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READING TRAUMA INSCRIBED ON LIVES IN ZINNIE HARRIS' *MIDWINTER*¹

Tuğba Aygan*

ABSTRACT

Contemporary British theatre has been saturated with war narratives and the ensuing state of trauma in response to the chaotic atmosphere of the 20th and 21st centuries. Besides a wide array of plays depicting the deleterious impact of war on homecoming soldiers, the contemporary stage has also witnessed performances embodying the personal and collective traumas of war-torn societies. The multi-award-winning playwright Zinnie Harris subtly treats different faces and consequences of war in her dramatic outputs. Among them, her *Midwinter* (2004) attempts to portray trauma of an unnamed war inscribed on the bodies and psyches of the people from soldiers to children in an unnamed county. Drawing upon contemporary theories of trauma, this article interprets the different manifestations of war trauma in the characters of *Midwinter* and probes the difficulty of recovering trauma for the people who disavow the reality of war and trauma.

Keywords: Trauma, War, *Midwinter*, Trauma theory, PTSD

ZINNIE HARRIS'İN *MIDWINTER* ADLI OYUNUNDA HAYATLARA KAZINMIŞ TRAVMAYI OKUMAK

ÖZ

Çağdaş İngiliz tiyatrosu, 20. ve 21. yüzyılların kaotik atmosferine yanıt olarak savaş anlatıları ve süregelen travma durumu ile doludur. Savaşın geri dönen askerler üzerindeki yıkıcı etkisini konu edinen çeşitli oyunların yanı sıra, çağdaş sahne, savaşın parçalandığı toplumların kişisel ve kolektif travmalarını içeren performanslara da yer verir. Birçok ödül sahibi oyun yazarı Zinnie Harris de savaşın farklı yüzleri ve sonuçlarını dramatik eserlerine konu edinir. Bunlardan biri olan Harris'in *Midwinter*

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* Asst. Prof., Atatürk University, tugba.aygan@atauni.edu.tr , ORCID: 0000-0002-0514-8472

(2004) adlı eseri isimsiz bir ülkede, isimsiz bir savaşın askerlerden çocuklara tüm toplum üzerinde neden olduğu fiziksel ve psikolojik travmaları barındırır. Çağdaş travma teorilerinden yola çıkarak, bu makale savaş travmasının *Midwinter* oyununun karakterleri üzerindeki çeşitli tezahürlerini yorumlamakta, savaş ve travma gerçeğiyle yüzleşememenin ise bu sorunların süresiz devamlılığına neden oluşunu tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Travma, Savaş, *Midwinter*, Travma teorisi, PTSD

1. INTRODUCTION

The potential damage to the psychological and physical lives of those who fight in wars has been ostensible since ‘shell shock’ was diagnosed by medical officer Charles Myers in World War I (1940, p. 26). The term that gained currency afterwards was used only to denote the traumatic reactions of soldiers to war. However, following the Vietnam War and the inclusion of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the third edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) in 1980, trauma as a mental disorder garnered renewed attention, now with more expanded diagnostic criteria. Its “essential feature” has been redefined as “the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience” (APA, 1980, p. 236). This definition focused again on the effects of war as well as other experiences such as disasters, rape, accidents, and oppression, and the like. Notwithstanding the expansion of the reasons of trauma, it has stayed related fundamentally to war and its effects for a long time.

Having its roots in clinical medicine and first and foremost ties with psychology, trauma has become a prevalent cultural trope since the 1990s with the theories of prominent scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Bessel A. van der Kolk, Judith Herman, and Dominic LaCapra. In their attempts to define boundaries and suggest cures, scholars from different disciplines such as psychiatry, sociology, psychoanalysis, literature, and history galvanised enormous interest to explain and theorise trauma with their ground-breaking works. They have also triggered significant discussions on the relationship between literature and trauma, enabling articulation of trauma within the boundaries of literary studies.

The Greek word for ‘wound’, trauma (τραῦμα) originally refers to serious physical injuries or wounds. In a psychological sense, more particularly in Freud’s studies, trauma amounts to a wound inflicted on the mind rather than the body. In modern medicine, psychological trauma is defined as a reaction to an overpowering event resulting in serious psychological damage². More generally, trauma is understood by the theorist

² See APA’s revised definitions of the term in DSM III-R, 1987, p. 248; IV, 1994, p. 427; V, 2013, p. 265.

