

Trauma and Resilience in World Literature

الصدمة والصمود في الأدب العالمي

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Abstract:

Trauma is a term that has been investigated from various approaches like medicine, psychoanalytic theory, cultural theory, human geography, psychogeography, literature, and philosophy. The complex nature of the concept of trauma requires more definition. This paper argues that concepts of trauma and resilience are explored through various cultural productions like literature, visual arts and even media production like podcasts. Trauma and resistance have grown too important and crucial that there are recently emerging literary genres that engage with these two themes exclusively, like trauma narratives, refugee literature diasporic fiction. This article explores themes of trauma, resilience, and healing in world literature by providing an account of various of literary works from different authors from different national, linguistic, ethnic, racial, gender and religious backgrounds. It focuses more extensively on canonical postcolonial and diasporic texts, which constitute what might be called a transnational archive of resilience and healing from personal and collective trauma. This study concludes that trauma and resilience are universal experiences, and that world literature reflects universal and culturally specific trauma, emphasizing postcolonial resilience.

Keywords: Literary Criticism, Resilience, Trauma, Universal Experience, World Literature

ملخص

الصدمة مصطلح تم التحقيق فيه من وجهات نظر متعددة التخصصات ومتعددة المجالات مثل الطب، والنظرية التحليلية النفسية، والنظرية الثقافية، والجغرافيا البشرية، والجغرافيا النفسية، والأدب، والفلسفة. هذه الطبيعة المتشعبة لمفهوم الصدمة تدفع إلى ضرورة التحقيق في ما تعنيه الصدمة حقًا. هذه الورقة البحثية تستخلص ان مفهوم الصدمة مهم جدا اذ نجد ان يبرز كموضوع رئيسي في مجموعة متنوعة من الإنتاجات الثقافية مثل الأدب والفنون البصرية وحتى الإنتاج الإعلامي مثل اليوتيوب.

لقد أصبحت مفاهيم الصدمة والمقاومة مهمة وحاسمة لدرجة أن هناك أنواع أدبية جديدة تظهر مؤخرًا تتناول هذين الموضوعين حصريًا مثل روايات الصدمة، أدب اللاجئين وأدب المهجر، تستكشف هذه المقالة مواضيع الصدمة والمقاومة والشفاء في الأدب العالمي من خلال تقديم مجموعة متنوعة من الأعمال الأدبية من مؤلفين مختلفين من خلفيات وطنية ولغوية وإثنية وعرقية وجنسية ودينية مختلفة. كما يستنتج البحث أن الصدمة والمقاومة تجربتان عالميتان، وأن الأدب العالمي يعمل كوسيلة يتم من خلالها تحقيق فهم فعال للصدمة.

كلمات مفتاحية: النقد الأدبي، المقاومة، الصدمة، التجربة العالمية، الأدب العالمي

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1- Introduction

Literary Trauma Studies gained academic recognition and significant attention amongst the community of literary criticism in the 1990s with the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1995). The incidents of 9/11 in the United States, global pandemics, waves of immigration, the increasing numbers of refugees and global wars marked the peak of the World's increasing interest in Trauma Studies. These factors in addition to political conflicts, social and political activism and global pandemics like Covid-19, made Trauma Studies more relevant than ever. This relevance translated into academic efforts to define trauma as it is a term, experience applicable to different ethnic, racial, national, religious, linguistic, and geographic (city-dwellers and people inhabiting rural areas) groups across different cultures, historical periods, ages and genders. In this sense, trauma is a global phenomenon that can be traced in a number of literary works written by both male and female authors from different nationalities, linguistic backgrounds and religious groups. However, it could be argued that writers of postcolonial heritage seem to have the biggest share of trauma narratives. This is probably because the cultural, socio-political and historical heritage of postcolonial nations is fused and saturated with traumatic experiences like colonialism, imperialism, civil wars, waves of revolutions and violent cultural and political changes. These traumatic experiences provided a fertile background which inspired novelists, poets, playwrights and artists. Remarkably, trauma makes an appearance in different cultural platforms: literature, visual arts like cinema and graphic fiction, drama and podcasts which provided platforms to speak up about different traumatic experiences like wars, sexual harassment, racism, xenophobia... Some of these works include, for instance, in painting, Roman Polanski's *Andy Warhol* (1973), which portrays the atrocities of war and its mental and psychological outcomes. In cinema Gustav Klimt's *The Rape of Europa* (2006) depicts the power dynamics and emotional devastation caused by violence. In graphic fiction, Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1978) portrays the cultural trauma of the Holocaust. Oral storytelling holds a unique space in preserving and sharing personal and collective narratives of trauma. In drama Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (1996) features the traumatic experiences of female survivors of sexual abuse. Even some podcasts dealt with trauma like *The Moth* which features stories of trauma, resistance and resilience. Trauma is thus a global phenomenon which has been studied through the lenses of science, medicine, philosophy and cultural theory. This article focuses on trauma in World Literature and engages with the ongoing dialogue on trauma and literary narratives by providing a reading of the latest thoughts on the topic. It also extends Caruth's psychoanalytic focus to postcolonial and diasporic contexts, and applies various models of trauma such as Caruth's belated trauma, Rotheberg's multidirectional memory, Lazali's colonial trauma and LaCapra's acting out and thinking through to analyse this concept and how it was represented in some postcolonial and diasporic literary texts written by male and female authors.

