

Recurrent Proceedings of Distress: The Psychological trauma of a Teenager in Elie Wiesel’s “The Night”

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Trauma studies was inveterate in the early 2000s as a critical study which scrutinize the facet of the consequences on how literature deals with the outcome of personal trauma and the resilience that leads. Psychological Trauma vandalize the peace and harmony of psyche that was followed by the acquaintance of series of traumatic events. Sigmund Freud inaugurated Trauma theory initially with the notion of addressing sexual violence such as rape, battering, incest, considering the female as a focal point as it advanced to the next level of the traumatic psychic scars inflicted by the tortures, genocide in regards to the holocaust. The shock and the stressors of the incident pave way for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which make the victim arduous to cope up with daily life make them undergo abnormal activities namely sleepless nights, derealization, anxiety disorder, dissociative amnesia etc. In the Memoir, ‘The Night’ by Elie Wiesel, narrated the traumas of a young protagonist named Eliezer, an Orthodox Jewish teenager who undergone traumatic experience, because of witnessing ill treatment and being a prisoner in a Nazi German concentration camp. He was enforced to go on for days in the absence of the fundamental necessities which are needed for a human to survive. Those refusals held back his will to strive and left him traumatic that he ceased to response for the happenings he witnessed. His change from being a normal boy who was steadfast to religion, how shattered he has become after receiving the recurring cruel punishments and being a victim to the inhumane behaviour is noticeable.

Keywords: Psychological Trauma, Prisoner, Survival, Derealization, PTSD.

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The motive of the research is to examine the concept of recurring distress and psychological trauma and in Elie Wiesel’s Night (1958). The twinning subjects of the postmodern era are Trauma and its memory. These are explored through the studies of literature, literary and cultural theory. Memories are what humans left behind and it is what a person will be filled with through the times of thick and thin and covered boxes of gifts during the times of old age. These memories come to humans through various forms such as feeling the same emotional intensity and experiencing the same kind of similar situations and getting to witness the look alike circumstances including certain specific objects also plays a vital role in kicking back the memories to the surface back. One such terrible memory of the Holocaust brought trauma into the lives of Jewish people and a survivor voicing out the dreadful consecutive encounters.

Psychological Trauma vandalize the peace and harmony of psyche that was followed by the acquaintance of series of traumatic events. The memory and Trauma of these people are viewed through variety of movies and books. Wiesel is connected with the holocaust writers. In *Night*, trauma and memory are explicitly present in the form of personal recollections of the narrator's experiences in the Nazi concentration camps. The casualties of Holocaust undergone innumerable dark moments. Those are not simply just a fiction. They were the painful voices of the survivors. The Holocaust literature depicts the human rights violations in history. It clearly depicts the reflection of the sufferings and shows the timelessness; to be precise is to explain the intermingling of the past and present experiences of an individual psyche that transcends both space and time. The worst part is that it wholly detaches the character from their present state at the moment and pull them back to days or years back and re live the nightmare once they endured. This process of experiencing trauma is the flashes of bitter moments of Trauma, paralysis and shock which manifest the belated symptoms and it demonstrates the impotence of let slip the memories.

Trauma theory as a literary theory emerged with Cathy Caruth as a leading pioneer. In her collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), she defines physic trauma and its numerous symptoms. She studied the incompetence of casualty's traumatic experience and the possibility of provoking the endowment to the listener. Trauma can also be evaluate as witnessing of violence that is emotionally painful and distressing. The inability to deal with the aftermath of surviving erects a long-term effect on the survivor's physical and mental health. It is stated as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that is a delayed physic response of recurrent experiences. Eliezer and the other characters in *Night* testified countless tortures and witnessed the loss of life of family, friends and relatives while scared of their own death. This naturally traumatised and defile the minds of the observers in the camp. It hits hard because it is not only the story of their own but also the pain and the unimaginable position they were put in as they would not be able to respond to the happenings of the events where their trauma is fastened with the trauma of their beloved ones. In this sense, Cathy Caruth asserted that "the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images (hallucinations, flashbacks, nightmares) and thoughts, the one who has lived through them". On the other hand, the impression of Trauma is the ineptitude to recall and comprehend the events of the past and the obscure happenings questioning the truth.

