

A Psycho-Traumatic Analysis of Two Post-Modern Plays: Julie Myatt's *Welcome Home Jenny Stutter* and Christopher Shinn's *Dying City*

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Received: 9 /4/2023

Accepted: 30 /40 /2023

Published: 15/9/2023

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.36473/uihss.v62i3.2206>



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Abstract

Due to the intense and detrimental effects that war has not just traumatized military personnel who have served in the military of their home nation, particularly throughout wars, as well as on a whole warring society, the theme of trauma has become increasingly prevalent in the American scene over the past forty years. This has prompted many relevant playwrights to record and depict the negative outcomes of war and its disastrous effects not only on the militants after coming back home but also on the civilian population. Playwrights have explored the terrible effects of war, the challenges that survivors confront after the war, and the origins of trauma in their plays in order to highlight the trauma's causes and develop treatments for the hazardous mental disorder of war trauma. The two American post-modern plays *Welcome Home Jenny Stutter* by Julie Myatt and *Dying City* by Christopher Shinn will be examined and their major characters' psyches will be analyzed. The research concludes that there are certain symptoms that appear on the main characters in the plays such as alienation, insomnia, fear, depression, insecurity, and flashback.

Keywords: traumatic theatre, trauma, traumatic theory, flashback, alienation

التحليل النفسي لأضطراب ما بعد الصدمة في مسحتة: من الحقبه الحديثة : أهلا بعودتك لجولي مايت و مدينة الموت لكريستينورشن

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الملخص

يقدم فهم الشخصيات من خلال عدسة نظرية الصدمات بعداً أكبر ويوضح سلوكياتهم في الدراما. تظهر عليهم علامات اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة من كل من الصدمات السابقة وتلك التي تظهر حالياً في المسرحيات. لوحظت أعراض مختلفة للصدمة مثل وجود مثل بغبيضة، كونها ساخرة، والتفكير في أن العالم غير مستقر، وخطير، وغير موثوق به، وغير منظم. تعاني الشخصيات من المزاج المكتئب والأرق والكوابيس والباس واللوم على الذات؛ الدوافع نحو الماسوشية وتدمير الذات. كما عانت الشخصيات من تدني احترام الذات واللوم على الذات والشعور بالذنب والوحدة مما تسبب في اغترابهم وخيبة أملهم وخلل النطق. سمات الشخصية التي تشير إلى الضرر المرتبط بالصدمة للبنية الذاتية. تتكرر هذه الأعراض في هاتين المسرحيتين، مما يشير إلى وجود علاقة غير واعية بين الموضوعات وعلم نفس الشخصية. الحرب وأثارها المروعة لها عواقب وخيمة على الناس لفترة طويلة. سواء كانت الشخصيات مقاتلين أم مدنيين، فإنهم يشعرون أنهم فظيعون وغير محتملين وغير مرغوب فيهم لأنهم يجبرون الأفراد المصابين بصدمات نفسية الذين يتأثرون على أن يصبحوا معزولين أكثر فأكثر عن الأعضاء الآخرين في مجتمعهم. تستخدم جيني سوتر في مسرحيتها " أهلاً بعودتك" أسلوباً حساساً للغاية. حيث توضح حالة المخضرم الذي لا يستطيع التعامل مع ساقه الاصطناعية. جيني تمكن القارئ من الدخول في العقل و تُظهر الأشخاص المضطربين من خلال شخصياتها وكيف تؤثر هذه المشاكل على حياتهم الطبيعية. تُظهر المسرحية شخصية مروعة ومتقلبة للمحارب المخضرم الذي لا يريد العودة إلى المنزل من أجل لقاء اللوم عليه من قبل أفراد عائلته. تكشف المسرحية أن كل إنسان لديه معركة للفوز. تكافح الشخصيات الأخرى ضد قضاياهم الشخصية ليتم حلها، أي أنهم بحاجة إلى الاعتناء بهم. تبدو مسرحية كريستوفر شين "مدينة تحتضر" دخيلة لأن الشخصية هي نفسها مما يجعل الماضي والحاضر منفصلين. ينجح شين في تقديم المسرحية بألغاز مما يترك القارئ يطرح عدة أسئلة ويحاول الإجابة عليها. أسلوبه الدرامي يهدف إلى إعطاء نطاق واسع لمسرحيته. حيث يوضح الكاتب أعراض ما بعد الصدمة بنجاح باستخدام سلوكيات معينة تقوم بها شخصياته. يستخدم شين أسلوباً غير مباشر ومخادع لاكتشاف الأعراض اللاحقة لصدمة شخصياته، نظراً لأن أحد أعراض الدراما هو إظهار العمل الدرامي الذي يوجد فيه الصراع والتشويق وعدم اليقين والتوتر والخوف حيث يمكن الجمهور من اخذ افكار عن مشاكلهم ايضاً للتغلب عليها من خلال ملاحظة الدراما للتعرف على قصص الشخصيات التي تم إجبارها على البقاء ظروف مروعة وكيف تم تحسينها بشكل كبير. اليوم، الجميع على دراية بالصدمة بسبب الصراعات العديدة والكوارث الطبيعية التي تحدث في جميع أنحاء العالم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المسرح المؤلم، الصدمة، نظرية الصدمة، الفلاش باك، الاغتراب

