each of the children is emotionally distracted in childhood by their mother’s physical and verbal abuse. As it has been discussed that Cody is the oldest child the most severely affected by his mother’s temper, Ezra and Jenny are also involved in Pearl’s harsh treatment. Being the only available parent, Pearl transmits her anger onto her children to a great extent. Being the absent figure,

Beck leads children to suffer from the father hunger. These dysfunctionalities are visible in the multigenerational process of the Tull family: Cody's son Luke has a similar look to Ezra whom Cody is damagingly victimized, and Jenny's daughter Becky has the similar illness anorexia as her mother. It can be said that poorly differentiated offspring are products of poorly differentiated parents.

### **Emotional Distance**

Nuclear family emotional system postulates that dysfunctional families are prone to cut off emotionally and physically due to poor differentiation and anxiety. The emotional distance takes place if anxiety increases to a very high level that the spouses and children cannot bear and avoid being in contact with each other. As it has been asserted, the emotional distance is the cause of conflicts rising among spouses and children that they emotionally withdraw themselves from the relationship to decrease anxiety. The lower the differentiation of self an individual acquires, the higher possibility the family involves in the emotional distance. Dysfunctionality in nuclear families is visible in the conflictual spouses who present unstable selves. Having a concrete sense of self and high functioning, the highly differentiated individuals can adapt to the anxiety, and these individuals are less prone to develop emotional dysfunctions and suffer from emotional and physical distance. However, the poorly differentiated and conflictual spouses in the conflictual marriages suffer from the inability to give in in order to comprise and get rid of anxiety since the less differentiation brings about the instinctual urge to be either fused in or separated from familial relationships. Emotional distance hence results from the emotional immaturity each of the spouses has acquired and seen the conflicts in the family as unbearable burden. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, the marriage of Pearl and Beck presents emotional and physical distance resulting from the spouses' lack of emotional attachment.

The emotional distance between the spouses stems from their incompetence to respond to each other. As being available to one another is crucial for sustaining emotional attachment within the family, the spouses who cannot provide it tend to avoid interacting with each other. It gradually leads to develop anxiety because of unspoken resentments. In time, these spouses lose their emotional contact in the family

as they become reactionless towards each other, and they inevitable cut off from each other. The relationship of Pearl and Beck suitably demonstrates the mechanism of emotional distance. As it is told, their marriage has been built upon Pearl's futile attempts to form an ideally functional family that each member loves, cares for, shows respect to, and is dependent on only each other. However, the Tull family presents not an ideal but a dysfunctional family in which each member feels disintegrated: the father deserts, the mother burns out, children are emotionally short of attachment.

The basic reason for the emotional distance in the Tulls is that they emotionally suffer from Beck's unavailability to the family. In the beginning, although Pearl is inwardly aware that the flamboyant and conceited Beck is not a well-matched partner, she accepts to marry him due to her folks' pressure and his wooing. They hastily happen to marry and start moving out because of Beck's job. As he works as a salesman for the Tanner Corporation, he is required to change places a lot. They initially move out together; however, in his travels after they have Cody, he leaves Pearl alone at home. Pearl longs for his arrival and naturally expects emotional warmth from her husband. Yet, what Beck does is the opposite; he only talks about his business and emotionally ignores Pearl. Beck is "so busy with the Tanner Corporation, away from home more often than not, and even when home always [he is] fuming over business" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 4). Later, being constantly left alone by Beck, Pearl grows the feeling of disconnection from her partner, and her suspicion about his travels and distrust begin that she feels retreated and admits, that Beck is not a trustworthy person anymore (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 8). The distrust indicates the emotional separation they feel over time.

It is observed that even though their marriage has been going on for sixteen years, they have been unable to emotionally connect to each other and speak the same language of feelings because they do not communicate, even they communicate. On the day of Beck's leaving, Pearl admits that "the purest fact of her life" is that she has never understood Beck, it is evident that both speak "a whole separate language" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 10). It becomes clear that the marriage has been conflictual from the start, and they lack responding to each other. The emotional silencing results in distancing gradually as Beck eventually announces that he "[does]not want to stay married" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 9). Surely, the decision is taken because of the

unspoken resentments. It is seen that Beck has no strong family bonds that may hold him in the same home with Pearl. Due to both his and Pearl's poor differentiation, they have been unable to resolve conflicts that increase anxiety through comprehending and meeting each other's needs. The unresolved conflicts significantly influence their dysfunctioning; they avoid emotional contact and cut off.