2- Methodology

This study uses conceptual analysis of the theme and concept of trauma in world literature. By engaging with literary texts from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and national contexts, and employing interdisciplinary frameworks like psychoanalytical, postcolonial and cultural theories, it aims to highlight both the universality and specificity of traumatic experience as portrayed in literature. While maintaining a global perspective, the study places particular emphasis on postcolonial texts, where trauma is often intertwined with histories of colonisation, displacement, cultural erasure, and resistance. Through close readings and thematic comparisons, the research seeks to define, trace, and critically examine the various ways trauma is conceived and articulated across different literary traditions. Additionally, this study adopts a narrative synthesis approach, allowing for a comprehensive review of how the theme of trauma has been addressed in both scholarly and literary works. This methodology facilitates the integration of diverse interpretations and theoretical frameworks, providing a nuanced understanding of trauma's literary representation and its cultural and political implications. This article also employs various models of trauma to examine some literary works. These models include Cathy Caruth's *Belated Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra's *Acting Out and Working Through*, Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*, and Karima Lazali's *Colonial Trauma*, which all engage with how trauma is shaped by migration, war, postcolonial rupture, and socio-economic conditions.

3- The Conception of Trauma

Trauma is a term that has been investigated from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches like medicine, psychoanalytic theory, cultural theory, human geography, psychogeography, literature, and philosophy. Perhaps trauma appears as a theme of investigation in all of these different fields because it is a phenomenon emerging from a number of other phenomena like worldwide migration, pandemics, wars, climate change, political and social activism. This nuanced and expansive nature of trauma necessitates a clear definition. Contemporary academic studies on trauma seem to focus on the genealogical approach in an attempt to define the concept of trauma. This approach has been thought to be the best as trauma and its relevance were subject to time. In other words, as it has been mentioned in the previous section, the concept of trauma is now more relevant than ever in light of the world's current issues like wars, the increasing numbers of refugees, movements of independence and revolution, social and political activism, and global pandemics like COVID-19. The necessity to define trauma stems from the fact that the contemporary world is shaped by a large number of traumatic experiences, which have made trauma a theme that cannot be disregarded. Significantly, these experiences are present in different fields. Consequently, trauma is a complex concept that acts as the subject matter of different disciplines.

The early conceptualisation of trauma was psychoanalytical in the sense that trauma was defined as an unsolvable problem of unconsciousness that cannot be depicted linguistically. This Lacanian approach "crafts a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing linguistic value other than a referential expression" (Baleav 2014, p. 2).