1. Introduction

Theatre in general has certain purposes. It is not only utilized for entertainment but for other purposes as well, for instance; teaching people values and morals. According to the theatre viewpoints, the characters on-stage are not only abstract entities but also representatives of people's real life who act to uncover their surroundings and sufferings. Accordingly, the audience will be able to interact with the characters' private lives. For Aristotle, this can happen because the audience creates an internal connection with a certain character who goes through a certain type of trauma. Frye (1957: 38) states that "pathos has a close relation to the sensational reflex of tears. Pathos presents its hero as isolated by a weakness which appeals to our sympathy because it is our own level of experience".

The impact of that connection helps the audience to manage their trauma too as Horowitz (1976: 20) argues that "after a traumatic event, there is a compulsory tendency toward repetition of some aspect of the experience". One of the ways that people treat their traumatic problems is by attending the theatre. Consequently, theatre can be considered as a kind of clinic that can heal traumatized people in order to go back to their normal life before experiencing trauma and be good people in their community.

Psychologically, when the feelings of the audience go with certain characters, they are going to feel either scared or sympathetic to them. These types of feelings are not merely felt towards the characters but also realized from the inner side of the audience themselves due to their own traumatic experiences. Despite that the scenes and atmosphere within the play might be severe or fantasy, they can exist in the real world which is unlike what was presented in past dramatic performances. Previously, people flood by tragic stories which are imaginary and unrealistic and some of these stories still haunt the contemporary audience. Moriarty (1989: 523) states that "the notion of vraisemblance can exercise a pragmatic function of ideological censorship in confirming 'public opinion', or even a set of stereotypes equated with public opinion, reinforcing on the imaginary level the power-relationships of everyday life".

Bogart (2010: 82) argues that "I believe that theatre's function is to remind us with the big human issues ... of our terror and our humanity". Fear emerges when someone faces or experiences trauma but connecting and witnessing this kind of trauma to large sufferings of humans, it gets us closer to humanity. All human being experience suffers as results from things that are imposed on them. About sharing others' sufferings and feelings, Bogart (2010: 83) says that "theatre that does not channel terror has no energy... not from a place of security and safety". Accordingly, people do not attend theatres for fun only or running away from their burdens, the theatre also makes them face reality and things that scared them hoping to find solutions in the performances of others' experiences on the stage. The influential thing that haunts people is to experience trauma because it is out of control and has many causes such as rape, attacks, natural disasters, close death, abuse and other life-threatening incomprehensible events. These traumatic experiences can cause physiological sufferings as well as and psychological wounds which might lead to death in some cases so that is why the

dramatists put this issue on the stage so as to expose to society the seriousness of this issue.

2. Theatre of Trauma

2.1. The Structure of Drama

Aristotle's *The Poetics* is a firm base for drama. As it is regarded as the bible of theatre which any scholar should read. For Aristotle, drama has six vital entities: spectacle, song, diction, thought, character, and plot. Aristotle (1961 : 61) points out that:

“Tragedy is ... an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in the separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions”.

All parts of the play are significant and relevant but single acts can influence the audience and purge them of negative feelings. Accordingly, Lucas (1962: 41-42) assures that:

“Too often, however, it is misleadingly assumed that the only emotions supposed by Aristotle to find healthy relief in serious drama are pity and fear. But he does not say ‘pity and fear producing the relief of these emotions’. .. the relief of such emotions, emotions of that sort. But of what sort? ... Grief, weakness, contempt, blame – these I take to be the sort of things that Aristotle meant by ‘feelings of that sort’.

This type of purification that people do is achieved through mimic. The role of tragedy is to represent the reality of the world people live in. Consequently, when the audience goes to the theatre, they not only have soul purification but to learn lessons too. Aristotle also (1961: 62) argues that “tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists of action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality”. Although this statement is true, yet there is also another important element in the play which cannot be avoided which is the character. The character is as significant as the plot itself because through characterization emotional purgation can be deeply achieved. Gellrich (1988: 230) states that “all of the actions names by Greek philosophers involve violent deeds between persons dear to each other, such as relatives and close friends”. Accordingly, if one can consider the plot as the soul, the character is the heart of the drama. Thus, what makes the audience engages with the character is the emotional situation of their role. Hanly (1992: 89) clarifies that:

“There is an obscurity concerning the emotions selected by Aristotle for this cathartic remedy. They are pity and fear. The obscurity may result from the fact that Aristotle did not understand the unconscious thoughts and effects aroused by tragedy and, in a qualified sense, gratified (abreacted). It is these unconscious thoughts and effects that terminate in a conscious feelings of pity for the tragic hero who suffers a calamity and a fear lest we ourselves suffer a like calamity”.