Slavoj Žižek as “the violent intrusion of something radically unexpected, something the subject was absolutely not ready for, something the subject cannot integrate in any way” (2011, p. 292). Žižek’s definition is heavily indebted to the event-based understanding of the trauma that puts a violent and unexpected event in the centre while modern medicine focuses on the reaction to the event.

Revisiting Freud’s theories on trauma in her work *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Cathy Caruth, unarguably one of the key figures in contemporary trauma theory, redefines trauma based on the structure of trauma experience. In Caruth’s terms “[trauma] describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic event in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, the uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena,” (1996, p. 11) as “the event is not assimilated or fully experienced at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (1995, p. 4). Contrary to the former definitions of trauma that focus on the nature of the event or the immediate response to it, Caruth’s formulation emphasises the suddenness of the event and belatedness inhering in the traumatic moment itself. According to her, a traumatic event cannot be fully grasped or acknowledged immediately because of the individual’s unpreparedness to the threat to life; it is only after a certain amount of time that it can be experienced in psychic returns by various repetitions. Rather than being remembered as a past experience, trauma thus becomes a part of a survivor’s life, being compulsively repeated in the present and maintaining its ungraspable nature.

Nearly all of the trauma scholars point out the temporality and inexpressibility of trauma that makes addressing to the trauma almost impossible. “Despite this,” writes Jenny Edkins “there is an imperative to speak, and a determination to find ways of speaking that remains true to the trauma” (2003, p. 15). To this end, telling stories about trauma and re-inscribing them may help to communicate and alleviate the pain caused by trauma. Theatre, as a field of literature, has been a fertile arena for the expression and communication of many memorable events, as well as those having traumatic consequences. Due to the stage’s ability to respond to the events promptly with a moderate expense, contemporary conflicts have also found expression in a short span of time in British theatre. Informed by the ‘wound culture’ of the decade, plays have represented a chaotic worldview as well as the traumatic lives of people. Most of these plays have been specifically haunted by the idea of war; they attempt to portray the horrors of war and its destructive effects rather than presenting a stereotypical picture. A great number of war plays, dominated by the male perspective, were written mostly focusing on the effects of war and depicting war trauma especially of homecoming soldiers. Some good examples of these plays that portray traumatized lives of the men after the war are Simon Stephen’s *Motortown*

(2006), Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004), Jonathan Lewis's *Our Boys* (1993), and Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* to name but a few.

In contrast to the scores of plays concerning themselves with the trauma of soldiers, on the grounds that they do not fight on the frontline, the trauma of war for women as well as the other civilians has been substantially overlooked throughout the theatre history. As a matter of fact, women who do not actively take part in the war, and experience it first-hand in the battlefield, have still been victims, sometimes of wartime sexual violence or war-caused disasters as well as the war itself. Furthermore, as they were exposed to stories of the traumatic events experienced by their next of kin, they were victims of "secondary" or "vicarious trauma" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 20). Within the canon of the 1990s' New Writing, not only the grief and losses that women and civilians, as well as the soldiers, have to cope with, but also more grievous realities have come to the fore and been provocatively portrayed. Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995), a landmark play of the in-yer-face theatre in the context of war, unflinchingly portrays the grievous horrors of war from rape to cannibalism and stories of appalling atrocities that no one was willing to hear until then. Following Kane's footsteps her contemporaries too, such as Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Neilson, and Martin Crimp, have produced plays with evocations of the violence of war and its deleterious effects on society, so much the more on women.