Trauma has been defined by a number of scholars like Lacan (1992), Caruth (1996), Tal (1995), and Baleav (2014) as the loss of the ability to communicate because it causes irreversible damage to the psyche. In this sense, the traumatized cannot channel their experiences and feelings. By contrast, contemporary conceptions of trauma, as provided by a host of scholars including Luckhurst (2013), Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone (2013), define it as a fluid term, a multiple signifier, a subjective and collective experience that transcends consciousness and is shaped by various cultural and subjective productions. Elaborating on this point, Luckhurst (2013) argues that trauma is a knot or one of those “knots” or “hybrid assemblages” that “tangle up questions of science, law, technology, capitalism, politics, medicine and risk” (pp. 14–15). In the same line, Rothberg (2014) claims that trauma is a socio-cultural product that should be contextualized to be understood. Literary Trauma Criticism thus engages with the fluid conception of trauma for a meticulous and comprehensive understanding of the different collective and subjective accounts of trauma. Arguably, contemporary critics who focus on trauma aim to “decolonise” the concept of trauma from its Western, Eurocentric centralism. In this context, the contributions of scholars in the field like Ananya Kabir, Nouri Gana and Lyndsey Stonebridge provide insights into what trauma means and a platform for traumatized people from marginalized groups like refugees in Australia, black people inhabiting the Atlantic, and those who belong to some religious groups like Buddhism and Sufism to speak about their experiences. Trauma has also been approached as a geo-cultural and historical production that manifests itself linguistically, ethnically, and also in terms of gender. This article seeks to provide an account of the conception of trauma as defined in contemporary literary criticism and how literary narratives of trauma from the world depict this concept.

4- Trauma in World Literature

Trauma literature has grown into a separate field in the twentieth century, influenced by the increasing interest in psychoanalytical theory, the American-Vietnamese War and the 9/11 event. Consequently, narratives of trauma witnessed a boom in terms of the variety of traumatic accounts, including intergenerational trauma like racism as depicted by African American writers and black writers, collective trauma as depicted in several postcolonial novels, and personal traumas. Trauma Literature is also varied in terms of genres as it includes fiction and non-fiction like testimonies and memoirs, and narratives. Though it varies in genre, it reflects the complexities of cultural and collective traumas. Some of these literary works gained global applause, like Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) which explores the enduring impact of war and political upheaval on two Afghan families, highlighting the challenges of resistance and overcoming colonial legacies. Applying Rothberg's (2014) sociocultural trauma model to Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) provides a comprehension of how collective memory and historical violence shape individual and communal identities. This framework facilitates an understanding of trauma as both a personal and societal phenomenon, particularly in contexts marked by political upheaval and cultural dislocation. Rothberg's (2014) sociocultural trauma model emphasizes the interplay between individual and collective memory. Rothberg argues that trauma is not solely an

individual psychological wound, but is deeply embedded in social, political, and historical contexts. This framework helps uncover how Amir's guilt and trauma over Hassan's assault are inextricably tied to the collective traumas of ethnic discrimination, war, and exile in Afghanistan: "I had one last chance to make a decision. One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be. I could step into that alley, stand up for Hassan... Or I could run. In the end, I ran" (Hosseini, 2003, p. 77). Amir's silence and subsequent alienation reflect not just personal shame but a societal failure to acknowledge the oppression of Hazaras. Similarly, the collapse of Kabul and the rise of the Taliban evoke a broader national trauma that overlays Amir's return journey with symbolic weight: "I feel like a tourist in my own country," he confesses (p. 232), capturing the disorientation of exile and the rupture of national identity. Rothberg's model thus clarifies how trauma in *The Kite Runner* (2003) operates with personal memory which is shaped by collective violence, and redemption narratives are entangled with the politics of memory and historical injustice.

Memory and Trauma are also explored in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). In this work, Adichie examines the Biafran war in Nigeria, questioning the aftermaths of war and strategies of coping its legacy. The novel deals with themes of loss, memory, and survival. It interrogates how personal and national identities are reconstructed in the wake of collective trauma. Adichie's fragmented narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) mirrors Biafran identity struggles. This is clearly stated in the following quotation:

She taught them about the Biafran flag. They sat on wooden planks and the weak morning sun streamed into the roofless class as she unfurled Odenigbo's cloth flag and told them what the symbols meant. Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for the prosperity Biafra would have, and, finally, the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future (2006, p. 325).

This passage illustrates how symbols like the Biafran flag encapsulate the collective grief and hope of a people enduring war. This grief is not only collective, but also personal. Characters like Ugwu, Olanna, and Richard struggle with guilt, grief, and disillusionment, each embodying different facets of postwar trauma and resilience. Adichie also critiques the inadequacy of historical narratives and political rhetoric in addressing the human cost of conflict, highlighting instead intimate, often painful, acts of remembrance and storytelling as means of coping. In doing so, the novel becomes a literary site for negotiating memory, mourning, and the possibilities of healing from personal and collective traumas.

