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### The Domino Effect

Every individual born in this world for a reason, with a destiny based on the decisions or so choices the individual makes. All of us tend to think about how things would have turned out differently, if one did something another way, if one chose another path. This intertwines the fates of individuals in the web of choices and creates a complex, colorful tapestry known as life. Every selection one makes from their spectrum of options not only affects their own 'kismet' or future, but also brings about a change for the ones around them in some way or the other. The writer makes choices which forms the narrative, but the fact he/she does so makes the reader think about what if the writer had gone the other way. The small decisions the writer makes about how his/her story develops greatly influences the way the reader perceives it. In the book *People of Paper*, the choices so made by Salvador, be it the way he wrote the story, or even wrote the story in the first-place due to the departure of his lover shapes the way the story is so perceived and understood by the writer.

The way the writer sequences the story heavily affects the way the reader comprehends it. In the *People of Paper*, from the very first chapter we can see the way Salvador is talking about how things turn out for the better or the worst. This can be seen in the television show *How I met your mother?* which is a series of flashbacks, where a father tells his children about he met their mother. Throughout the course of the show, the main character Ted Mosby makes emphasis on

the fact that how different things would have turned out if they hadn't happened so and even shows glimpses of the alternate futures. Specifically, in the episode *Right Place, Right Time*, Ted recollects the chain of events which led him to being in the right place for a metamorphic encounter. Each small occurrence affected the way things turned out in a rather large manner. From the very first chapter of the book itself, the reader sees that Federico wonders about how life would have been if he had discovered the marvel which cured his bedwetting a year earlier specifically 'Federico de la Fe's only regret was that he had not discovered fire ten years earlier.' (Saturn, pg 20). He wishes that would have happened so that his wife would still be with him, Little Merced would still have a mother. As the story progresses, the reader tends to realize that the departure of his wife from their lives is what caused them to move to El Monte in the first place. If they hadn't moved to California, there wouldn't have been a breach in the fourth wall and the story wouldn't have turned out the way it progressed. It's interesting to think how the events would have turned out if an alternative happened instead of the other, but the fact that the events happened so, helps to form an image of the character in the mind of reader, the way the writer intended. In the episode of the series so mentioned above, there's a line said 'There's a lot of little reasons, why the big things in our lives happen', this line can be related to the book in a way that the reasons the reader realizes so as to why the book was written so is in the book itself. In Part 2 of the book, the reason so as to why Saturn/Plascencia wrote about the departure of Little Merced's mother as he went through the exact same thing in his personal life, with the departure of Liz (his lover). The reader sees the distress he went through when he practically gave up on continuing the story such as 'But when I came to see Saturn he was no longer in control. He did not have the foresight to see to see that I was coming, nor did he care. He had surrendered the story and his power as narrator.' (Smiley, Page 103) and 'Although

Saturn was now blind to the progression of the story and what was to come...'(Smiley, Page 105). These quotes portray the kind of distress the author was under, how he had just given up. The reason Salvador wrote the story is to establish an element of reality into the rather magical story. The main aim of the author is for the reader to be able to relate to the characters in story and imagine themselves in their shoes, in this case, his(Saturn's) shoes. The situation he so wrote about is easy for the readers to relate to, as usually when one loses a loved one, goes through a break up, one tends to feel the emotion of helplessness and a sort of weakness which disables from doing anything, and this is so beautifully portrayed throughout the book.

From Part 2 of the book, the reader develops an emotion of sympathy for the author realizing the reasons why he wrote the book so. He does so by relating the events so taking place to his own life happenings and adding a human touch to the rather magical story. This can be seen specifically 'Saturn sat down and explained that there are many characters, plots and devices, and in the jumble of things sometimes minor characters are forgotten, even by the author.', basically showing that every decision or idea which comes to the mind of the author, in this case Saturn, not only affects the author and his book, but also the characters in the book, who are now deemed as real as due to the breach in the fourth wall by Smiley. The book may have been written differently if Liz hadn't broken up with Plascencia and that would have brought a change in the turn of events which took place later, just as if a row of dominoes would fall if the first one is given a slight push like when said 'Saturn would end the war, tumble all the columns, even if it meant his own destruction. He was tired of the martial life, tired of wars spurred by lost love.' (Saturn,Pg 238). Saturn/Salvador himself seems to think about how long lasting and tiring the entire thing has been, and wonders about the alternate futures so possible. After the characters seem to break through the fourth wall, specifically Federico wants to take

