

THE BURDEN OF MEMORIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TRAUMA IN *BROKEN SOUP* AND *THE THINGS THEY CARRIED*

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Abstract

"The wound is the place where the Light enters you." (Rumi) This research explores trauma leading to the wounds through the literary texts of Broken Soup and The Things They Carried by Jenny Valentine and Tim O'Brien respectively, through the lens of trauma theory. Drawing from Cathy Caruth's framework in Unclaimed Experience and Judith Herman's treatment methodologies in Trauma and Recovery, the study examines the psychological and emotional impacts of traumatic events, focusing on loss and the horrors of war in the characters marked by flashbacks, timelessness and Inability to speak about it. By employing the comparative and interdisciplinary approach to study trauma which allows a new insight into literary criticism and trauma theory, this study reveals the traumatic effects of war experiences on individuals' memories and identities. Moreover, the qualitative method is used to examine the emotional and psychological impact of Vietnam war on the lives of American soldiers. The findings of the research reveal that the response and resilience by characters in The Things They Carried is complex due to the lack of safety in the critical situation of war than that in the Broken Soup. This study suggests the application of other aspects of theoretical framework such as childhood abuse, slavery and genocide, domestic violence, psychological disturbance in the lives of women in order to explore new findings.

Key Words: Trauma, Loss, Vietnam war, Unclaimed experiences, Stages of recovery

Introduction:

Generally, people put an end to their lives after certain events because they are unable to shut the doors of their past and it seems that they do not want to co-operate with the inevitable. Undoubtedly, the literature has significant influence over the lives of human being throughout the course of history. Elissa Marder in her essay "Trauma and Literary Studies: Some "Enabling Questions" states: "Literature is one of the ways we tell one another about aspects of human experience that cannot be contained by ordinary modes of expression and that may even exceed human understanding" (Marder, 2006, p.3). Equally, Trauma theory is a multi-dimensional framework that investigates the psychological, emotional and social effects of trauma on individuals and communities. It seeks to understand how trauma influences an individual's memory, perceptions and behavior and its long lasting impacts on overall wellbeing. According to Cathy Caruth, trauma is understood in its most general sense as "describing an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, 1996, p. 11).

The study of trauma within literary texts represents a profound exploration into human psychology and complexities of human conditions. Moreover, trauma theory is the branch of psychoanalytical theory and it heavily rely on the concept of Sigmund Freud regarding the working of unconscious mind and repression of ideas in it. In addition, there are many leading theorists such as Judith Herman, Bonnie Burstow, Cathy Caruth, Bessel Van der Klok, etc., who contributed in the field of trauma theory by providing their perspectives and ideas according to their intellect. However, the term trauma theory first appeared in the works of Cathy Caruth's *Unexplained Experiences*.

However, this study is conducted in this regard which is based on the analysis of themes, nature and underlying effects of traumatic events in the two selected literary texts named *The Things They Carried* by Tim O' Brien and *Broken Soup* by Jenny Valentine under the models of Trauma Theory laid by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman. *Broken soup* is a novel about journey of a girl named Rowan toward self-discovery after coping with her trauma. Moreover, the accidental death of her brother named Jack lead to distressing impact on the normal structures of family and their psychological wellbeing. For instance, after investigating the mystery of photograph negative which she received from a boy named Harper, she comes across the realization of her and her mother's trauma and they explore new relationships.

However, *The Things They Carried* is made up of stories detailing the lives of soldiers during Vietnam War. The stories present the lives of men and their struggles with love, life, fear and death while fighting the war overseas. The title of the story describes what the soldiers must carried with them both literally and figuratively as it involved food, canteens, flak jackets, and weapons, as well as grief, terror, secrets and memories. The particular novel is deeply rooted in the context of Vietnam war which was Lasted from 1955 to 1975 and it was a highly controversial conflict between North Vietnam, supported by the communist government of Soviet Union and China and South Vietnam, Supported by United States and other anti-communist allies. It had the profound impact on the those who served in it as well as an American society as a whole and it pushed the young people into the war against their will. Consequently, many Americans protested against the war and they questioned the morality and purpose of war.

Research Objectives:

The study is aimed to meet the following objectives:

- To investigate and identify the traumatic effects of wars on soldiers
- To understand the effective strategies and therapies regarding the recovery of trauma

Research Questions:

The research would successfully respond to following questions:

- How does trauma theory enhance the understanding of psychological effects of wars on soldiers?
- What are the treatments or therapies in order to come out of trauma?