The emotional and physical distance is caused by the incapacity to understand each other's feeling in Pearl and Beck's marriage. It is seen in Beck's justification of his departure that Pearl "wore [him]out... Used up all my [Beck's] good points" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 300). The wearing out is closely related to Pearl's idealism of family that Beck needs to be emotionally available to her. As Pearl's damaging and failing attempts increase the anxiety in the family, Beck feels the need to emotionally and physically limit himself to Pearl. As he eventually avoids adapting himself to the relationship with Pearl, Beck deserts her and their children instead of compromising with her and stating what he thinks and feels. He reduces physical contact. Therefore, he tries to get rid of the anxiety by deserting his family. Beck explains that what he cannot take anymore is "greyness of things; half-right-and-half-wrongness of things. Everything [is] tangled, mingled" (Tyler, 1982/2008, p. 301). He perceives that they do not accommodate any emotional response to each other.

The emotional distance is the indicator of the spouses' undifferentiation. The conflictual family of the Tulls depicts Pearl and Beck's emotional detachment from each other. Consequently, suffering from the emotional closeness to each other and family of origin, they have been unable to construct strong spousal ties. They lack one of the essential necessities: responding to each other. Beck physically withdraws himself from Pearl for calming their relationship which results in more dysfunctioning in themselves and their children. As they are poorly differentiated individuals, they have difficulties to adapt themselves to the anxious family environment, and they eventually end up with avoiding emotional contact in order to reduce their anxiety and distance from each other.

## CONCLUSION

In the present thesis, *The Accidental Tourist* and *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* have been closely read and investigated to reveal the dys/functioning of the selected characters on the basis of the influence of the family institution on their reciprocal interactions with other members and to be able to disclose selected characters' levels of differentiation of self on Bowen's scale of differentiation of self and their dys/functionality according to four mechanisms of nuclear family emotional system. The main purpose was to evaluate the noticeable characters on the theoretical scale in order to find out if the level of differentiation of self from the family of origin determines individuals' functionality in both childhood and adulthood and to identify if nuclear families repress and impair spouses and children. In Tyler's selected works, it has been observed that the application of selected concepts of BFST gives us the opportunity to search for how families emotionally nourish and suppress individuals and how individuals acquire similar characteristics within the family and repeat similar actions in their adult life.

In the first chapter, the study has revealed that one's differentiation of self is innately built in the family environment; it is not easy to change it as the emotional functioning pace which evolutionarily emerged is slow. It can be surmised that differentiation of self is one's self-efficacy to think, feel and act, and possession of the high adaptiveness to cope with anxiety without being fused within the family and acquisition of self-determined and inner-directed goals. The higher the levels of differentiation individuals have, the higher the functionality they acquire, the better they adapt to the stressful family environment, and the quicker they are to restore the emotional disharmony. Well-differentiated people are autonomous, capable of adapting to stress and compromising with other family members instead of emotionally cutting themselves off from them. However, poorly differentiated people are emotionally reactive and dependent on others' emotional functioning; during high anxiety, they tend to either cut themselves off from or fuse within the family. For the analysis, Bowen's scale of differentiation of self, the theoretical measurement that assigns scores from 0 to 100 to determine one's adaptiveness, was used. It was carried out on Macon and Muriel from *the Accidental Tourist* and Pearl and Cody from *Dinner*

at the *Homesick Restaurant* to demonstrate what traits are seen and how these traits influence them in their relationship with the other family members. During the character analysis, three ranges out of four of the scale have been determined to present the characters' emotional functioning and differentiation from the family of origin.

Driven by the emotional reactivity and neediness of others, Cody in *Dinner at Homesick Restaurant* has scored in the range of 0-25, which shows complete undifferentiation. He is pictured as the eldest child and as the child most impaired by the parents' dysfunctioning. It has been indicated that Cody is easily disturbed during emotionally intense situations, and the disturbance has a severe impact in his adult life. He constantly clashes with his wife Ruth and his son Luke and is incapable of maintaining a prosperous and healthy family life. Cody severely suffers from his father's absence and his mother's favouritism towards his brother. These dysfunctional traits lead his functioning to gradually decrease and to self-sabotaging thoughts caused by low self-esteem. Furthermore, Macon in *The Accidental Tourist* and Pearl in *Dinner at Homesick Restaurant* have scored in the range of 25-50. It is seen that the protagonists of the novels acquire dysfunctional traits; therefore, they are poorly differentiated individuals. Macon holds the Learyism philosophy, which conveys the static and unchanging practices and is closed to the outer world. Pearl carries the emotional detachment from her family of origin and tries hard to accomplish an ideal family portrait of her own. Being deserted by their spouses, both Macon and Pearl are reactively anxious and fail to respond to their partners. It has been put forward that they have a budding capacity to function within the family, and their functioning mostly depends on the approval or criticism of others. Having a lack of self-determination, Macon and Pearl fuse into the family relationship and close themselves to the outer world due to being unable to form a concrete sense of self. They hence construct pseudo self through a rudder during less emotionally intense situations. However, it is seen that they mostly dysfunction in anxious family environments and project their anxiety onto the other family members. The dysfunctionality of these protagonists has revealed that they lack the standpoint of the differentiated *I*.

