

Artículo

VI Coloquio de Investigación en Comunicación
La comunicación en tiempos de incertidumbre

Kashmiri Females Facing Uncertainty in Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring*

Mujeres Kashmiris frente a la incertidumbre en Rumores de primavera de Farah Bashir

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Abstract

This paper explores how and to what effect uncertainty is communicated in the Kashmiri memoir *Rumours of Spring* by Farah Bashir. The research is part of an ongoing project that shares the perspective of a group of academics from South Asia and Mexico on gender, borderlands, discrimination, sexuality and violence through the work of female writers from both regions. The framework for this research is inspired by Van der Bles et al. (2019) adaptation of Lasswell's classic model of communication for studying epistemic uncertainty. Although their research questions were appropriate for our purposes, their parameters were not always applicable or sufficient. It was necessary to highlight how Bashir's competence for identifying, internalizing and depicting corporal reactions through sensorial and psychological images paint a vivid dramatic picture of the presence and consequences of trauma and uncertainty, often focusing on dynamic actions with kinetic relevance. This approach humanizes all the consequences of uncertainty and enhances an emotional reception. Data concerning significant behavioral changes reinforce the devastating trauma. Frequently Bashir's work produced both compassion and empathy from readers as expressed in reviews on the digital platforms analyzed. However, her subjective style produced a few negative commentaries from those who presumably did not share her personal perspective suggesting this style is perhaps not the adequate vehicle for communicating to critics.

Keywords: Kashmir, Farah Bashir, female representation, uncertainty

Resumen

Este artículo explora cómo y con qué efecto se comunica la incertidumbre en la crónica kashmiri Rumores de primavera de Farah Bashir. La investigación es parte de un proyecto en curso que comparte la perspectiva de un grupo de académicos del sur de Asia y México sobre género, zonas fronterizas, discriminación, sexualidad y violencia a través del trabajo de escritoras de ambas regiones. El marco de esta investigación está inspirado en la adaptación del modelo clásico de comunicación de Lasswell que realizó Van der Bles et al. (2019) para estudiar la incertidumbre epistémica. Aunque las preguntas de investigación del modelo fueron útiles para nuestros propósitos, sus parámetros no siempre resultaron aplicables o suficientes. Fue necesario resaltar cómo la competencia de Bashir para identificar, internalizar y representar reacciones corporales a través de imágenes sensoriales y psicológicas pinta un cuadro vívido y dramático de la presencia y las consecuencias del trauma y la incertidumbre, a menudo centrándose en acciones dinámicas con relevancia cinética. Este enfoque humaniza las consecuencias de la incertidumbre y potencia el aspecto emocional de la recepción. Los datos sobre cambios significativos de comportamiento refuerzan el trauma devastador. Frecuentemente, el trabajo de Bashir produjo tanto compasión como empatía por parte de los lectores, como se expresa en las reseñas en las plataformas digitales analizadas. Sin embargo, el estilo subjetivo de Bashir produjo algunos comentarios negativos de quienes al parecer no compartían su perspectiva personal, sugiriendo que este estilo tal vez no sea el vehículo adecuado para comunicarse con los críticos.

Palabras clave: Kashmir, Farah Bashir, Representación femenina, incertidumbre

Introduction: Facing uncertainty in the Kashmiri memoir *Rumours of Spring* by Farah Bashir

This paper explores how and to what effect uncertainty is communicated in the Kashmiri memoir *Rumours of Spring* by Farah Bashir. The research is part of an ongoing project that shares the perspective of a group of academics from South Asia and Mexico on gender, borderlands, discrimination, sexuality and violence through the work of female writers from both regions. The project entitled *Zan*, analyzing literary works from these areas, encompasses academic research as well as artistic practice. *Zan* received the support of an artistic fellowship from CEIIDA, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Mexico in 2021.

In the first stage of the project the group of scholars from Mexico and South Asia interacted online, reading female writers from both areas. *Rumours of Spring* was selected by one of the participants from the region of Kashmir to represent the experience lived by women of her locality. The author was born and raised in Kashmir, formerly worked as a photojournalist for Reuters and currently works as a communications consultant. Although there are multiple memoirs that narrate what people have faced in the heavily militarized area of Kashmir where there is a lot of political unrest, for example: Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2008), the work of Bashir is unique in that the non-fiction story is told from the viewpoint of a teenage girl and the way in which she internalizes the violence surrounding her.