Literature Review:

Trauma theory as formulated by Cathy Caruth (1996) and Judith Herman (1992) payed foundational role in understanding of the literary representation of traumatic experiences. Caruth describes trauma as an unassimilated experience that recurs belatedly. While Herman provide a three stage recovery process involving safety, remembrance and reconnection. By integrating both framework, the present examines how trauma and memory operate across war and non-war context in Tim O'Brien's *the things they carried* and jenny valentine's *Broken soup*.

Building on this, Jamalpour H, Jamalpour Z, Feiz M (2025) in their study introduce a neuro phenomenological lens of text. In this perspective, trauma is not only a psychological experience but a sensory and bodily experience. Moreover, the author illuminate corporeal dimension of trauma by examining how environmental stimuli such as sound, smell, heat and terrain contributes to disorientation and psychological breakdown of soldiers. This insight is critical for current study which seek to understand how trauma manifests differently in non- war contexts when contrasted with Broken Soup where trauma is internalized and relational rather than environmental.

In order to farther deepen this exploration, the study by Pourghari et. al. (2024) apply Cathy Caruth's trauma theory to examine how literary form articulates psychological recovery. They emphasized on fragmentation, belatedness and repetition which is similar to key narrative elements in O' Brien work as well. While their focus lies on a different text and literary context, their approach substantiates the use of trauma theory in cooperative literary analysis. Thus, it reinforces the rationale on this study to apply concepts of Caruth and Judith Herman across divergent trauma settings in Broken Soup and The Things They Carried.

Additionally, Aiello and Calkin (2025) in their study Retracing Trauma's theories in postmodern literature" critique the modernist and Eurocentric limitations of trauma theory. In this regard, they emphasized the need for reframing trauma theory within diverse historical and cultural paradigms. In this perspective, their approach strengthens the comparative and theoretical aims of this study. Similarly, Dubois (2023) in his study "Empowerment and transformation: Correlating John of the Cross and Judith Herman for trauma healing" deals with integration of Herman's trauma recovery stages with spiritual transformation process formulated by John of the cross. Authors synthesis of religious and clinical frameworks suggest a broader and relational healing. This insight is valuable for current research as it will help to examine how Broken Soup portrays recovery of trauma through interpersonal relation and empowerment. Another research under consideration is conducted by Nerez (2020) pinpoints the personal traumas of main characters, Axl and Beatrice, and suggests how their repressed memories strike in their mind repeatedly in the novel *The Buried Gigantic* penned by Kazuo Ishiguro.

While extensive research has been conducted on trauma in the context of war particularly focusing on *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, limited attention has been paid to comparative trauma studies involving both war and non-war contexts such as Jenny Valentine's Broken Soup. Moreover, most existing researches viewed these texts from merely psychological or literary lens. But, it has been analyzed rarely in a comparative framework in order to highlight different origins and expressions of trauma. Most importantly, theory of unclaimed experience along with Judith Herman in a comparative text analysis remained unexplored. In this regard, current study fills this gap by allowing an interdisciplinary and comparative literary analysis of trauma in which different manifestation and recovery of traumatic experience has been examined in different environment. Thus, it contributes to both trauma theory and literary criticism by providing new insight into how trauma and memory operate across different genres and demographic factors.

Research Methodology:

This study is centered upon the qualitative analysis of the selected literary text in order to interpret it and comprehend the nature of trauma represented through different characters and groups. In addition, the data is collected from primary source as it involves the texts of the novels by Tim O' Brien and Jenny valentine and it also based on secondary source of data from the researches related to particular texts. As for as the procedure for the study is considered, the texts of both novels have

been thoroughly read in order to analyze it from the perspective of trauma. After this, nature of trauma was investigated in both novels and also characters suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are identified. Then, each text was interpreted according to the concept of trauma by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman in order to respond to the research question. At the end, the conclusions are drawn on the basis of above analysis and interpretation of various aspects of novels.

Theoretical Framework

The current study is conducted on the selected literary texts within the framework of Trauma Theory by considering the perspectives of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman regarding traumatic experiences, its exploration in the literature and its recovery process. Inheriting the spirit of Freud, Cathy Caruth and representatives of the American Yale school created the first wave in the construction of trauma theory in the humanities. On the other hand, Judith Herman is an American Psychiatrist who is one of the pioneers within modern trauma studies and has contributed to the diagnosis, clarifying definition and symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), treatment methodology. In addition, the works of Judith Herman has been accepted by clinicians and researchers as a foundation for the development of contemporary treatment for trauma.