The encounter of the Traumatic experience of Moishe the beadle comes from a different route as he explained the Traumatic experience of his fellow members in the Polish borders. The unforeseen confrontation with death and calamitous survival exemplifies the form of Trauma derived form a source of listening. Moishe attempting to get away the Traumatic experience is described by Caruth as the 'Trauma's contagion of the traumatization of the ones who listen'. So, it is obvious that Trauma can be shifted to a person through listening especially when the listener is not ready for the unusual source of distress.

When the people were taken in a truck to a camp, Eliezer claims the scream of a lady infected all who travelled with her. The panic that inflicted through the madness of her voice made few men contagious to fear and the victim themselves are beating her and forcing her out of her own will to silence her. "The heat, the thirst, the stench, the lack of air, were suffocating us. Yet all that was nothing compared to her screams, which tore us apart. A few more days and all of us would have started to scream". (38) Another similar incident happened when Russians were nearing the Buna camp, the prisoners were transferred in a train to Buchenwald naked in cold, darkness and fear, a wail from somewhere spread across the whole train. This passing of swift wailing was absent even when they were actually tortured and put to tolerate the acute unreasonable pain.

Eliezer described his own personal Trauma and the Trauma of the others he witnessed. Being a survivor of the horrendous camp, he vocalized for others and addressed their plight. He spoke for many starting form Moishe, his father, a woman in a train, a hanged young boy and so. This aspect

of explaining others plight through him is stated by Caruth as “It is possible to read the address of the voice..., not as the story of an individual in relation to the events of his past, but as the story of the way in which one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another... through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound.” (41). It is highly complicated to witness the traumatic experience or the speech of the traumatized.

The Trauma at the present state is most horrifying as a person’s mind cease to function and in worst case scenario, in despair it thinks of the awful to happen in order to save oneself. Eliezer’s father, even in the midst of helplessness he stayed with his son enduring all the tortures. But at a certain point of time, Eliezer wished him dead partly to save his father from the tortures and partly to save himself as he does not want weak accompanying him as that sedates his personal process in the living hell. In the despair and the inadequacy, a minor incident of sharing food from the meagre amount he was provided with illustrates the focus he holds for himself he possessed by the outcome of the Traumatic unpleasant recurrences.

Trauma is hailed as long-term as it engraved with memory. Bergson’s theory about memory and duration developed during the beginning of twentieth century to vanquish the progression of timelessness memory. The significance of memory in the memoir *Night* depicts the inner life, thoughts, feelings around the character. The things he narrated was not his past experiences but the dissolution of the unforgettable memories of the past. Through the Traumas he overcome, he became a different person acquiring all the experiences and the memories that cannot be erased.

The series of terrorized moments he witnessed become the moments of duration. The reflection of the recurrent memories is an attempt to make conversation to Eliezer’s inner self and how it totally transformed him later into a different person. Before being captured as a prisoner, he was an innocent teenager who is more pious and devoted to God as he was from a ghetto. When they were captured, all the faith he could hold on to was only God. The separation of his mother broke him and during the loathsome stay at the camp testifying the series of abominable tortures, made him broke his faith. He lost his house, family, faith in God, hope of surviving and identity.

Elie Wiesel utilize memory in his memoir and the whole narration is a recollection of unoppressive memories. It totally illustrates the past happenings of images that aggravates the moments of present. The timeless memory brought the implicit agony of the past. The intention of memory is to hold a unchangeable role in shaping a person’s identity. The reliving of the past through the memories will keep on holding the Traumas as long the memory is intact. Being the sole survivor of the family, narrating the story will never make him forget all those. Moving far away from where he was, he understood the kind of person he was changing into.

He neither feel sorry for it nor changed his attitude about it. He wished for his father’s death. The cruel treatment towards life brought the changes in him and he was not an exceptional to the Traumatic incidents he witnessed. Instead of concentrating on the other things, he directed himself towards his internal conflict and his Trauma. He was enforced to go on for days in the absence of the fundamental necessities which are needed for a human to survive. Those refusals held back his will to strive and left him traumatic that he ceased to response for the happenings he witnessed. The severe psychological disorder and inability to get over the emotional hurricanes and the incompetence to forget the memories are the phenomenon expressed.

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