On the other hand, Muriel in *The Accidental Tourist* has scored in the range of 50-75, which demonstrates a moderate differentiation she acquires from the original family. Having a close relationship with Macon, Muriel is portrayed as a fairly

differentiated character with her self-determined life goals and is an appreciated person because of her accomplishments. It is seen that as Macon lives with Muriel, she temporarily leaves her job and becomes financially dependent on him. Muriel suffers from temporary anxiety, and Macon complains about her sloppiness. However, realizing that this may increase anxiety in their relationship, she steps back and relieves the anxiety by acknowledging her independent position. She is quick in recovering from the anxiety. Even though she comes from a disadvantaged environment, she has succeeded in overcoming life issues, growing a sick child, and following her dreams. Unlike 25-50 Macon, Muriel is aware of her position as an individual who has acquired a high level of differentiation from her family of origin and functions on her own self-sufficient nature. The study has revealed that no characters in the studied novels score the range of 75-100 on the scale, as they cannot be fully functional and have complete differentiation in the dysfunctional families: the Learys and Tulls. Overall, according to Bowen's scale of differentiation of self, most of the characters (Macon, Pearl, and Cody) studied in this thesis are dysfunctional due to their undifferentiation from their family of origin. This shows that dysfunctional families breed dysfunctional individuals. In parallel, on the same scale, Muriel, who comes from a moderately functional family, has scored in the range of 50-75, which means that she has significantly better differentiation than the other characters in the novel. The character analysis of Muriel has shown that the more functional a family is, the better individuals from that family function and the more they are differentiated and able to use the differentiated *I* language.

In the second chapter, the thesis has examined four patterns of nuclear family emotional system and demonstrated that conflictual marriages are prone to cutting off emotionally and physically due to unresolved issues that generate anxiety within the family. In nuclear families, differentiation of self and the level of anxiety play a critical role in the functioning of spouses and children. The study has focused on the nuclear families in Tyler's selected works: Macon and Sarah, and Beck and Pearl. The application of the four mechanisms of nuclear family emotional system has shown that the mentioned nuclear families that consist of poorly differentiated spouses parallelly dysfunction and emotionally distance themselves from the marriage in order to reduce



anxiety. The spouses tend to cut themselves off from each other instead of coaching the other spouses and children.

It has been observed that the nuclear families in Tyler's chosen works undergo the marital conflict in which each of them believes that the other partner needs to change their attitudes and, in that way, the issue –anxiety– can be solved. Thus, no spouse gives in, and anxiety increases. In *The Accidental Tourist*, it has been indicated that Sarah believes that Macon is supposed to provide her with comfort over the issue of their son's death; Macon thinks in the same way; however, none of them attempts to be incorporated in it, and their marriage becomes more anxious. Furthermore, in times of anxiety, one spouse takes the role of being overfunctioning and the other underfunctioning. Macon carries the Leary family traits –being closed, deadening cocoon–, and Sarah is critical of his aloofness. In several scenes, it is seen that she becomes the dominant spouse in which every initiative is taken by her, not Macon. It hence leads him to be fused into the relationship and ends up with no self and being driven by her functioning. Additionally, it has been asserted that conflictual spouses with poor differentiation impair their children. Raised by Macon and Sarah, Ethan is likely to acquire poor differentiation because of the transmission of their dysfunctional traits. He is not openly pictured in the story, but it is perceived through the parents' accounts that Ethan most probably bears his family traits, as the apple does not fall far from the tree. Eventually, the abovementioned patterns bring about the emotional distance in the family. Macon and Sarah get divorced due to increasing anxiety and inability to adapt to stressful situations and inability to restore the emotional harmony in their marriage. The analysis has shown that Tyler's selected nuclear families that are closed to the outer world impair both the spouses and offspring and severely decrease their functionality to act and think in their own way. The poorly differentiated spouses in these conflictual nuclear families fail to maintain emotional equilibrium.