The plot of the play might not be equal to the audience's real life story but the emotional scenes of the characters can affect them profoundly. Most of tragedies depend on fantasy events but this does not mean that the plot lacks basic elements to make the audience become more engaged. Aristotle (1961: 79) argues that "He (the playwright) may not indeed destroy the framework of the received legends ... but he ought to show invention of his own, and skillfully handle the traditional material". Thus, it doesn't matter if the audience knows what's going on as long as the plot manages in the right way. Steiner (1963: 35) justifies that "the forms of Greek tragedy codify the truth of experience and common understanding. The wildness of incident in *King Lear* or the alternate of grief and buffoonery in *Macbeth* is reprehensible not because they violate the precepts of Aristotle, but because they contradict the natural shape of human behavior".

2.2. General Trauma Theory

Applying modern theories in drama causes worries all the time. Thus, the psychological theory is not recent as it can be found within the fields of theology and philosophy. The Psychological trauma has its roots in the work of the French dramatist Pierre Janet. De Prince (2001: 2) argues that Janet makes a type of relationship between women's hysteria and wide-range childhood traumas. Accordingly, other scholars reach the same results such as Freud and Breuer. According to Herman (1992: 12) those two scholars state that "unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness, which in turn induced the hysterical symptoms". The difference between Freud and Breuer on one hand and Janet on the other hand is a matter of terminology. Herman (Ibid: 12) states that the formers call the modification in consciousness "double consciousness" while the latter calls this type of modification "dissociation". According to Janet, these types of memories regard as "subconscious fixed ideas" while Breuer and Freud regard them as "reminiscences" (Herman, Ibid: 12).

Janet (1925: 670) suggests that "The traumatic memory ... plays an important part in a certain number of neuroses and psychoses". Consequently, this is the heart of various psychological problems. An individual who has not revealed any type of disorder can find her/himself showing some symptoms. Thus, "a depression which seems accidental, which is not related to the subject's condition from youth upwards, and which does not depend upon an obvious change in his health, may be related to a memory of this kind" (Janet, Ibid: 670). When one cannot find any justification for the problem, it can be traced back to a series of events.

Janet (1925: 678-679) argues that:

"The psychological study of traumatic memories enables us to devise a more rational method of treatment. The memory has only become traumatic because of the reaction to the happening has been badly affected. Either because of a depression already induced by other causes, or else because of a depression induced then and there by emotion aroused by the incident, the subject has been unable to

achieve, or has but partially achieved, the assimilation which is the internal adaptation of the individuality of the event”.

Literary speaking, tragic characters are affected by these experiences and memories as if happened in their real life. So to understand why these characters perform such actions, one has to understand the events and their influence on the characters as these factors influence them in many ways. Janet realizes that traumatic memories are very difficult and with heavy impact because they are rooted in the psyche of a person. And the process of healing may take a long time. Freyd (2009: 90) states that:

“according to the prevailing viewpoint in cognitive science, we have in place many separate mental modules, or cognitive mechanisms ... capable of processing incoming information in parallel and organized into even larger mental processing clusters... often, different modules process the same event in different ways”.

The other reason, according to Herman (1992 :33), is that:

“traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke responses of catastrophe”.

Trauma, thus, depends on the psychological status of the person as some individuals can call back traumatic events very quickly while others cannot. Various factors that can affect an individual’s psychological status as Horowitz (1976: 20) argues that :“As a psychoanalysis developed, trauma was regarded as the cause of various symptoms, conflicts, fixations, character traits, defenses, and adaptive and maladaptive cognitive and affective developments”.

2.3. Directing Theories

Some scholars and theorists who study directing theories adopt some scenarios that happen in their personal lives to create the atmosphere of the theatre. Meyerhold has “The Great Purge” when he is tortured for his beliefs. Brecht, the German director, establishes “Epic Theatre” as he experiences oppression happens in Germany after World War I. Romanska clarifies how Grotowski and Kantor, Polish artists, utilize the holocaust so as to establish a new theatre. Also, Romanska (2012: 124) states that:

“Grotowski has made an imaginative work of art, which at first sight has the trappings of art ... What the actors are doing is making the spirit of that concentration camp live again for a moment, so in a sense, their work is more realistic, because even the statistics refer to the past, the man describing in the courtroom what happened refers to the past”.