2. Manifestations of Truma in Midwinter

In the same lines with the scarcity of plays touching upon the war experiences of women and civilians, plays about war experiences written by women are rarer. A representative of these rare female playwrights is Zinnie Harris who wrote the multi-award-winning play *Further than the Furthest Thing* (2000). One of the freshest voices of the British theatre, Harris is a playwright, screenwriter, and theatre director, whose literary output is stupendous in its entirety. Yet, her plays in which war is handled as a pervasive element make her an exceptional playwright. In plays such as *The Wheel* (2011), *Solstice* (2005), *Midwinter* (2004), and *Fall* (2008), Harris does not limit the description of war to trench warfare, army life, and their ravages. Rather, she is preoccupied with representing the trauma of war at home and in society. Her *Midwinter*, the second in a trilogy of plays all concerned with war, was first staged by the RSC at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon in October 2004. Later, as a prequel to this play, Harris wrote *Solstice*, and the trilogy culminated in *Fall* in 2008. About the trilogy Harris says: "[t]hey all look at different aspects of war. They have different seasons as titles. *Solstice* is before the war starts, *Midwinter* is the middle of a war and *Fall* is a little bit after it, dealing with how society moves on" (as cited in Fisher, 2008). Thus

each play probes different phases and faces of war, whilst testifying to their aftermath.

As a matter of fact, all of the plays in the trilogy successfully portray the grim reality of war and society in the face of war. What makes *Midwinter* exceptional among others is that it presents the trauma of an ever-present war. Harris avoids specificity and does not name the war, time and the place in the play. Doing so, she both unfolds the reality of war going on somewhere in the world and alerts her audiences to the fact that it can break out anytime, anywhere. In an interview with Sinem Dönmez on the production of *Midwinter* by DOT Theatre in Turkey the playwright says,

[In *Midwinter*] where we are and when it happens is not clear, while writing I was thinking of Iraq War, but it can be anywhere. This is just aftermath of a war. It reminds us that the war is real and everywhere. We are all in the same world, those trying to survive the war are not different. Either an African woman or a European one. (2016)

This way, the play demonstrates that war and its traumas are not peculiar to any group, time or geography. By blurring spatial and temporal borders, it universalizes them, and creates a critical distance between the play and the audiences. Thus, Harris challenges her audiences to face the possibility of war and its destructive effects at any time. She also makes her audiences question what is happening around the world outside their lives in bubbles that are prone to pop anytime.

2.1. Haunted Lives

Midwinter is about a post-apocalyptic future and set between the end of a bitter, non-specific ten-year war and just before another one about to start. In the opening scene of the play Maud, a woman in her thirties, is seen devouring the carcass of a horse. She is interrupted by an old man, Leonard, and his mute grandson, Sirin who are lured by the smell of the meat as they are starving just like the rest of the city. After a discussion, she barter some of the horse for the starving boy whom she then passes off as her dead child. When the war is over, her long-presumed dead husband Grenville returns from the war as a hero, but he is infected with a blinding parasite. Thus, he has brought the violence and terror of the war home.

The play begins by revealing the collapse of the sense of a community and evident disruption of societal bonds. Judith Herman's assertion that traumatic events disrupt human relationships breaching the attachments of a community (1997, p. 51), can be seen at the very beginning of the play with its traumatized and insecure community. When Leonard and his grandson ask for some meat to feed themselves, Maud threatens them with shooting (Harris,

2004, p. 2, 3; 1)³. After major traumatic events, especially those that are inflicted by a human agent, it is a foregone conclusion for the victim to lose the sense of safety, what is more, the feeling of trust. Far from feeling safe as a part of a community, with the emergence of the war and the subsequent exposure to violence and hunger, all the characters in *Midwinter* look for the ways to survive alone. Because the ensuing state of trauma as a result of the internalized conflict hinders attachment to anybody, and this, in turn, renders a community impossible. Maud, as an embodiment of this loss of any form of commitment, regards everybody as a possible threat to her life. With the fear of being attacked or betrayed, she refuses to communicate with an old man and a little boy and avoids helping them.

In effect, throughout the thirteen scenes the play is structured upon, there is no real connection between any of the characters which attests to the subjugation of community notion. Maud cannot set a healthy tie with either the boy or Grenville. Although she tries hard to construct a real mother-son relationship with Sirin, she can never be successful. Likewise, Leonard, Grenville, and the boy cannot make meaningful connections with one another due to the impairments that the trauma of war has caused. Even though they all strive to spend their lives together, even in the same house they live in isolation, grappling with their fears and wounds. Leonard, for instance, seems to be fond of his real grandson Sirin at the beginning of the play, yet he refuses to take him when Maud wants to give him back as Grenville is very hard on the child:

Leonard: I can't take him

Maud: He is your grandchild.