Like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003), Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* (2015) also explores how socio-political turmoil shapes both personal and collective trauma, exploring the fragile relationship between identity and historical violence. While *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) portrays the catastrophic impact of the Biafran War on Nigerian lives, illustrating how ethnic violence and national fragmentation disrupt personal identities and social cohesion, and *The*

Kite Runner (2003) delves into Afghanistan's political upheavals and ethnic conflicts, tracing how collective historical violence intertwines with Amir's personal guilt and quest for redemption. Applying again Rothenberg's (2014) socio-cultural model of trauma, Sweat (2015) deals with racism and class hierarchy and the psychological and emotional turmoil of modern life and its serious outcomes on individuals and different racial and economic groups. Nottage exposes the economic and racial tensions in post-industrial America, revealing how job loss and deindustrialization fracture communities and individual lives, fostering trauma born of displacement and socio-economic marginalization. This play extends from the traditional conception of trauma as an aftermath of life-threatening event, to a concept that encompasses psychological and emotional agony that could be caused by socio-economic environments of the contemporary world. This contemporary world is shaped by historical events, which some of them were traumatic. In this continuum, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) is a documentary about Holocaust survivors' testimonies acts as a historical documentation of the legacy of racial, ethnical and religious segregation, and the genocide committed against "the Other" during Hitler's presidency. Trauma also makes appearance in poetry. There are some poets whose works focus on political trauma like the poetry of Pablo Neruda from Chile. His poetry deals with political oppression, wars and exile. He is best known for *I'm Explaining a Few Things* (1937) through which he mourns the civil war. Probably the most recognized name in the Arab world, the voice of political activism and resistance against the colonizer is the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish. Applying Caruth's notion of trauma as a wound that resists narrative closure, Darwish's poetry articulates the fragmented memory and ongoing pain of Palestinian identity under occupation. Both Darwish and Neruda utilize their art as modes of political activism and cultural survival, where personal and collective traumas intertwine to resist erasure and assert a resilient voice against colonization and violence. Caruth's model of trauma highlights how Neruda and Darwish's works exemplify the enduring power of poetry to bear witness to trauma while fostering communal memory and hope.

In literature, the majority of trauma narratives seem to be postcolonial literary productions. This seems a logical connection as postcolonial nations have been historically and culturally marginalized and traumatized, for they are societies with a traumatic legacy. As Mamdani (2020) notes, postcolonial nations have witnessed great imperial powers, waves of revolutions, extreme psychological and physical violence and losses, cultural, racial and ethnic conflicts. In the same vein, La Capra (2014) points out the complexities and overlapping nature of this traumatic colonial heritage. This overlapping nature can be seen through language, religion, race, class and identity and trauma. The traumatic colonial heritage can be traced through stories of diasporic displacements, problems of border crossing, identity contentions, systemic racism, political unrest, and cross-generational loss, added to other manifold forms of cultural erosion (Beneduce 2016, La Capra 2014). In postcolonial literature, to deal with trauma is to deal with the colonial heritage, loss, despair and resistance.

4.1 Collective Trauma, Memory and Narratives of Colonial Legacies

Trauma is a recurrent theme in postcolonial writing. Postcolonial writers depict trauma in relation to cultural and historical wounds. In this sense, postcolonial narratives of trauma depict “wounds of nations” (Blake 2008). These wounds are collective experiences which postcolonial writers examine along with exploring possibilities of healing and resilience. However, trauma needs a more accurate, nuanced examination. In this sense, Silverman in his *Traumatic Memory and the Postcolonial: Disruptive Genealogy* (2024), critiques the dominance of trauma theory in postcolonial studies, arguing that it often overlooks the complex, intersecting processes of memory, loss, and mourning in cultural works. Using the Lebanese film *Memory Box* (2021) as a case study, he explains how postcolonial narratives can offer ambivalent and multifaceted representations of trauma that challenge linear genealogies and highlight the interplay of time, culture, and media. Similarly, Borges (2022) emphasises the interplay of time and culture in understanding and dealing with trauma. He argues that incorporating non-Western perspectives and practices, such as indigenous storytelling and communal rituals, can lead to fully understand the multifaceted nature of trauma in postcolonial contexts. As such, Silverman and Borges call for a decolonization of trauma studies. Karima Lazali’s concept of colonial trauma (2021) is one of the many academic efforts that work to decolonize this field from Western approaches. Lazali’s (2021) concept of “colonial trauma” can be considered a groundbreaking contribution to postcolonial and psychoanalytic thought. In her book *Colonial Trauma: A Study of the Psychic and Political Consequences of Colonial Oppression in Algeria*, Lazali explores how colonial violence not only invades land and bodies but also leaves deep psychological wounds that affect the colonized long after formal colonial rule ends.

Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s *A Grain of Wheat* (1987) depict the psychological and cultural traumas of colonisation, aligning with recent scholarly approaches that call for decolonising trauma studies from Western approaches. Karima Lazali’s (2021) concept of “colonial trauma” as a psychic severing of historical and communal continuity is evident in Achebe’s portrayal of Okonkwo, whose personal downfall parallels the collapse of Igbo cultural sovereignty under colonial rule. The disruption of traditional life, from religious practices to communal justice systems, generates a collective sense of dislocation—what Lazali identifies as the “loss of historical anchoring” in colonized societies. Similarly, Ngũgĩ’s *A Grain of Wheat* (1987) offers a portrait of individual and communal trauma inflicted by British colonialism and the Mau Mau rebellion. The silences and betrayals in the novel reflect what Silverman (2024) calls “disruptive genealogies,” where trauma does not follow a linear path of recollection but emerges in fragmented, morally ambiguous forms. Recent critiques of Eurocentric trauma theory, such as Borges’ “Multiple Worlds of Trauma” (2022), underscore the need for contextual frameworks that recognize trauma’s collective, political, and spiritual dimensions in African societies—features both Achebe and Ngũgĩ embed through oral traditions, communal memory, and the use of indigenous idioms. As such, these novels not only narrate trauma but resist colonial erasure by preserving cultural memory and asserting postcolonial agency.

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) which was adapted into a film, explores the enduring impact of war and political upheaval on two Afghan families. It also deals with possibilities of healing and resistance both individually and collectively. It is about surviving civil war and colonialism. Similarly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) examines the Biafran war in Nigeria and its traumatic consequences on Nigerians who were dreaming of a better Nigeria. The novel recounts the impassioned struggle of Nigerians to establish an independent republic in the 1960s and the horrific series of violence that followed that. Postcolonial female writers like Jean Rhys in *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) all deal the psychological effects of the clash against colonialism. A clash resulting in a traumatic colonial legacy that its effects still hunt postcolonial societies. These texts, though set in diverse geographical and historical contexts, converge in their portrayal of trauma as both individual and structural, emerging from the displacement, dehumanization, and gendered violence rooted in colonial and patriarchal systems. Rhys's Antoinette Cosway is a paradigmatic figure of Caruth's (1996) "belated trauma": her madness is not simply psychological but reflects the historical rupture of identity and belonging caused by slavery's legacy and racial marginalization in the post-Emancipation Caribbean. In *Beloved* (1987), Morrison literalizes trauma through the ghost of Beloved, showing how slavery survives in memory and the body. LaCapra's distinction between acting out and working through is particularly useful here: Sethe's initial possession by trauma gradually gives way to a painful process of narrative confrontation, supported by community storytelling and ritual. Similarly, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) critiques the colonial myth of "progress" by exposing the trauma of maternal sacrifice under imperial rule. Nnu Ego's suffering reflects Lazali's (2021) colonial trauma—a psychic disintegration caused by the imposition of foreign value systems that sever indigenous identity and kinship structures. Dangarembga's Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) articulates epistemic trauma, a form of alienation and internalized inferiority caused by colonial education. Her painful awakening mirrors Rothberg's (2009) multidirectional memory, as her personal growth is intertwined with the silenced traumas of women like Nyasha, whose eating disorder becomes a corporeal metaphor for historical violence. Collectively, these texts challenge Western models of trauma by emphasizing its gendered, communal, and culturally embedded forms, offering instead a postcolonial ethics of remembrance and resistance.

The clash between cultures and its traumatic aftermaths is not only shaped by colonialism. Racism too can have a traumatic effect on marginalized groups. Works like Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* (2015) a non-fiction book based off a collection of true stories, offers a powerful examination of racism and its enduring impact on Black communities in America. It is about intergenerational trauma, resistance and resilience. Coates' work also deals with displacement because of trauma, and the trauma of displacement. In this regard, the theme of trauma and displacement is a recurring theme in trauma narratives.