Kantor includes the holocaust in his drama differently which is clarified by Romanska (Ibid: 252) as follows : “Kantor negates both physical presence and the present, concluding that only thought and memory are important ... memory is important because after a traumatic event, one lives only in memory, dwelling in

the moment of trauma, reliving it over and over again". The elements of theatre for Kantor are about the past because when trauma haunts, individuals cannot keep moving forward and they live in hurtful memories. Accordingly, the meaning of theatre is clarified by Artaud (1997: 27) as "The plague takes images that are dormant, a latent disorder, and suddenly extends them into the most extreme gestures; the theatre also takes gestures and pushes them as far as they will go; like the plague it reforges the chain between what is said and what is not, between the virtuality of possible and what already exists in materialized nature". Also Artaud (Ibid: 82-83) shared his opinion by stating that: "I suppose then a theatre in which violent physical images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator seized by the theatre as by a whirlwind of higher forces". Thus, human beings are famous for reacting deeply to extreme and violent images in nature. It is really exciting to witness people's experiences live on the stage where violent events show and share directly with the audience. When people experience something horrible and it shows life in front of them, these events trigger their senses and make them react physiologically.

Another director who is concerned with trauma on stage is Reza Abdoh. His works are identified with certain themes such as violence, musical scenes, unrelenting performances, sexuality and disruptions. He wants to establish narratives not only drive himself but others. He rejects the traditional ways of narratives. Mufson (1999: 45) quotes the lines of Abdoh as follows:

"Everything I do in some way deals with the notion of restructure, restructuring of something that has been destroyed, something that has been either intentionally destroyed or destroyed by means of power. So of course death and redemption and ecstasy and structures of family which are laden with unexamined concepts – it's a way of looking at these things and thinking 'how do we reshape these, how do we look at them again? How do we create a way of accepting who we are in our own image rather than in someone else's?'"

Abdoh wants to say that trauma shapes us. People reshape trauma and uncover it. Accordingly, the audience wonders what happened in the past, what is happening now and what will happen. It keeps the audience more engaged with the show.

3. A Glance at the Life of Julie Myatt and Christopher Shinn:

Having a glance at the dramatists' lives helps the reader to have a background about them and enhance their understanding of their literary works.

3.1. Julie Marie Myatt

Myatt's early years are influenced by the Vietnam War, in which her father deploys twice while she was still a toddler. Personal experience is not the play's sole inspiration, though. She develops an interest in the undercurrents that lie beneath beautiful family lives after seeing Bill Owens' photographs in his pioneering book, *Suburbia*, which was released in 1973.

Her work rouses sympathy, disdain, humor, and self-recognition. She is the first significant photographic examination of middle-class lives. Julie's statements

regarding her subjects are similar to Owen's themes . She likes to write about what is exciting in American society and what is lifeless about it.

Myatt is a playwright with a base in Los Angeles, and some of her most recent productions are *Welcome Home Jenny Stutter*, a play about her tough journey home from the war in Iraq, *Boats on a River*, a play about sex slavery in Cambodia, and *Someday*, a play about reproductive rights that Cornerstone Theater commissioned for its Justice Cycle. Myatt's writing is far more nuanced than that. Thus, it's impossible to label her as an author of "issue plays." Michael John Garcés, creative director of Cornerstone, claims that Julie says all she wants to express without really having to say it (Anne:69).

3.2. Christopher Shinn

Christopher Shinn was born in the United States in 1975. His plays *Where Do We Live* (2004) earned the 2005 Obie Award for Playwriting, and *Dying City* (2006) was a nominee for the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Shinn, who now resides in New York, was born in 1975 in Hartford, Connecticut. He graduated from New York University with a BFA in dramatic writing. His debut play, *Four*, was presented by the Royal Court Theatre in London, which also ordered numerous of his other pieces.

His play *Dying City* was presented Off-Broadway at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theatre by Lincoln Center Theater from February 15, 2007, during previews, until April 29, 2007, officially. Brooksher and Schreiber were among the cast members under James G. MacDonald's direction. The Royal Court Theatre in London had the play's global debut in 2006. The play was a Pulitzer Prize for Drama nominee in 2008.

From 3 September to 1 November 2008, the Royal Court Theatre in London hosted the world premiere of Shinn's drama now or later. The drama is set during a presidential campaign in the United States and centers on the struggle that the gay son of the Democratic nominee is going through. In October 2012, the play got its US premiere at Boston's Huntington Theatre Company. Director Michael Wilson features Grant MacDermott, Tom Nelis, and Adriane Lenox.

The Goodman Theatre in Chicago commissioned *Teddy Ferrara*, which had its world debut there from February 2–3, 2013, under the direction of Evan Cabnet. In the play, Gabe, a gay college student, has a tragedy on campus that complicates his life. Dominic Cooke, the director, staged the play in London at the Donmar Warehouse in October 2015.

Oliver Butler's production of *An Opening in Time* had its world debut at Hartford Stage from September 17 until October 11, 2015. The drama is set in New England and centers on Anne, a woman in her 60s who is trying to get in touch with a former lover.