Theoretical framework

The framework for this research is inspired by Van der Bles et al. (2019) adaptation of Lasswell's classic model of communication for studying epistemic uncertainty by focusing on who is communicating, what is being communicated, in what form uncertainty is communicated, communicated to whom, and communicated to what effect; their method has been adjusted for the study of a literary memoir. When dealing with each of these research questions, the applicability of their adaptation and relevant parameters will be examined.

Van de Bles et al (2019, p. 2) define uncertainty as follows:

Uncertainty is all-pervasive in the world, and we regularly communicate this in everyday life. We might say we are uncertain when we are unable to predict the future, we cannot decide what to do, there is ambiguity about what something

means, we are ignorant of what has happened or simply for a general feeling of doubt or unease.

Their investigation is centered on case studies of climate change and economic statistics; in *Rumours of Spring* uncertainty is moreover associated with trauma, violence and vulnerability leading to quite drastic consequences, even loss of life. Nevertheless, Van der Bles's (2019) adaptation permits an interesting assessment of how and to what effect uncertainty is being communicated.

Methodology

The relevance of each of their five research questions is analyzed along with their designation of corresponding factors. In the event that additional parameters pertain, for example: context in the rubric *who is communicating*, this is explained. Factors for *in what form uncertainty is being communicated* must also be redefined and expanded. Results include an answer to our research objective as well as an appreciation of the extent to which Van de Bles's (2019) approach is pertinent.

Who is communicating

The author Farah Bashir remembers difficult moments through the perspective of her adolescent years. Van der Bles et al. (2019, p. 3) underline the importance of the people assessing the uncertainty and realizing the communication. In our research, this corresponds basically to the author as she remembers her own, her grandmother's and other family members' recollections. In Van der Bles's words, they are *the owners of the uncertainty*. In this case, the context of communication is all important for an adequate appreciation of the *who is doing* the communicating due to the fact that the author focuses on a personal perspective *vis a vis* this uncertainty and its consequences rather than uncertainty's factual sources. Thus, the context is necessary as the milieu where the author's narrative is situated.

Context of communication

The area known as Kashmir is a region in South Asia surrounded by the Himalaya mountains. The territory was a princely kingdom before their independence from the British government and a multicultural and multilingual region in which most of the population was Muslim, although there also were Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. The locals spoke Kashmiri, Dogra, Hindi-Urdu, English and Balti, amongst other languages. The Kashmir, famous for its rich culture, the beauty of the mountains and landscape, has been the scene of devastating political conflict as well.

In 1947 two separate independent countries were created: India and Pakistan. The region of Kashmir was disputed and divided between the two emerging nations. The local leaders had envisioned creating an independent country or an autonomous state within the Indian Union (Punjabi, 1995, p. 47). The Indian government agreed on a plebiscite to allow the Kashmiris on their side to determine whether they wanted to be a part of India or not. The future of Kashmir was uncertain. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution established the terms of Kashmir's relationship to India by granting a degree of autonomy to the state and conferring it a "special status" (Duschinski et al., 2018, p. 15). Nevertheless, the population of this state was never given the opportunity to participate in the plebiscite as promised.

Kashmir became the location of military encounters between India and Pakistan and at the same time, a place of political tensions with the central Indian government. Although this dynamic lasted decades, in 1987 the elections in Kashmir were viewed as severely manipulated by the national government, causing severe resentment and revolt among the young population (Ganguly 2001). This situation led to mobilizations and riots across the territory. In 1989, armed groups known as militants, were demanding independence from India and fought with the Indian security forces (Webb 2012). The Indian government sought to crush the rebellion through a massive counterinsurgency assault against the insurgent and civilian populations, deploying more than 700,000 military and paramilitary forces in the region. (Duschinski et al., 2018). The militarization deepened the unresolved issues rooted in the history of Kashmir. It is in this very context at the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties that the narrative of Bashir is situated.

Over time, the organizations involved in the conflict have changed; on both sides of the spectrum there are both secular and more radical Islamic groups. The government

has forcefully responded with strategies to control separatist movements. The number of militant groups grew and clashes between ideologically opposed groups became more common (Webb 2012). The civilians had to persevere under these extenuating circumstances. "Since the 1990s, words such as "crackdowns," "curfews," "encounters," "hideouts," "bombs," and "Kalashnikovs" (referring to AK-47s) have become part of the Kashmiri lexicon, signaling a new normalcy in which space, place, and language reflect the everyday experience" (Duschinski et al., 2018, p. 12). The activity of the militia and militarization have had terrible consequences on the regular life of the people.

