

## TRAUMA THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Trauma theory has placed its thrust in the present scenario to a greater extent were writers of the present era have a thirst to widen their genre in the field of psychoanalysis and subconscious of the human mind. Critics have tried to spread their wide knowledge in man's psychological, physiological, philosophical and ethical thoughts which blended and echoed in their practical life. A man has to undergo a serious trauma externally and literally to overcome this dreadful trauma which accounts throughout his life journey. The writers have made an attempt in the trauma theory and have applied in their writings through their own experiences which have become the limelight for other growing critical thinkers and writers.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Trauma, Psychology, Philosophy, Ethics, Pain, Neorosis*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Trauma theory is of a recent origin, which surfaced as a critical category only after the mid-1990. Trauma study spreads over many fields focusing on the psychological, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic questions about the “the nature and representation of traumatic events” (luckhurst, 497).Trauma concerns range from the public and historical to the private and memorial. Trauma has been defined as “a body injury produced by the violence or any thermal, chemical or other extrinsic agents”,’ the condition resulting from the injury, traumatism,’ it could also refer to a startling or shocking experience that has a lasting effect on mental life” (The random house college, dictionary 1398).Traumatic happenings are like a double- edged l ward, that impulse and wounds deeply and sharply. The victim is usually left with an aftermath that scars them for life.

Some of the critical school developed theories and models relating to the trauma theory: the Freudian psycho analysis have provided a model of traumatic subjectivity in a bid, he create the personal as ‘political’ created a model for a community where women could openly articulate the various physical and sexual abuse by subsequent ‘survivor’ groups. New historical emphaticthe omestians and repressions of historical narrative developed a model of attempts to recover what had been silenced or last in traditional literary histories. The Deconstruction school of critics, particularly the gale school were after a model that redirected its concerns with reference, representation and the limits of knowledge to the problem of trauma critics like Shoshna Felman and Geoffrey Hartman immersed in the undecidability of interpretation turned to publish work on Holocaust memory and witness in the early 1990’s Jacques Derrida’s own work focused on

themes of mourning, melancholy, and in datedness to the dead form, spectres of marx(1993) to The work of mourning.(2001).

Early entry on trauma ('traumatic', 'traumatism', 'traumatize') used this term in the sense of physical piercing or wounding. Ending the speculation that trauma was associated only with the physical, in the first instance, **The Popular Science monthly in 1895**, centralized this by referring the "Psychical trauma a morbid nervous condition' (waugh, 498). This transfer of meaning from the physical to the psychical wound took place over the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Trauma was first associated with any aspect that was physical. As a railway shock was referred to as a "railway spine, soon it came to notice that white physical injury, was one aspect, there was the possibility that the accident victim could escape physical injury completely, yet may suffer from persistent forms of mental distress long after the event. During the 1870's and 1880's, there was a flood of new symptoms identified, to which the historians hacking called "diseases of memory" there cropped up a series of mysterious conditions that was seemingly independent of the physical condition this began to be investigated seriously for the first time. The symptoms identified were hysteria, double or multiple personality, hypnotic and other trance states and amnesia. Mental illness and madness were regarded as a result of physical weakness and a sign of degeneration a reduction in the evolutionary scale to the existence of the base primitive or even animalistic state. Two young psychologists from Austria, Sigmund Freud, and Joseph Breuer published the essay "on the psychical mechanism of hysterical phenomena" in 1893, the title itself was suggestive of the notion that hysteria was the result of physical degeneration. Freud's writing in the 1890's was seminal in advancing the theory of how 'trauma' assumed new psychical meanings, with his ideas constantly evolving he named his novel approach as "psycho-analysis" in 1896.

Freud and Breuer's essay suggested that the strange physical symphony the hysteric trance states, violent mood swings, amnesias, partial paralysis of the body and related disorders are the outcome of the traumatic effects. In of accidents "Traumatic neurosis" they wrote:

The operative causes of the illness are not the trifling physical injury, but the effect of fright –the psychical trauma. In an analogous manner, our investigations reveal, for many, if not for most, hysterical symptoms, precipitating causes which can only be described as physical traumas. Any experience which calls up distressing affects- such as those of fright, anxiety, shame on physical pain-may operate as a trauma of this kind (qtd in waugh, 498).

It can be deduced from Freud's work that most frequently physical symptoms are manifestations to the traumatic memories deeply tucked away and hidden within the layers of the unconscious. One has to only refer to Freud's famous aphorism. "Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences. Freud and Breuer even provided an outline for the treatment and cure: ' [w]e found, to our great surprise at first, that each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying effect' (qtd in waugh, 499). This method was also referred to by one of Breuer's first patients as the talking cure.

**Studies on Hysteria**, published in 1895, put forward a number of case histories of the traumatic origins of hysterical symptoms and made forceful claims for the effectiveness of the talking cure. Freud in his 1896 lecture on 'the Aetiology of hysteria" proposed a collaborator Joseph Breuer. Freud announced that he had come to the conclusion that, "Whatever case and whatever symptom we take as our point of departure, in the end, we infallibly come to the field of

sexual experience” (1956, 199).

Two modes of trauma have been identified which share a lot of the structure of memory. Roger Luckhurst points out that;

“Repatriation compulsion has a peculiar time scheme: after the event, there is an attempt to act as if in preparation for it. This is also the case with sexual trauma. The event takes place in childhood, but it is only understood as traumatic later, after reaching sexual maturity” (501).

The second model for Trauma is that an adult life produces a kind of a jolt in which meaningless fragments from childhood are reinterpreted as significant memories that are however, previously incomprehensible. In both the models, there is a sense of belatedness about responses, a deferred action of what the psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche called the “afterwardness” of trauma. Trauma is an inclusive multidisciplinary study, stretching from psychic life to public history, reading materials that can include romantic poetry, psychiatric case histories, accounts of sexual abuse, memories, testimonies, documentaries, and the symptomatic silences and omissions in natural histories.

Trauma Theory has turned criticism to becoming ethical, responsible and purposive discourse, listening to the bleeding soul of others as Lockhart points out trauma theories have to use this “point of convergence to be the start of a divergence, of an opening out of theory to wider contexts. Trauma, he points out is “inherently multidisciplinary, if this criticism has a future, it needs to displace older paradigms and attend to new configurations of the cultural knowledge” (506). And it is sure that the trauma theories have their future.

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