Ben Whishaw and Ian Rickson's Against, which ran at the Almeida Theatre from August 12 to September 30, 2017 had its world debut there. The drama centers on a Silicon Valley billionaire who embarks on a mission to persuade America to confront its violence problem.

4. The Analysis of the Plays:

4.1. Julie Myatt's *Welcome Home Jenny Sutter*

Myatt's heroin is Jenny Sutter, a U.S. Marine, who puts her rifle down when she returns from Iraq but isn't prepared to pick up her kids. To buy some time, Jenny travels one way to the oddball desert town of Slab City, where its compassionate citizens tenderly tend to her wounded spirit and prod her into her own humanity. Trauma is vividly captured during the events of the play as in the following quotation:

"The ceiling was quiet. The ceiling never changed. Only the same shadows of my parents dancing across the white, as they stood arguing in a corner of the room ... Eventually, I stopped asking. I gave up on the ceiling. I turned my face to the wall instead, where there hung a picture of my dad uncle Jim, killed in Vietnam".
(*Welcome Home Jenny Sutter*, p:1)

The play opens with the post-traumatic status of Jenny who is still haunted by the shock as she cannot stop thinking of her situation. She is depressed and disappointed as her participation in the war does not bring anything just grief. She lies alone in a bed recalling her memories. She remembers her parents' fights and dancing, their happy and sad moments. Lots of questions trigger in her mind but her uncle's picture, who died in Vietnam War, was on the wall and that stops her flashbacks to look at it. Morgan (2012:201) raises important questions concerning the soldiers who participate in war: "Can citizens ever really comprehend the thoughts of wounded American war veterans who are attempting to rejoin the community following deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq? Undoubtedly, a lot of those veterans need assistance, but how can we effectively get in touch with them?"

These issues are subtly but honorably addressed in the drama of *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter*. The play which is currently having its Midwest debut at Next Theatre undoubtedly has the right intentions, yet its theatrical style can cause more confusion than it does illumination. As Jenny Sutter (Lily Majekwu), a former U.S. Marine, recovers from her wounds sustained in battle, we first get a glimpse into her mind. Then, we are taken to a dilapidated bus terminal in California where we learn that Sutter is having trouble using her prosthetic leg. Accordingly, Myatt tries to make the reader gets into the patients' mind to reveal the psychological status s/he lives in.

"Slowly I fell asleep in the comfort of his young, beautiful smile ... the flickering light of the gold buttons on his proud chest ... and I dreamed of being a hero. The sounds of a bomb exploding".

(*Welcome Home Jenny Sutter* p: 2)

The writer depicts Jenny as a tired person who suffers from post-traumatic symptoms. Jenny needs rest to refresh and comfort. On the smile of her uncle, she falls asleep. The scenes of war are still in her mind. She cannot get rid of them. She dreams of the sounds of explosions and bombs. She has a psychological condition because of war. She cannot think of anything else but explosions. This is one of the

psychological states of a traumatic person who suffers from overthinking of an event that causes pain.

Noth (2014) argues that the plot of the play is disconnected, either to minimize preachiness or possibly because the playwright, Julie Marie Myatt, prefers odd observations. She uses riffs on their daily activities to delve inside the troubled minds of her characters. Because of this, the play must rely significantly on its actors to convey to us insights that are subtler than those that can be written. Thus, the writer wants the reader to dive into trouble-minded characters and to feel their sufferings.

In the following dialogue, Jenny talks to Hugo at the bus station but her status seems unstable as she looks afraid and cautious:

“Hugo: Have you worked a graveyard shift?

Jenny: Yes.

Hugo: Gotta do something.

Jenny: Trying cleaning.

Hugo: where you going?

Jenny: Won't you find out when I buy my ticket?

Hugo: Is that your final destination?

Jenny: None of your business.

Hugo: That's too unclear. I need a place. A name.

Jenny: I don't want you following me.

Hugo: Why would I follow you?” (Welcome Home Jenny Sutter,p: 5)

She doesn't like anyone to get into her own business. She looks nervous when she told him that:“None of your business”. She has no desire to talk at all and starts imagining that he might follow her and want to do something bad. Her speech reflects her psychological status which proves that she is suffering from trauma. Her physical status also shows that too as she looks afraid, cautious, and tired. Morgan (2012) comments on Sutter's state as being evasive with everyone she meets, even the outgoing vagabond Lou and terminal employee Hugo. Sutter accepts Lou's invitation to go with her to a desert community of social outcasts who have established a kind of social collective on the grounds of a deserted military post because she doesn't want to go back home. Jenny is very standoffish with anyone she meets. She is in a psychological condition that makes her avoid anyone because she distrusts them.

Jenny is presented as lost and uncertain of what to do and where to go :

“Jenny: Where's the next but going?

Lou: Niland.

Jenny: Where's that?

Lou: middle of nowhere really. Desert.