The inhabitants of Kashmir have greatly suffered from the violence and instability of the area. The report *Kashmir Violence and Health* from Médecins Sans Frontières (Jong et al., 2006) takes 1989 as the starting point of their survey in which almost half of the people interviewed declared that they had felt unsafe frequently; two thirds had experienced or witnessed physical or psychological mistreatment and nearly half reported physical or mental health issues affecting their ability to carry out daily activities. Sadly, this information shows the distress in which people have been living and this is the backdrop of *Rumours of Spring*.

To whom is being communicated

The audience for this communication will not be uniform, in regard to Van der Bles' (2029, 3) criteria: the characteristics of the audience, their relationship to the communication and/or the people being communicating with. The book written in English, instead of local languages, appeals to a wide audience in South Asia and the rest of the world. To understand how readers evaluate *Rumours of Spring*, we looked at reviews on Amazon and the Good Reads website. As a result, it was obvious that this memoir has attracted more attention from South Asian readers.

What is being communicated

Van der Bles et al. (2019) highlight the objects about which there is uncertainty and their sources as well as the level and magnitude of this uncertainty. In our research the major objects of uncertainty correspond to: curfews, crackdowns,

crossfire between the militia and government troops (stray bullets), bunkers, tear gas and new dress codes. The above authors have limited their study to epistemic uncertainty defined as uncertainty about facts, numbers or science, in contrast to aleatory uncertainty: random events. In our research, both basic types of uncertainty occur as well as blended examples. However, the differences between the two are usually irrelevant as both often lead to disastrous results: the disparity between being killed by a stray bullet (aleatory) rather than being carried off during a crackdown, never to return (epistemic, in the sense that those planning the crackdown had previous knowledge while those affected didn't) were equally devastating.

To the populations affected by these objects, the exact sources of uncertainty (who made the decisions as to where, when and how) were usually unknown. The context of the *who* doing the communicating probably provides our greatest clue regarding these sources. In any case, the existence and sources of uncertainty are most likely related to the shifting power struggles in the region (as explained in the context of communication). The author rather deals with the consequences and her and her family's personal experiences.

As to the level of uncertainty, it was often directly expressed:

On an ordinary night, curfew swelled up the air with fear and uncertainty. It controlled everything. It disciplined people inside their own houses, animals on the streets, and had even tamed the loud sneezes of the tobacco-seller who lived two houses from ours Bashir (2021, p.3).

The magnitude can rather be perceived indirectly, *ie.* it was so great that *it controlled everything*, even taming physical phenomena like *sneezes*. In her mind this domination ruled over all: uncertainty was complete.

The author constantly personifies uncertainty to stress its far-reaching consequences:

The dreadful rhythm of jackboots echoed through the bitter cold winter evenings. We did everything we could to shut the sinister, synchronized sound out ...even that did not stop the unwanted entry of those steps which pushed further, inch upon inch, into our kitchen which overlooked the street. From there, they stomped on our temples and finally entered our heads. The marching seeped into our silences, punctuated

our conversations with pauses, which, in turn, jumbled our thoughts and our language (2021, p.3).

The rhythm of soldiers' boots clomped on their temples and finally went into their heads seeping into their silences and jumbling their beliefs, judgments and speech. This sound reinforced the possibility that at any moment these troops could interrupt their lives in a multiplicity of harmful unpredictable ways.

The impact of uncertainty, not knowing what was going to happen, and the feelings of futility and vulnerability in the face of the consequences, was overwhelming:

Our lives were controlled from elsewhere and the dreams that we dreamt were always at the

mercy of someone else, someone occupying us, ruling us (p. 129).

At other times, the level of uncertainty was indirectly expressed by the lexis; nevertheless, the magnitude was always great:

Even I had understood by then that their safety was by no means guaranteed and

that just because the men had been assembled, there was no assurance that they'd return

together or return at all (p. 99).

The memoir is also sprinkled with probability phrases, adverbs and frequent poignant questions:

'Are you really alive?' (p. 10).

Where were all the people now, whose shoes were left behind? (p. 48).