matters into his own hands and have absolute control. In the beginning of Part 3, after the book is begun to be rewritten, we notice the initial silence of Saturn/Salvador (Saturn, Page 146,148,150), and things to some extent seem to be settling down in El Monde to some extent. As he continues writing, Salvador realizes that however he writes the book, the characters are never going to be content or satisfied with what is written specifically ‘This was the fate of women who know too much, women who can upset the pride of Saturn. Because ultimately Saturn is a tyrant, commanding the story where he wants it to go. That is why they fight against him, why they hide under lead and try to push him to the margins. But Cameroon was just one, not a gang or an army – easily flicked from an African cliff.’ (Cameroon, Pg 228). He will always be subjected to disagreement and ridicule from them with whatever change is so made, as he proves to be sort of a tyrant or dictator, they are never truly free. He is not the only one who realizes this, and we can see that when Federico walks out of the pages of the story towards the end of the book, to never be heard of again. The characters and the author realize that irreversibility of events is not something which is not easily achievable, no alternate future is ever going to be perfect, so it’s better to accept fate as it is and try to make the upcoming future amicable for all. Now this lesson is clearer to the reader as he/she approaches the end of the book, as we start off with a rather ambiguity at the start of the book not realizing who all the characters are. Till Part 1, Saturn is seen only as kind of a narrator but the reader grows to understand that he is none other than the author himself. The author does so to bring a glimpse of real life and humanity in the story increasing the factor of relatability. The entire story till then had rather magical elements such as the love making of a lady made of paper with a man in Chapter 6 specifically ‘I am sorry, Ramon.....I’m fine, just a little blood...’. (Ramon Barreto, Pg 75). This entire thought of a lady made of paper having sex is just imaginative, but the fact

that the man she is having intercourse with gets paper cuts due to her being made of paper adds a touch of reality to the story. This is to maintain the genre of metafiction with the element of realism, magical realism to be specific but also help the reader realize how the character, in this case Ramon must have felt while having sex with Merced De Papel. The decision of establishing the realm and environment created by the author heavily shaped how we the readers understood the book. If he hadn't done so, the reader would rather just think that the entire story is preposterous and deem it as ridiculous. By doing so, the reader imagines to be present in the realm so created by the author than our own and hence changes the way we perceive the story.

A similar parallel is seen in *The Sound of Thunder* by Ray Bradbury. It is shown that unknowingly crushed butterfly causes such a drastic change that even the English language is spoken and written differently. A series of subtle and rather negligible changes have affected the essence of the alternative present. The reader notices that every move one makes or doesn't make affects their respective futures in some way or the other. In *Sound of Thunder*, it's shown that one may not even notice their actions at times and how much change a single action can make. The alternative present may or may not be the best all the time, it's best to think one's decisions through and analyze their options carefully before making any decisions. The main similarity between the *Sound of Thunder* and *People of Paper* lies in the fact of how the characters in the book react to the changes which so occurred, they all want it to be reversed. Each set of characters have their own individual hope that what has happened can be reversed, which in both cases proves to be false hope later. In *Sound of Thunder*, Eckel desperately wants to undo the big change which just the small butterfly caused and in the *People of Paper*, the main cause of the rebellion or battle against Saturn is that the characters want certain events to be changed. In both cases, the conclusion so comprehended is that reversibility is not achievable. The difference was

that in *People of Paper*, the characters seem to come in terms with their fate but there is a huge fragment of despair and regret in the mind of Eckel in *Sound of Thunder*. Bradbury employs the element of irony into his story, as Travis and Eckel travel back into the past mainly to experience the least amount of change in the future, but a small butterfly which is practically insignificant causes such a massive change in the future. Irony cannot be inferred in *The People of Paper*, but both works are based on the fact that there lies a hope to undo what has already been done, but the hope is doomed in *Sound of Thunder* whereas there are efforts so made when the book is begun to be rewritten for the latter.

A similar parallel for the same can be seen in the main crux of the poem *The Road not taken* by Robert Frost. Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* makes one think about how things would have turned out if things took place differently but no one knows even if the alternate future is the best alternate of all and we can see this throughout the course of *The People of Paper* specifically in the quotes so shown above. The Road not taken is personification for the statement that the choices an individual makes a difference in their futures and also of the people around them, which can be related to the fact that the choices the writer makes affects the story as a whole and the characters as well. This quote 'Emancipation has many paths, some with more ruckus than others, but the quiet mediation of monks had failed us. We surrendered silence and opened our mouths, saying whatever we wished under open air. After all these pages, as Saturn faded, it was our voices that directed the story, our collective might pressing Saturn into a corner.' (Sandra, Pg 216) shows that the characters are aware of the fact that their lives are controlled by Saturn/Salvador, but are ready to achieve freedom from the same. This helps the audience understand the importance of the choices the author makes and how it changes the

course of the story in terms of both affecting the characters and as well as the progression of the story.

Writers usually have the creative freedom to manipulate the ways their characters react to different situations, but a good writer always thinks about which storyline would quickly grasp the attention of the readers, as there is always a minimum of two alternatives to most situations. Every small decision the writer helps the story progress differently, as each alternative progresses to a different chain of events. This makes one think about the value of our thoughts in time. An individual's way of thinking affects not only his or her own destiny, but the seals the fate of the many mortals who are not to be necessarily in relation with the being. The other option always seems better after the deed is done, but one needs to realize that every decision we make shapes us as an individual and makes us stronger in our own will and power.

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