Jenny: That's where I'm going” (p: 9)

She has nowhere to escape from her war nightmares. She wants to run out of this because she has a nervous breakdown and needs a place to feel comfortable. The post-traumatic condition affects her so badly, depressed, sad, and unable to escape

that past because war deprives her of her family members and causes nervous breakdown and psychological problems.

Duke (2018) argues that a chance encounter at a bus stop convinces Jenny to travel with Lou to Slab City, California, where squatters and campers have taken over an abandoned military base and transformed it into a kind of off-the-grid village. She is avoiding home out of concern for her family's reaction towards her wounds.

Jenny is surprised to see that Lou has lots of friends while she does not :

“Lou: Hi Page! ... Hi Ricky! ... How ya doing, Marcus! Your plants look great. That toilet makes a terrific planter ... Donald.

Donald: Louise.

Lou: Hi Linda! ... Nice chairs. Wow. Where'd you find those? Ola, Raul. Love your shorts.

Jenny: You have a lot of friends.” (Welcome Home Jenny Sutter,p: 14)

A close look at both Lou and Jenny shows that Lou is a sociable person while Jenny Sutter is an introverted one who prefers loneliness over being surrounded by friends. War makes soldiers machine guns as they are left without feelings and emotions. She feels the difference between her and Lou who has many friends, family and people who care about her. It is Jenny's post-traumatic condition that makes her introverted and unfriendly as well. Duke (2018) connects Jenny's reaction to her realizing that everyone around her is battling with their own messed-up lives; Lou, who struggles with addiction issues of gambling, smoking, and sex; Buddy, a victim of abuse who sees himself as a preacher; and Donald, a socially awkward jeweler with rage issues. They are all yearning for something or someone to believe in, but they must start with themselves, especially Jenny. The idea is that a traumatic person should be treated in a special way to heal. So those people whom Jenny meets are searching for someone to believe in them and to soothe their psychological pain.

Jenny is not only suffering from the psychological consequences of war but she is physically tired too:

“Jenny: I need to lay down.

Lou: She's been to war.

Buddy: No Kidding ...

She'll need a good rest from that one ...

I hear my grandfather slept for one month solid when he came home from war”.
(Welcome Home Jenny Sutter, p: 16)

She is so exhausted and cannot bear to go from one place to another. She is very tired both physically and psychologically. Post-traumatic condition is critical as the person who has such symptoms prefers to be lonely so as to have rest and relief. Also her sadness for losing some of her family members in the war causes her instability to the extent of escaping from her reality to nowhere or at least sleeping for a long time. Fischer (2014) argues that :“The supporting cast of Harrison's Jenny gradually persuades us of that their own torturous return from the edge while inspiring us with their idealistic, occasionally painful, frequently humorous, and utterly sincere attempts to relate to a woman for whom so much has gone wrong”.

This helps us to believe in Jenny's potential for redemption. So to succeed in depicting the inner feelings of a traumatic person then we need to focus on the inner side of the character's mind. The singing of the somber and melancholy ensemble makes it abundantly evident how fragile and quickly broken all such connections are. According to Myatt , sticking together is another reason for creating a moving drama that arouse audiences' feelings of sadness for such characters .

Having Nightmares can also be considered as a trauma symptom which is obvious in this dialogue:

“Lou: You scream and talk in your sleep, you know.

Jenny: I do?

Lou: It's pretty awful.

Jenny: sorry.

Lou: No problem. I just wonder what they feel like?

Jenny: What?

Lou: Your nightmares” (Welcome Home Jenny Sutter,p:20)

Besides all her sufferings, Jenny has nightmares and talks in her sleep too. But when she wakes up she couldn't even recall her nightmares as her mind is busy with past war events in Iraq. Sleep talking is another traumatic symptom that lasts for a long period of time to be fully healed. Jenny is physically and psychologically hurts.

Any play about a returning war veteran who suffers from injuries and nightmares runs the risk of becoming overly sentimental. Since the subject is so current in society, so any dramatic balance can easily be upset by the immense weight of our concern. The ensemble's skill, the story's developing indirect psychology, and the funny, poignant punches that are permitted to sneak up on the audience save *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter* from such a detour.

4.2. Christopher Shinn's *Dying City*

Shinn's *Dying City* focuses on the character of Kelly, a young therapist, whose husband's death, while serving in Iraq, still has its impact on her. A year after Craig's death, Kelly is confronted by Peter, his identical twin, who believes that Craig's death was not an accident. The scenes in Shinn's drama alternate between the conflict between Peter and Kelly and Kelly's last difficult goodbye to her husband, Craig, at their sparse downtown Manhattan apartment after nightfall. Through allusions to 9/11 and the Iraq War, Shinn's eerie, nuanced play examines how recent political events and history have affected the lives of these three men. Shinn shows that impact by inserting traumatic scenes as in the following quotation:

“Peter: When did you start watching all this TV, I don't remember you being a big TV person.