Trauma Theory, its development and tenets:

The term trauma has its origin in the Greek language and can be translated with 'wound'. The trauma theories were first developed in 1990s which heavily relied on the model of trauma by Freud. However, psychological trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in shaping individual and cultural identities are the central concerns that define the field of trauma studies. Moreover, the word 'Trauma' literally meant "a wound or external body injury", which could be traced back to seventeenth century medical pathology. Later in the nineteenth century, the word came to mean "psychical trauma". Not until the theories of Sigmund Freud, the term altered its meaning and from there it was being denoted primarily a 'wound of the mind' (Caruth 1995). After that, the new sense was the product of Victorian modernity that the effects of trauma were mostly associated with railway accidents and were called "railroad spine" (ibid).

Then, early theories of Sigmund Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) written with Joseph Breuer, and especially his adapted theories later in his career in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), dominate conceptual implementation of trauma by literary trauma critics today. Furthermore, Sigmund Freud is known as The Father of psychoanalysis and he showed his interest in traumatic events during two periods (the years between 1892 and 1896, he examined the causes of hysterical attacks and the years following World War I when he turned his attention to the war neuroses. While, his original theory was based on sexual experiences during infancy and early childhood as the cause of all trauma and the basis for neurosis. Trauma theory emerged in the 1960s from several areas of social concern: recognition of the prevalence of violence against women and children (rape, battering, incest); identification of the phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder in (Vietnam) war veterans; and awareness of the psychic scars inflicted by torture and genocide, especially in regard to the Holocaust. In the aftermath of Vietnam war in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept attracted great number of scholars of different fields and it led to the beginning of trauma research and theory. Trauma was consequently termed PTSD in the field of psychiatry and was being described in the Diagnostic and statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. After this, Feminism added a new political dimension to trauma theory in cases of physical and sexual abuse. Furthermore, a lot of scholarly works in the 1990s arose to examine the concept of

trauma and its role in literature and society most prominently by Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman. This is known as first wave of trauma criticism and it popularized the concept of trauma as an unrepresentable event that revealed the inherent contradictions within language and experience. In the traditional trauma model pioneered by Cathy Caruth, trauma is viewed as an event that fragments consciousness and prevents direct linguistic representation. This model emphasizes the suffering by an external source that makes internal changes to the mind and irreversibly changes identity. It draws attention to the severity of suffering by suggesting the traumatic experience permanently damages the psyche. The emergence of Trauma Studies in literary theory in the 1990 can be credited to Cathy Caruth's book, *Unclaimed Experience:*

Trauma, Narrative and History and Kall Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* which takes a particular interpretation of Freud's trauma theories to forward a larger post-structural concern with the referential limits of language and history. Although the experience may never be narrated clearly, it acts like a tumor in consciousness that wounds the self. Caruth also relies on a neurobiological approach to explain trauma's effect on consciousness and memory, particularly the work of psychiatrist Bessel Van der Kolk who argues that the neurobiological response to trauma elicits a universal response- a "speechless terror" that forecloses the possibility of narrative recall memory since the event cannot be "organized on a linguistic level". In contrast to Caruth, Judith Herman (1997) has argued that recovery of trauma is possible with certain qualifications. Following her assumptions, victims need to be encouraged to remember the traumatic events and to mourn their losses in order to re-gain control over their experiences. The American Psychiatric Association has recognized traumatic experience and their effects under the title, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The field of trauma continues to develop and adapt the foundational post structural approaches well as incorporate new perspectives from post colonialism, feminist theory, ethnic studies and ecocriticism in scholarship that examines significance of trauma in literature and society. Recent collections such as *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Theory* and *The future of Trauma* include further exploration of sociocultural and semiotic implications of trauma in literature. The breadth of current criticism provides to the versatility of trauma studies and its relevance to literary theory.

Analysis and Discussion

The selected literary texts can be analyzed and interpreted from the perspective of Trauma theory by considering the concepts of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman about trauma and its representation in literature by focusing on Characterization, narrative structure and symbolism.