Pearl and Beck's nuclear family mostly bears similar characteristics of dysfunctional family traits caused by the undifferentiation of the family. The marital conflict seen in their family results from emotional inaccessibility. Beck is mostly away on business; Pearl struggles to keep him nearby. They clash on Pearl's ideal family concept because Pearl demands him to leave the job he loves, but he insists on moving on. Both are insufficient to comprehend and give emotional comfort to each

other. However, in some scenes in their earlier interactions, it is seen that Beck becomes the submissive spouse while Pearl takes the front stage of steering the marriage. Beck tries to achieve what Pearl dreams of the ideal family portrait. However, it results in Beck's complete fusion and departure in the end since he realizes that he cannot meet Pearl's standards. Surely, these conflictual parents have a very critical role in their children's emotional undernourishment. Cody, Ezra, and Jenny suffer from the acts of the dysfunctionality of their parents because of the shortage of access to parental love and caring. The absent father and damagingly controlling mother cause these children to be homesick eventually. It has been observed that Pearl verbally and physically abuses the children, which leads each to develop poor differentiation. Consequently, it is seen that the Tulls' conflictual issues that cause anxiety lead the family members to distance themselves emotionally and physically from each other. It has resulted from Pearl and Beck's low level of differentiation of self since they emotionally and physically cut themselves off from the family instead of compromising. According to the analysis, the selected nuclear families negatively affect their members in a way that constructs a prosperous and harmonious family environment for neither parents nor children.

According to the analysis of the selected novels of Anne Tyler, it can be stated that the family environment is the base for one's personal development. The study has shown that these two novels share similar dysfunctional traits that the selected families transmit onto the products. In each novel, Tyler's approach to the family (dys)functionality is that the characters who acquire dys/functional features from their families of origin face similar dysfunctional traits in their lives. The poorly differentiated Leary and Tull families pave the way to the poorly differentiated children. It can be put forward that Tyler's point of view is that the lower the family functionality, the more likely the anxious family environment occurs, and the less flexible it becomes for the members. The lower the level of differentiation of self of the parents, the lower the level of their children. In this sense, it can be concluded that Tyler's point of view correlates with Bowen's on the basis of the functionality of the family that dysfunctional children are the products of dysfunctional parents. It is also significant to note that the Bowen theory does not differentiate the functionality of males and females. This study has shown that the theory is genderblind.

In the light of these findings, it can be clarified that the selected individuals portrayed in Tyler's selected works are alike to their families of origin in terms of their functioning. The family setting determines one's high or low level of differentiation of self because the family members function in reaction to the others. The lower the family's differentiation is, the lower the adaptiveness to stress is. The poorly differentiated individuals find it challenging to maintain emotional harmony in their relationships. Unlike Muriel, who is found out to be outside of this position, the Learys and Tulls are dysfunctional families in terms of transmitting dysfunctional traits such as living in their own deadening cocoon and hindering the potentiality of the offspring to function on their own selves. It can be inferred from the selected characters and conflictual marriages portrayed by Anne Tyler that individuals who are raised in dysfunctional families often acquire similar dysfunctional characteristics with their nuclear and multigenerational families. Dysfunctional traits of parents in nuclear families repress individuals to construct an autonomous and differentiated self. Therefore, it can be concluded that these families are traps for the personal development of the individuals as these families breed offspring who are essentially alike to them. The world around us is full of traces of Tyler's prominent characters portrayed in her dysfunctional families, and what makes her voice so strong is her realistic approach to picturing the everyday lives of ordinary people. Having come to know and understand the characters, it is discovered that their families are, indubitably, our own families.

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## CV

### **Personal Information:**

Name and Surname: Mehmet AKGÜL

### **Educational Background:**

High-School: Hakkâri Anatolian High School, Hakkâri, Turkey

Bachelor of Arts: English Language and Literature, Akdeniz University, Antalya, Turkey



## ÖZGEÇMİŞ

### **Kişisel Bilgiler**

Adı ve Soyadı: Mehmet AKGÜL

### **Eğitim Durumu**

Lise: Hakkâri Anadolu Lisesi, Hakkâri, Türkiye

Lisans: İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Antalya, Türkiye