Kelly: Yeah, I never was before.

Peter: Was it after Craig died? (pause).

Kelly: Maybe – when I couldn't sleep I'd watch TV, I'd watch”. (*Dying City,p: 22*)

Kelly starts to have insomnia after Craig's death. She couldn't sleep well since her husband's death. Her mind actually couldn't handle his forever departure. Her mind is preoccupied with her husband and as a result, her body reacts to the event as well. Her daily routine turns upside down too as she has changed a lot; before his death, she doesn't like to watch TV but now she is an addicted TV person which is one of the symptoms of traumatic disorder that is called insomnia.

Shinn presents the character of Peter as an identical twin to Craig so as to highlight the impact of that similarity on Kelly. But Scheck (2019) criticizes the play for giving one character two roles. He states that the transitions between the past and present would be unclear and seem gimmicky.

The identical twins are presented to give Kelly the chance to engage with one person who represents two very different characters: Craig, a Harvard graduate, is an academic, whereas Peter, who is self-absorbed, doesn't seem like the brightest bulb. Also, the dramatic impact would be vividly captured through their identical faces which give a more realistic impact on the audiences too. Shinn presents most of events orally rather than being dramatized. Also they are frequently brought up subtly and brief way too. The elliptical exchanges could hint that Kelly and Craig's marriage might have been in before he departed for war.

Peter is also presented as having the post-traumatic disorder as is quoted here:

"Peter: Tim thinks I have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, keeps bugging me to see his shrink. But I'm like, No – if this is grief, these "moments" – then I should feel it, right? I don't want to medicate my grief away ...

Kelly: I'm not a psychiatrist. But I think Tim is right, it does sound like you should see one". (Dying City,p: 23)

Just like Kelly, Peter suffers from insomnia too which is one of the post-traumatic symptoms such as overthinking, change in mood and having flashbacks. The death of his twin has a deep impact on him which might last for a long time so he will need of a psychiatrist.

Brantley (2007) argues that Shinn uses the allure of a cunning window display in his play to introduce a variety of riddles concerning the desolate and empty flat. Also, it is not clear how Craig passed away.

Being an absent character, Craig is presented through the flashback technique by both Kelly and Peter. From also the following dialogue the audience will get to know more things about Craig:

"Peter: Well, he also believed in the war. There was that also. I think it's so sad he never finished his Ph.D. Do you still have his Faulkner research?

Kelly: I sent it to your mom" (Dying City,p: 24)

Kelly and Peter are remembering the things that Craig used to do before his death. He likes military service and studying too. They feel sorry for him as he couldn't get his Ph.D. because the army paid for his school. Kelly sends Craig's incomplete thesis to his mom as she cannot keep it to herself as she wants to stay away from whatever reminds her of her husband. Memories of Craig still haunt his wife and his brother. They cannot stop thinking about old times. Flashback here considered as is a symptom of a person who suffers from a post-traumatic disorder. Brantley (2007) argues that the topic of William Faulkner, which was discussed in Craig's

thesis was also presented in television shows such as ;"Law & Order" and "The Daily Show". Kelly spends most of her time watching TV after the death of her husband to escape from sadness but such shows make her very sad. Kelly also does not want to talk with Peter because of the identical looking between them as that will make her sadness deeper and add more pain which is not understood by Peter himself:

“Peter: Why couldn't you ... did I do something that made you not want to talk to me,/ or –

Kelly: It's just me. I haven't wanted contact with anybody”. (*Dying City*, p: 32)

The narrative by Shinn is deceptive and indirect, offering numerous underlying concepts. There are timely allusions to 9/11 and Abu Ghraib that appear to be attempting to draw a parallel between the personal anguish of the three protagonists and an American tragedy. Craig describes Baghdad as a dying city, but it's difficult to prevent us from thinking of that the phrase could also apply to New York. Also, the references to Faulkner and Eugene O'Neill are undoubtedly intended to be hints as well. Concerning Peter's fluctuating cast of boyfriends, Kelly's wealthy parents, and war are all on the conversational agenda. Every word that is said in the play contributes to the perception that individuals are competing for dominance and trying to categorize and indirectly denigrate one another.

Peter feels the depression that Kelly lives in, so he wants to change the atmosphere of the scene by talking about some war jokes. Kelly is disappointed and depressed at the same time. She lost her husband and lives a gloomy life. He likes to advise her to read her husband's emails about some jokes but he couldn't. Kelly lives in conflict between trying to forget her husband and her yearning to reconcile with him once again via reading his emails as she told Peter that:

“Kelly: ... So I sort of – would retreat into my own little world, and read Craig's emails ... they were so inspiring ...