Characters and Trauma:

Broken soup revolves around the traumatic experiences of two characters Rowan Clark and her mother, Tess Clark and its influence on their behaviors, emotions and relationships. Rowan Clark, whose brother recently died in an accident and she now finds herself responsible for looking after her little sister Stroma, because her dad has run away and her mum has suffered in a deep depression. This sense of isolation and grief is depicted such as:

"I was the only person who wasn't moving on, and I didn't know how to. Everyone else was getting back to normal, or at least pretending to. But I couldn't. I was stuck in this place of grief and confusion, and I didn't know how to escape" (Valentine, 2008).

However, Tess is suffering from the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as she experiences the avoidance behavior, dissociation, heightened arousal and intrusive memories. For instance, her avoidance behavior can be seen in the following lines:

"They've kept one room locked ever since we moved in. The keys on a hook in the kitchen. Tess doesn't ever go in there. It's the only room in the house that's never been decorated or sorted out." (Valentine, 2008)

On the other hand, *The Things They Carried* depicted the psychological and emotional wounds of different characters on the grounds of Vietnam war. But, it mainly revolves around the experiences of main characters Involving narrator and protagonist Tim O'Brien who is deeply betrayed character because of misguided and uninformed beliefs of community which forced him into the grounds of Vietnam war. He is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder marked by Dissociation, anxiety reactions, war-related depression, survival guilt and grief and nightmares.

Norman Bowker arrives in Vietnam operating within a schema of World War II soldiering. Moreover, he suffered extreme survivor guilt and loss of self after the war as he passed through the death of his friend Kiowa in the wastefulness of war and ultimately he hanged himself after the three years of leaving war. He is unable to turn his traumatic experiences into words and asked the Tim O'Brien to tell his story for him. In his letter to O'Brien, he writes about the problems in finding a meaningful use for his life after war,

"The thing is," he wrote, "there's no place to go. Not just in this lousy little town. In general, my life, I mean. It's almost like I got killed over in Nam . . . Hard to describe. That night when Kiowa got wasted, I sort of sank down into the sewage with him . . . Feels like I'm still in deep shit." (O'Brien, 1990)

Symbols and metaphors related to trauma

"The Broken Soup Bowl" symbolizes the fragmented aspects of life of Tess and acts as reminder of pain she endured as a result of traumatic event. Rowan states in this regard as,

"I found it in the attic. Hidden behind a stack of old newspapers. It's all broken. In bits" (Valentine, 2008).

Moreover, "The Locked Door" represents the inability of Mother of Rowan to express trauma and Isolation surrounding the trauma of Tess. However, "The Mosaic Artwork" serves as metaphor for the process of healing and resilience in the face of trauma which is illustrated as,

"Only a mosaic you can't really see properly because it's been smashed to bits, then put back together again" (Valentine, 2008).

On the other hand, the title *The Things They Carried* indicates the physical and psychological burden of the Soldiers during the war. The dancing girl, who is portrayed in the chapter "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," symbolizes the innocence lost during the harsh period of war.

Narrative Structure

The structure of both novels involves the shifts between the traumatic past and present experiences which depicts fragmented memories with reference to the concept of Cathy Caruth. Tim O'Brien blurs the line between fiction and reality through the storytelling and he shares the harsh realities he experienced as soldier of war as writer. Similarly, the narrative structure is based on the integration of past into present as novel begins with a psychological struggle of family to cope with a loss which is revealed as the story progresses.

Key concept of Caruth embedded in texts:

Caruth's key concepts revolve around the idea that trauma is an event that shatters the individual's experience of time and self, leading to a belated understanding of the traumatic event. This delayed comprehension is often possible through repetitive actions, flashbacks, and the inability to symbolize their experience.

Unclaimed Experiences and Traumatic Delay:

The protagonist, Rowan, experiences the trauma of an accidental death of her brother Jack. This trauma is not fully understood or processed immediately but it gradually comes to the surface with development of plot. For instance, her initial reaction to the death of Jack depicts her numbness and detachment,

"I didn't cry at the funeral. I didn't cry for ages. It was like my tears were stuck inside, frozen solid". (Valentine, 2008)

The mysterious photograph negative that Rowan receives from a boy named Harper played significant role in fragmented understanding of her trauma as she investigates about it. This concept represented as:

"The negative was like a puzzle piece, one that I wasn't sure how it fit into the bigger picture, but I knew it was important." (ibid)

When Rowan sees the entire photograph, she begins to claim and understand her trauma marked by moving from numbness to a profound loss. It is narrated in the novel as

"It was only when I saw the photograph properly that I felt something break inside me. The tears came then, a flood that I couldn't stop." (ibid)

In the same way, Cathy Caruth states in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, "the traumatic experience is an experience that is not fully assimilated as it occurs" (Caruth, 1996, p. 5).