4.2 Trauma and Displacement

Trauma, exile and displacement are central themes in trauma narratives. Through these themes, writers depict the psychological and emotional ramifications of trauma. The number of literary production dealing with these themes is large that there are specific literary genres which deal with these concepts exclusively like diasporic fiction, border studies and refugee literature. The Vietnamese-American writer Ocean Vuong explores the devastating outcomes of forced migration and displacement, and the enduring consequences of trauma caused by displacement in his work *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019). Similarly, Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* (2000) provides a detailed account of the psychological and emotional consequences of exile and dislocation. Suad Amiry's *My Damascus* (2021) explores themes of intergenerational trauma, identity crisis caused by forced dislocation across three different generations of women of the same family. Displacement, whether caused by war, colonization, or forced migration, is central to the experience of trauma in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile* (2000), and Suad Amiry's *My Damascus* (2021). Vuong's fragmented autofictional novel reveals **Cathy Caruth's (1996) "belated trauma"**, where memory is nonlinear and expressed through poetic disorientation, mirroring the protagonist's experience of war's aftershocks and inherited exile. His novel reflects **Cathy Caruth's (1996) concept of "belated trauma"**, where the impact of traumatic events is not fully realized at the moment but resurfaces later. Vuong (2019) writes, "Ma. You once told me that memory is a choice. But if you were god, you'd know it's a flood" (p. 48) , illustrating how memory overwhelms and disrupts the present. This deluge of recollection signifies the inescapable nature of trauma, aligning with Caruth's assertion that trauma is experienced belatedly and incomprehensibly. His narrative oscillates between Vietnam and the U.S., suggesting that trauma is not localized but diasporically transmitted, echoing Dominick LaCapra's (2001) concept of "acting out" vs. "working through"—as the narrator vacillates between painful reliving and tentative narration. Similarly, Said (2000) views exile not only as a material loss of home but as a psychic fragmentation, marked by what he calls a "plurality of vision." He writes: "'Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (2000. P173). This multiplicity is itself traumatic, leading to what Rothberg (2009) would call a multidirectional consciousness, where the pain of one exile resonates with others across geographies and histories. Suad Amiry's *My Damascus* mourns the gradual erasure of her city through occupation, gentrification, and war. Her memoir enacts what Karima Lazali (2021) calls "colonial trauma" (the psychic disfigurement caused by occupation and the silencing of indigenous memory). Amiry, like Vuong, engages in narrative repair—using storytelling to resist loss and reconstruct belonging. Together, these works underscore how displacement produces a trauma that is both intensely personal and structurally imposed, and how writing itself becomes a method of working through dislocation, reclaiming fractured memory, and resisting imposed erasures.

Works by Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2006) Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982) and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) all deal with how forced displacement, migration and exile shape identities, effects generations of immigrants, and affect cultural and historical legacies and how dislocated people navigates their roots and senses of loss, belonging and resilience.

In *Midnight's Children* (1981), the narrator, Saleem Sinai, embodies what Caruth (1996) calls "traumatic latency"—the idea that trauma returns belatedly and incomprehensibly. Saleem's fragmented self is shaped by national cataclysm: "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (Rushdie, 1981, p. 3). In this passage, the trauma of Partition is personalised, inscribing collective violence into individual memory.

In *White Teeth* (2000), Zadie Smith explores intergenerational trauma through the children of immigrants, who inherit both the psychological burdens and unprocessed grief of colonial histories. Applying LaCapra's (2001) distinction between "acting out" and "working through," characters like Irie and Millat oscillate between compulsive repetition of the past and attempts at resolution. Smith writes, "Every moment happens twice: inside and outside, and they are two different histories" (Smith, 2000, p. 299), suggesting how trauma produces dual consciousness in diasporic identity.

Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982) uses what Rothberg (2009) calls "multidirectional memory," blending personal, colonial, and familial histories. Ondaatje's return to Sri Lanka becomes a ritual of re-narration: "In my mid-thirties I realized that I had slipped past a childhood I had ignored and not understood" (Ondaatje, 1982, p. 22). The attempt to recover memory becomes an act of psychic reconstruction, resisting the erasures of colonial displacement.

Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1988) examines trauma that spans generations and geographies, particularly the silences passed down from mothers to daughters. These silences echo Karima Lazali's (2021) model of "colonial trauma," in which suppressed histories manifest in identity fractures. Jing-Mei's discovery of her mother's painful past in China represents the beginning of a healing journey through narrative: "And I think about my life. My mother's life. And how maybe she had the same fears as me" (Tan, 1989, p. 288).

Through these varied works, we see trauma not as an isolated psychological wound, but as a multigenerational, culturally mediated process shaped by the legacy of colonialism, exile, and dislocation. Trauma models allow us to see how memory, silence, and narrative function as both symptoms of and responses to the enduring injuries of history.

5- Resilience and Resistance

The significance of trauma in literature lies not only in its ability to represent lived experiences but also in its potential to shape how we understand and respond to them. Trauma narratives explore resilience and resistance as to explore how individuals and communities move beyond their traumas, reconstruct their identities, and fight against racism and oppression. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the*

Caged Bird Sings (1969) deals with ways of coping and healing a collection of traumas caused by sexual violence, racism and domestic violence. The central theme in this memoir is not only trauma, but rather how to survive trauma. Angelou emphasizes the healing power of female bonding and nature. Similarly, in the majority of her works, like *Surfacing* (1972) and *the Edible Woman* (1969), the Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood emphasises the healing power of nature and human communication as opposed to colonialism and patriarchy. Resistance against the colonizer and healing from the traumas caused by colonialism and displacement through storytelling are central themes in Rabbieih Alamadin's *The Hakawati* (2003) who recounts the story of displaced Arabs, Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (2004) which focuss on Haitians and how stories are a pipeline of cultural heritage and cultural resilience, Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) also deals with how storytelling is a strategy of resistance and survival against colonial power. Storytelling is also depicted in some literary works as an individual strategy of survival like in Jeanette Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* (2011), which is about a woman who recounts stories in an attempt to navigate her personal turmoils. Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Goegeous* (2019) tells the story of a traumatized young man who resorts to epistolary writing through which he tells his mother stories as a mechanism of resistance. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) deals with how storytelling too can help women transcend patriarchy. In these works, storytelling acts as a way through which characters can make sense of pain, process their traumas, and understand themselves and their societies. Trauma narratives are not only about pain, loss and trauma. They also offer windows into a healthy channeling of strong and devastating human emotions like anguish, psychological and emotional turmoil. In Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, war veterans share their experiences through spoken word, blurring the lines between fiction and reality and urging reflection on the invisible wounds carried long after the battlefield.

6- Conclusion

World literature explores themes of trauma, resilience and healing. It explores the different accounts of traumatic experiences caused by political phenomena like colonialism, exile and wars, social and cultural productions like racism, immigration and gender oppression, and other personal factors ranging from violence, child abuse, poverty, loss and sexual harassment. World literature provides an aesthetic, collective efforts that attempt to understand, make sense, and navigate traumatic experiences. This collective effort culminating in trauma narratives provides a window into ways of healing from racism, colonialism, imperialism, injustice, violence, all types of oppression and turmoils. This article reveals that contemporary world literature not only depicts the theme of trauma, but also celebrates it in the sense that world literature also offers a message of hope. A hope that trauma, with all of its shades, can be dismantled and transcended. World literature provides thus a vast, cross-cultural archive through which trauma and resilience are represented, interrogated, and reimagined. From postcolonial narratives to diasporic testimonies, and from poetic fragments to testimonial memoirs, literary texts serve as sites of

both remembrance and resistance. This paper demonstrates that trauma is not a singular or static concept but a dynamic, historically embedded experience shaped by colonialism, war, displacement, racism, and gendered violence. Literary trauma studies, particularly when decentered from Eurocentric models, reveal the multiplicity of trauma's forms and the culturally specific strategies through which individuals and communities cope, narrate, and heal. Significantly, resilience in literature emerges not only through survival, but also through acts of storytelling, memory-making, and cultural continuity. Whether through the quiet defiance of personal testimony or the collective recovery of erased histories, world literature affirms that trauma is both a universal and cultural phenomenon. It also affirms the power of narrative, especially in marginalized voices, to transform pain into meaning, loss into connection, and memory into a platform for justice and healing. Literature does not simply depict trauma; it actively participates in the processes of witnessing, resistance, and recovery. This paper concludes that storytelling and human bonding, traumatized people can resist and overcome their traumas and create healthy communities.

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