In what form is the uncertainty communicated

Van der Bles' (2029,4) breakdown of this category includes the criteria expressions of uncertainty, format and medium. This is the category that most diverges from our analysis of a memoir as expression for Van der Bles et al. corresponds to scientific parameters such as a full probability distribution, summaries of distribution, rounded numbers etc. In our research, the format of uncertainty is always verbal text statements.

The medium is print, both in book form and digital. Though there are no statistics in our data, the preeminence of uncertainty is enormous as Bashir's memoir focuses on the trauma provoked by the difficulty of living a life in which safety is uncertain. Even though the fear of unpredictability is hard to express, the narration is compelling. Gilmore (2001) emphasizes that central to trauma is the fact that it is beyond language and she insists on paying attention to the way in which traumatic experiences are articulated.

Bashir describes the changes in her physical and mental states after the insurgency started. Those sensations are crucial for understanding her pain. As Van Der Kolk highlights trauma is an imprint on the mind, brain and the body (2015, p. 21). He explains that people who are traumatized feel unsafe inside their bodies, past events are alive inside them and they are frequently bombarded with visceral warning signs. Bashir effectively communicates the intensity of her perceptions alerting the reader at multiple levels. In our case, it is essential to examine devices used for this communication. Special care will be taken to locate sensorial images and behavioral changes as well as other factors correlating with the presence of uncertainty.

Curfew

In the first place Bashir has an extraordinary capacity for perceiving sensorial data. In the following description of a curfew, she exploits both sonorous and psychological phenomena while also referring to a lexical kinetic occurrence:

Now that bustle is replaced by sadness. People look worrisome. Nobody speaks loudly like we used to. Is curfew controlling our vocal cords too? The only loud sound we hear is shopkeepers rolling their shutters down when the 'relaxation' is over. There is hush on the streets and even a slight sound brings with it an echo of fear (p. 68).

Speaking loudly, vocal cords, hearing shutters rolling down and a hush so strong that even a slight sound leads to an echo of fear paint the sonorous landscape. Emotions like sadness and worry resonate the echo of fright replacing the kinetic energy of the *bustle*. Bashir contrasts these desolate emotions with the vibrant visual images of previous times:

It's not the same anymore. The bustle created at the shops of gold and coppersmiths, the dancing dresses as you'd call the flowy, shimmering, sequined cloth hanging from shops are gone (p. 68).

Her dexterity at portraying the sensorial and psychological is utmost when depicting her own and others personal reactions to the varying forms of uncertainty disturbing them. Her rendition of living through curfews is both moving and disconcerting. It began in 1989, at the time of the most important Islamic festivity Eid when she was just leaving the hair salon where she had finally been allowed to style her own hair as her elder sister had been doing for quite some time.

That Eid eve, as a twelve-year-old girl, I decided unwittingly to never participate in festivities again. In fact, from then on, I began associating inexplicable melancholy with Eid, and the heaviness that settled on the heart that day sank deeper each year (p. 6).

Her behavior changed: she no longer participated in celebrations and excitement previously associated with Eid became sorrow and despondency. The anxiety caused by waiting endlessly for who knew what misfortunes to occur during curfew provoked her to distract herself with a special kind of self-destructive behavior:

Absorbing the news from all around made my hands shake. In a moment of confusion and fear, I plucked a chunk of my hair from right behind my ear. It hurt to pull the hair out, but my hands needed to clutch at something. I pulled some out again to punish myself for not being able to make sense of what had befallen us as a people. I couldn't help but feel that none of this would have happened had I not troubled everyone about going to the salon. Somehow, I felt responsible for all of it: for being rumoured to be dead, for Bobeh's (her beloved grandmother's) condition: she had begun to wheeze uncontrollably.

Since then, a dark, silent cloud of death hovers above me every Eid (p. 11-12).

Here again we have kinetic images: hands trembling, yanking out her own hair, the need for clutching, wheezing irrepressibly and death hanging over her every Eid. Emotions abound: confusion, fear and guilt, feeling responsible, wanting to punish herself. The author continually expounds salient changes in behavior as she herself and others respond to the objects of uncertainty. Previously, her hair had been one of her proudest possessions and created an intimate relationship with her grandmother lasting over an hour every two weeks:

TAKING CARE OF MY HAIR was my grandmother's favorite activity until I shied away from it. 'Muss gov korri hund vass,' she would say while massaging my scalp, reminding me that hair is the best ornament a girl can have. Bobeh held sections of my hair carefully between her palms and applied her magic potion right from the root to the tip of each strand (p. 11-12).