The concept of latency is evident in the way O'Brien's characters process their war experiences after returning home. For example, in the story 'Speaking of Courage', Norman Bowker drives around a lake in his hometown and he tries to accept the death of Kiowa in his unconscious mind. According to Tim O'Brien,

"He could not talk about it and never would. The evening was smooth and warm." (O'Brien, 1990)

This quote illustrates how Bowker struggled regarding representation of his trauma. The smooth and warm evening contrast with his internal conflict which tends to distinguish the present and traumatic past. Similarly, in the chapter "The Man I Killed", O'Brien struggles to make sense about his trauma and to accept reality of his action.

Repetition and Re-enactment: The traumatic event repeatedly occurs in the form of dreams, flashbacks, memories, behavioral problems and mood swings in case of Rowan and her mother. Moreover, Rowan's trauma is often re-occurs through her interaction with the people associated with Jack's life. For instance, she continuously visits the swimming pool where Jack used to swim which signifies her need to re-enact moments that remind her of Jack, hoping to find understanding. As Valentine writes in novel,

"I found myself at the swimming pool again, just standing there, staring at the water, hoping to see something, feel something of Jack".

Caruth argues that trauma "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was

precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4).

Moreover, Tess experiences moments of emotional distress and intrusive memories which indicates the re-occurrence of repressed trauma.

"Sometimes, when I'm in bed, I can hear her crying in her room. Quiet, at first. Then louder." (Valentine, 2008).

In the same way, Tim O'Brien himself as the author and character in the book is an example of the repetitive nature of trauma. He writes and rewrites the stories of his experiences at Vietnam War which is a form of re-enactment that allows him to process the events indirectly. He writes in the chapter "How to Tell a True War Story",

"By telling stories, you objectify your own experience. You separate it from yourself. You pin down certain truths." (O'Brien, 1990)

Furthermore, he often found him-self in the traumatic period of war in his life at home in the form of dreams and flashbacks. In this regard, he states in the chapter "The Man I killed" as

"Sometimes, I forgive myself, other times I don't. In the ordinary hours of life, I try not to dwell on it, but now and then, when I'm reading a newspaper or just sitting alone in a room, I'll look up and see the young man coming out of the morning fog" (O'Brien, 1990).

The Inability to Symbolize the trauma: The trauma exceeds the capacity of language to fully comprehend it all aspects. Similarly, the difficulty of Rowan in expressing her trauma is dominant in her interactions with others and her internal monologue. She often struggles to find the right words to express her grief which is related to Caruth's notion of the crisis of representation,

"There were no words for what I felt. Nothing seemed to fit. Everything seemed too small, too simple for the storm inside me". (valentine, 2008)

Rowan's inability to fully represent her trauma through language reflects the profound impact of her brother's death and her struggle to make sense of it. The Tim O'Brien illustrates that the soldiers have no words to convey the horrors and realities of the war which is observed in the line,

"Beyond that, though, something about the story had frightened me—I was afraid to speak directly, afraid to remember—and in the end the piece had been ruined by a failure to tell the full and exact truth about our night in the shit field" (O'Brien, 1990).

In "How to Tell a True War Story," he reflects the inexpressible nature of trauma by providing that a true war story defies conventional narrative structures and morals:

"A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it (ibid)."

Trauma can be a Shared Experience: The trauma of Jack's death can be considered as a shared experience within the family of Rowan which affected each member in a different but interconnected ways. As Rowan uncovers more about Photograph negative and about the life of Jack, she realizes that her trauma is part of a larger network of shared memories and experiences. For instance, the authors depicted it as,

"The more I found out about Jack, the more I realized how many lives he had touched, and how we were all connected by our memories of him." (valentine, 2008)

The Title of story, *The Things They Carried* indicates the emotional and physical burdens the Soldier carried with them.

"They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing... They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice barely restrained, the instinct to run or freeze or hide... They carried their own lives"(O'Brien, 1990).

In the story "In the Field," The event of Kiowa's death can be a shared traumatic memory marked by a sense of guilt and grief that each soldier carries with them,

"All morning they struggled to retrieve the body, making slow, haphazard progress, but the water kept rising and they felt the ground go spongy underfoot. Lieutenant Cross went first, then the others, one by one" (O'Brien, 1990).