Can I ... I think part of my hesitation with – the emails, your asking if you could share them with me before” (*Dying City*,p: 33)

There are some letters from Craig when he was in the serves that make her eager to retreat to her world and read them. Kelly becomes introverted and preferred to be alone with her memories but she hesitates also to ask for the letters because she will be disconnected from reality and refuse to pass her sad memories. Mandell (2019:97) clarifies that: “ The two nights that are referenced in and out of the play during which the past of the characters are revealed through exposition, the puzzles grow more complex”. The complexity that Mandell states is concerning the details about the death of Craig , the casual way that Kelly treat Peter and the stilted, elliptical, and strained conversations between Craig and Kelly, and Peter and Kelly. All three characters are presented as having degrees and working in highly verbal fields; Kelly is a therapist and Craig is a Ph.D. candidate in English literature who was about to finalize a thesis on William Faulkner. Craig and Kelly are both Harvard graduates. The actor Peter is taking a vacation from acting in movies to appear in Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey into Night" in New York.

Shinn's play follows the predominance of toxic mentality across numerous degrees of culture and politics, from a theater backstage to a battlefield; from a couple's

bed to the back seat of a family car during a road trip. He meticulously builds the case against Craig using what appear to be casual recollections, a shocking batch of emails he wrote Peter from Iraq, and even the writers he was researching for his Ph.D. thesis.

Brantley (2019) argues that Peter is unstable one, leaves a play in the middle of it, and drinks himself to insanity. When Craig, whom Kelly had met at Harvard, was called up to serve in Iraq following the 11th.of Sep., he was a reservist and working on a dissertation in American literature. He appears to be a solid, honorable individual.

But when you learn more about the brothers, particularly about their upbringing in the Midwest, one can notice similarities between them that weren't first apparent. Over time, it becomes clear that they are both made of the same, deceptively silky fabric of misogyny and sadism. Kelly suspects that Craig has killed himself because she discovers that he betrays her with another woman and that breaks her down in a horrible way as she tells Peter that:

“Kelly: Guilt? Over me? No, that’s not guilt,/ no –

Peter: What is it then?

Kelly: He wanted to get away from/ me,

Peter: No.

Kelly: so he went to Iraq and shot himself – oh! Leave my house I need to be alone” (Dying City p: 36)

McNulty (2013) comments on the character of Peter as playing the role of a psychotherapist in order to help Kelly but being an identical twin to her husband becomes very challenging. It might get tiresome to try and convey empathy and understanding. Shinn has worked diligently to depict a lady who isn't quite a mistress of her own life in painting Kelly's persona as her inner struggle, wrath and sorrow are constantly threatening to overflow beyond her careful self-control.

5. Conclusion

Understanding the characters through the lens of trauma theory offers a greater dimension and clarifies their behaviors in the drama. They show signs of post-traumatic disorder from both earlier traumas and those currently shown in the plays. Various symptoms of trauma are observed such as having misanthropic ideals, being cynical, and thinking the world is unstable, perilous, unreliable, and erratic. The characters suffer from depressed moods, insomnia, nightmares, despair, self-blame; impulses toward masochism and self-destruction. Also characters experienced low self-esteem, self-blame, guilt and loneliness which caused their alienation, disillusionment and dysphoria. Personality traits that indicate trauma are closely related and cause damage to one's self-structure.

These symptoms recur in these two plays, indicating an unconscious connection between the topics and character psychology. War and its horrifying effects have bad consequences on people for a long time. Whether the characters are combatants or civilians, they feel that they are terrible, intolerable, and unwanted because they force the traumatized individuals who are affected to become more and more cut off from other members of their community.

Julie Myatt in her play *Welcome Home Jenny Sutter* uses a very prickly style. She illustrates the condition of a veteran who cannot cope with a prosthetic leg. She enables the reader to get into the mind. She shows the troubled minded people through her characters and how these troubles affect their normal lives. The play shows the evasive and standoffish character of a veteran who doesn't want to get back home in order to be blamed by her family members, i.e., she accepts the invitation Lou. The play reveals that every human has a battle to win. Other characters struggle against their issues to be solved, i.e., they are in need to be care of. Christopher Shinn's play *Dying City* looks gimmicky because the character is the same. It makes the past and the present disconnected. Shinn succeeds in presenting the play with riddles which leaves the reader asking several questions and trying to answer them. His dramatic technique was intended at giving wide scope to his play. The writer illustrates the post-traumatic symptoms successfully by using certain behaviors performed by his characters. He uses an indirect and deceptive style to discover the post-traumatic symptoms of his characters so as to give his audience a clear background about them. Since one of the purposes of drama is to show dramatic actions in which conflict, suspense, uncertainty, tension, and fear are present, audiences can have ideas about their problems and overcome them by observing drama and learning about the storylines of the characters who are made to remain harrowing circumstances and how they have been improved considerably. Today, everyone is familiar with trauma due to the numerous conflicts and natural catastrophes that occur across the world.

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