But now disparaging behavior continued every time there was a curfew. The eerie silence made it so difficult for her to fall asleep, she always began to fiddle with her hair:

I'd hold each strand between the thumb and index finger, and place my middle finger slightly above them, and with one violent jerk I'd root out the strand...I'd forget about the outside eeriness as I'd be too engrossed trying to soothe my hurting and burning scalp by pulling my hair out for hours. I'd lose track of time. Sometimes, I'd forcefully pluck out a chunk of hair trying to get rid of any possibility of hurting myself further, but the pain persisted. Every night, pain found a different spot. It traveled (p. 16).

Again, Bashir recurs to kinetic images (*violent jerk, root out, burning, forcefully pluck out*) psychological and sensorial aspects (*eeriness, engrossed, soothe, hurting, pain*) as well as personification (*pain traveled*).

Behavior patterns had changed drastically:

Following the autumn of 1989, I did not let Bobeh touch my scalp or caress my hair (p. 15).

She and her grandmother no longer participated in their favorite routine.

confronted with uncertainty: *discovering*, lack of expectation and *suspicion...as if*, for example.

Crackdown

Soldiers ransacking your house without notice, shuffling through your personal belongings, turning your house on its head all the while the men of the family had been taken away without any certain knowledge of where they were or when or if they would return was beyond belief; in the words of the author:

...a crackdown was nothing short of an out-of-body experience, no matter how many times one had been through it. (p. 53).

Again, Bashir recurs to corporal imagery to portray her dismay. She continues to utilize sensorial and kinetic lexicon to depict the devastation:

After the troops walked into our kitchen wearing muddy boots, soiling everything, they flung open the cabinets. Upon discovering the trapdoor on the floor — the *voggeh*—they went berserk! They ran amok with suspicion, as if they'd unearthed a tunnel to the other side of Kashmir, in Pakistan... They did not expect it to be an ordinary floor of an ordinary home with ordinary things... Suspecting militants to be in hiding behind the gunny sacks, they poked the bayonets of their rifles into them. They slashed open the large rice bags, callously unleashing rivers of grains on to the part-stone, part-mud store-room floor... When they left, they left behind nothing but misery that was pasted on to the floors and walls of our house. A misery that couldn't be wiped away (p. 97-98).

The psychological aspect of this event is transmitted by words and phrases like: go *berserk*, run *amok* with *suspicion*, *callously* performing the search and misery whereas the kinetic feature is portrayed through dynamic acts: *soiling everything*, flinging open cabinets, ransacking the storeroom, and slashing open grain bags. Personification is also present exemplified in poetic phrases like *rivers of grains* and *misery pasted to the floors that couldn't be wiped away*. It is interesting to note that in this instance, the military are also

Cross fire between the military and government troops: stray bullets

One of the ways Bashir communicates the gravity of uncertainty is through portrayals of important changes in her own or her family's behavior. Windows had always been an important part of their life. Every family member had their favorite spot:

On some summer evenings before 1989, after school, I'd spend time by the windows of the big hall on the fourth floor of our house... Every window in our house seemed to have been assigned a specific role, each one had numerous tales to tell (p. 23).

They were particularly important for her grandmother Bobeh who as a result of her asthma continually needed a steady current of fresh air and could never get rid of the custom to gaze outside and survey passersby. But the situation altered:

...things changed. after 1989 and the windows had to be tightly shut during the incessant spells of curfew... Open windows were an easy and unobstructed passage for bullets and grenade splinters to make their way inside. Even a peep could be dangerous. Letting in fresh air could cost us dearly (p. 23-24).

Opening windows became a matter of life and death:

...an asthmatic and unassuming neighbor, the grandmother of a friend, paid a heavy price for causing a stir at night. One night, she experienced a shortness of breath and decided to let in some fresh air. As she flung one of her bedroom windows open, the wooden planks jostling against each other made some noise. Just then, a bullet flew in from nowhere and hit the seventy-five-year-old woman, killing her instantly. Instead of catching fresh air to ease her labored breathing, her heart was neatly pierced (p. 73).

Besides dramatizing the effect of open windows, this

passage again highlights the silence and hush that had been imposed by curfews and crackdowns. Attracting attention had become so dangerous that it had become vital to consider every little detail regarding one's actions.