The narrative of O'Brien itself acts as an example of how trauma can be shared through story telling about his and his fellow soldier experiences in war.

Judith Herman and Trauma Recovery

The theory of Judith Herman is a valuable framework which includes four stages of trauma recovery: safety, Remembrance and mourning, and reconnection.

Safety:

It refers to environment for patient which provide them feelings of being protected and safe.

"It bears repeating that the survivor is free to examine aspects of her own personality or behavior that rendered her vulnerable to exploitation only after it has been clearly established that the perpetrator alone is responsible for the crime" (Herman, 1992).

In *Broken Soup*, the mother of Rowan is allowed to realize that she is not alone as she has a family and she can be recovered as others have recovered. Consequently, she expresses her desire to live despite of attempting suicide. For instance,

"For the first time in months, I felt like I wasn't alone. Harper understood what it was like to carry pain and loss, and somehow, that made it easier to bear" (Valentine, 2008)

. The soldiers' shared experiences and mutual support are crucial for their sense of safety and connection. This is seen in how they rely on each other during and after the war:

"They carried each other, the wounded and the weak. They carried infections. They carried diseases. They carried lice and ringworm and leeches and paddy algae and various rots and molds." (O' Brien, 1990)

Moreover, they created psychological safety in an unsafe environment through rituals, routines and carrying personal items. As illustrated by Tim O'Brien

"Henry Dobbins carried his girlfriend's pantyhose wrapped around his neck as a comforter, even after she broke up with him. He believed it kept him safe." (O' Brien, 1990)

Remembrance and Mourning:

This moment of mourning is crucial for Tess as it allows her to express her grief and begin to process her loss which align with Herman's second stage of trauma recovery.

"She cried for hours, and I didn't know what to do except hold her. It felt like she was finally letting go of some of the pain she had been carrying." (Valentine, 2008)

This stage is central in the narrative of O'Brien, as many of stories revolves around the remembering and mourning over the lost soldiers during the war. The act of storytelling itself becomes a method for the characters to reconstruct and mourn their experiences.

"Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (Herman, 1992).

Moreover, the repeated description of man by the O'Brien he killed serves a way to confront his trauma as,

"His jaw in his throat, his face neither expressive nor inexpressive. One eye was shut. The other was a star shaped hole". (O' Brien, pg.83)

Reconnection:

The final stage involves the survivor to reestablish connection and with others and to find a new sense of purpose. It is clearly illustrated as:

"Helplessness and isolation are the core experiences of psychological trauma.

Empowerment and reconnection are the core experiences of recovery (Herman, 1992).

In *The Things They carried*, the Tim O' Brien started writing stories after leaving the war in order to cope with his trauma and he made connection with others through sharing their experiences with others. On other hand, Norman Bowker was unable to find meaningful purpose of life and to adjust in his society after experiencing horrors of war. Despite the initial withdrawal and avoidance, the interaction of Rowan with Harper whom she meets by chance lead to the healing of his trauma and similar was with her mother who find comforts in relationships.

"For the first time in months, I felt like I wasn't alone. Harper understood what it was like to carry pain and loss, and somehow, that made it easier to bear" (Valentine, 2008).

Limitations

Although the theoretical study of trauma and its relationship to literature is vast and varied, the current study is limited to the exploration of above described aspects of traumatic events in *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien and *Broken Soup* by Jenny Valentine under the framework of trauma theory by Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In a nutshell, the current study contributes to understand how literature responds to violent event which are prevailing in a particular society. Moreover, this study carries out a comparative analysis of two very different texts which are associated with different genre involving fiction and historical realism and found that the individuals in *The Things They carried* are capable of responding to traumatic event in a far more complex and resilient way as compared to those in *Broken Soup*. Most importantly, through investigating the experiences of different characters in different context, it describes the trauma as an event which lead to the loss of control and one's identity. In addition, it states that survivors are unable to use language in order to describe such distressing and overwhelming events. Equally, this study provides the clear representation of long lasting psychological impacts of wars on soldiers and impacts of death of some dear ones on the lives of people behind them.

Further recommendations deal with the application of particular framework on different literary texts in an innovative way by considering different subject matters related to traumatic aspects such as childhood abuse, slavery and genocide, domestic violence, psychological disturbance in the lives of women to come up with new findings in the particular discipline in future. Most importantly, it suggests the need for broader discussions about trauma, its representation in literature and its recovery by considering the concepts of different renowned scholars who pioneered the trauma theory.

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