Collateral Damage

Collective behaviors changed, but these alterations also took place on a personal plane. The dramatic situation had serious effects for the Bashir's and others' psyche. The author uses the term collateral damage to describe the disastrous consequences of the anxiety caused by long-standing strife and uncertainty. All the stress related to curfews, crackdown and crossfire took their toll on this adolescent's incentive to succeed at school:

Unsure of the outcome and the uncertainty that prevailed around the siege, I had lost the resolve to do well in my exams. What was the point? People were struggling to stay alive. How did my distinction matter? The round-the-clock curfew, the killings, the protests, the futile dialogues, the labelling of men sometimes as militants, sometimes as mercenaries ... the constant shifting of power had done its damage. I didn't know then, but it was the beginning of an apathy for my own self that would last for a long time. (p. 129).

She contrasts her previous ambitions to achieve and accomplish with the struggle to stay alive. What was the use of striving for academic success in the face of the constant alterations of power? Her exams scheduled to take place during ten days lasted more than a month, constantly being postponed for the siege, the curfew, the protests. It was the start of a lethargy destined to endure for quite a while.

Her discomfort took a turn for the worse:

In 1993, just before I turned seventeen, I showed symptoms of heightened anxiety. I'd get palpitations, sleeplessness, and was inexplicably restless. I often contemplated various means by which to commit suicide. For weeks, I wouldn't speak more than a few words a day. I preferred to stay inside a dimly lit room during the day. I detested sunlight. Anything that the sun touched seemed torched to me. If a ray managed to pass through the thick curtains, that remained drawn throughout

the day - it felt like it was going to consume the whole room, including me. (p. 79).

She risked committing suicide, was agitated, couldn't sleep and barely spoke, internalizing the situation. She felt threatened by sunlight that could devour the entire room and even her own existence.

The military bunkers housing government troops began to take over the terrain causing even more distress and anxiety:

...it was impossible to miss the hideous structures. Like weed, they had cropped up everywhere, they followed us no matter which route we took, they stared at us in our faces. Who knew • Highlighters they would eventually become landmarks and become a part of our addresses: 'the-house next to the small bunker, 'the lane before the large bunker'! (p. 39-40).

Again, the author uses personification to depict the level of anxiety the presence of these bunkers wrought on her peace of mind. They become weeds growing everywhere out of control, trailing one wherever you went, confronting all face to face.

The existence of so many soldiers was extremely disturbing for an adolescent girl already perturbed by the changes in her own body:

I could hear my heartbeat outside of my body with warm tears welling up my eyes. My vision blurred. I took my school bag down from my shoulders and hugged it instead. On the deserted streets of my neighborhood, in the presence of so many military bunkers and the gaze of the unknown men inside them, I suddenly became aware of my body and its contours. My breasts had just assumed their distinct, slightly protruding shape. I felt naked. I tried to fold into the school bag clutched in front of me. That was how I developed a hunch in my upper back (Ibid. 105-106).

Once more, Bashir persists in sensorial images: sound (the beating of her heart), sight (the scrutiny of strange soldiers and *vision blurred*), psychological presence (an awareness of the shape of her own body), an emotional state (feeling undressed) and dynamic actions (tears brimming, grasping her belongings, her private parts bulging) leading to

a final physical transformation: a hunched back. All this had a pronounced effect on her state of mind:

With troopers stationed everywhere, walking on the streets made me feel uneasy. It felt like I was inviting their lecherous gaze. Like many others in the neighborhood, ...so, I began to ignore caring for my skin. I thought maybe if I looked ugly and less pleasant, the men would not look at me and I'd be safe. I wouldn't wash my face for days. I didn't want to look attractive in any way, at all, lest it invited undue attention and that indescribable guilt. I wanted to somehow become invisible. (p. 58-59).

Yet again, the author depicts her psychological outlook (feeling nervous, their lustful stare, and unutterable culpability). Her behavior changes: she no longer takes care of her appearance (doesn't care for her skin or wash her face), all in an effort to not attract attention she *wanted to become invisible* (an ultimate negation of self).

Communicated to what effect

Van de Bles' (2019) parameters for this category include: cognition, emotion, trust and behavior and decision making. As for cognition the objects of uncertainty were clearly identified and vividly depicted in the memoir, on the other hand, their sources were mostly implied. Bashir's focus on her own, her family's and friends' impressions using a variety of sensorial images (sight, sound, touch) produce empathy and compassion from readers who identify with her, the communication and/or her sensitivity. However, her subjective, sometimes poetic, renditions tend to cause distrust on behalf of those who do not associate with her perspective as can be seen below. As for behavior and decision making, the corpus was not relevant for any evaluation of these factors.

The reviews from the book's buyers and readers constitute a response to Bashir's text. *Rumours of Spring* tells a personal story, but at the same time is interconnected with the regional and national. The narrative has resonated strongly for Indian people who live under completely different circumstances; it is a testimony that contrasts with the reality in other parts of the country. In an Amazon review entitled *Disturbing* a reader stated:

Having grown up in a free environment with friends and family, celebrating festivals, we were able to go to school every day, meet people, live and laugh. But when I read this book from a Kashmiri teenage girl's perspective, I shuddered. There are people in one part of my country living such a hopeless life fearing that today might be their last day on the earth. Afraid their family members who left for a menial chore may or may not come back. Dreadful indeed (Das, 2022).

The deeply insecure setting and suffering is stressed in the comments of readers who have compassionate reactions to the accounts. Several mention the desire to hug the protagonist to comfort her and concerns about the mental health of people in Kashmir. A review entitled *Between conflict and hope* recognizes the emotional complexity and points out:

An extremely poignant account of life as an adolescent in Kashmir of the 1990s, the Kashmir that was full of conflict and uncertainty. Nothing has changed for Kashmiris as of today, but we shall not go there...I was gutted. As I was reading the book and when I finished reading it as well. I am still reeling from Bashir's experiences as young girl in the valley – what her family and friends had to go through, and the trauma that will never go away. Some wounds never heal. Maybe that's how it is meant to be (Tejuja 2022).

Not having the comfort of certainty and the struggles of daily life comes through in the impressions of readers. The pandemic also became a lens to understand these experiences as another review of *Rumours of Spring* asserted: "I remember the early days of Covid and the curfew, when we ran to shops to stock up on food and essentials. I also remember the fear and the uncertainty that came from having no idea when it would end" (Manu 2022). The text seems to succeed in expressing the uneasiness of unpredictability.

The narrative focuses on the circumstances in which the people of Kashmir were living. Nevertheless, not everyone agrees with Bashir's vision: "I would have really liked to read about the author's real issues but unfortunately, this book is full of amnesia and looks tailored to achieve a political goal" (Unnamed Amazon user, 2021). The reviewer questions the legitimacy of the narration and does not trust the reality constructed in the text: "The author remembers all conversations where there are alleged infractions by troops. Even those where the author is not present, she hears third party

accounts and is sure about what happened" (*Ibid*). Her subjectivity is not accepted by every reader.

Results and conclusion

Although Van der Bles' (2019) adaptation of Lasswell's classic model of communication was designed to measure epistemic uncertainty concerning facts, numbers and science, this approach, with its pertinent parameters, was quite relevant for discerning how and to what effect uncertainty was communicated in *Rumours of Spring*. The five research questions were quite appropriate for our purposes, though their parameters were not always applicable or sufficient. In the case of this memoir, it was necessary to add the category of context to correctly understand who was doing the communicating.

Although we had no precise knowledge of the relationship of the readers to the author or her message, it was obvious that this relationship signaled by Van der Bles (2019) was most likely connected to the effectiveness of a personal subjective testimony as could be perceived in the reviews. In the same way, her approach was not as useful for communicating uncertainty to those who did not share a similar world view.

However, with the exception of medium, the factors pertaining to in some way were unrelated. It was necessary to analyze the devices utilized to portray uncertainty and its consequences, in this case sensorial and kinetic images, a psychological perspective and an apprehension of significant behavioral changes. The factors related to what effect (cognition, emotion and trust) were illuminating, though we had insufficient data to examine either changes in the readers' behavior or decision making.

Bashir's competence for identifying, internalizing and depicting corporal reactions through sensorial and psychological images paint a vivid dramatic picture of the presence and consequences of trauma and uncertainty. She also focuses on dynamic actions with kinetic relevance contrasting the silence of curfew with the violence of crack down and crossfire. This approach humanizes all the consequences of uncertainty and enhances an emotional reception. Data concerning significant behavioral changes reinforce the devastating trauma.

Her memoir produced both compassion and empathy from readers with reviews on the digital platforms analyzed

although her subjective style produced a few negative commentaries from those who presumably did not share her personal perspective. A poetical literary style is perhaps not the adequate vehicle for communicating to critics.

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