Leonard: But you said it yourself, I am getting old. You know I can't.

Maud: You said you wanted him

Leonard: When you had him, I wanted him, but now –

Maud: Grenville will kill him.

Leonard: You will have to find someone else for him.

Maud: He is your grandchild.

Leonard: It doesn't count for anything. (2004, p. 64; 9)

It is apparent in Leonard's statement that the concept of a relationship or any kind of bond "doesn't count for anything" as the war and its trauma have damaged them all. They all look towards surviving the war rather than constructing a society and being a member of it. The war disrupts their emotional and psychological lives so severely that they even lose the feeling of attachment to their closest family members. Leonard abandons his grandson, only living relative, even though he knows the child will be

³ As the edition of *Midwinter* I used does not include line numbers, further citations from the play will be given by page numbers followed by scene numbers.

tormented by Grenville. Maud, similarly, does not show any sign of grief for her missing family members, presumably all of whom she has lost to war. These problematic relational bonds between the characters suggest that war trauma strips them of humanity, leaving behind insensitive living things.

As well as ravaging the land and disrupting relationships, the war also destroys the identities of the characters. In their studies, Dori Laub and Daniel Podell observe that traumatic experience brings along “failure to preserve an emphatic tie even with oneself” (1995, p. 992), and consequently, motivations, goals, and a sense of security are destroyed as the individual loses the understanding of self. The play’s Maud, Leonard, and Grenville too, losing this tie with their basic motivations, cannot manifest their real identities and cannot easily be depicted through self-qualities. Together with that, Ann Kaplan suggests that while annihilating existing identities, traumatic events “produce new subjectivities through the shocks, disruptions, and confusions that accompany them” (2005, p. 20). Characters in *Midwinter* who are devoid of their former identities in this fashion are seen to be reshaped by the shadows of the war. They are all insecure, escaping from the realities of the past and the future, and are fixated on survival more than anything else. Upon surviving, they tend to form new subjectivities in accordance with the traumatic conditions. For instance, after the war, the dead horse and the desperate child are not the only things that Maud steals. As she loses most of her life and identity to war, she expunges her real identity and strives to forge a new one by stealing that of her dead sister. Assuming her sister’s name and life, she intends to recuperate her real war-trodden self. This way, she believes, she can get rid of the traumas she experienced, which will haunt her for the rest of her life if she continues with the old one. However, although this delusional identity provides Maud momentary comfort, it falls short in obliterating the troubles of her old life and offering a new one. Besides forging herself an unsuccessful identity, Maud sets out to construct another one for the boy. She passes him off as a dead child, changing his name and introducing him to Grenville as his own son (2004, 19; 2). A ten-year-old, mute Sirin becomes Isaac, Maud’s dead son. Inasmuch as he was born to war and his short life is subjugated by the war, Sirin features many effects of trauma from which he needs to be freed. Shutting her eyes to this urgent need, Maud takes great pains to start a family with him and to teach him manners as if nothing has happened. But all her efforts perpetually fall flat.

A central claim of the trauma theory is that “trauma creates a speechless fright” (Balaev, 2008, p. 149) and, as language is neither appropriate nor powerful enough to describe the experience of trauma, remaining silent most often becomes the only choice for the victims of extreme events. Narratives of trauma, for that reason, are mostly haunted by profound silences. By means of adopting linguistic silences throughout the text or employing a mute character, the horror of the event can be manifestly

embodied. In *Midwinter*, the most striking example of the silence caused by trauma proves to be Sirin, who is totally stripped of speech. Primarily, the boy's silence marks a distinctive traumatic condition. All the way to the end, except the word 'fish' in the thirteenth scene, Sirin does not utter any word. Patrick Camegy in his review of the play comments that "the boy's stubborn silence is an enigma in response to which the characters' secrets slowly come to light" (2004, p. 61). In a way, for Camegy the silence amounts to what is hidden and not spoken throughout the play. However, at the end of the play, although the secrets are revealed, the boy remains silent. If we take secrets as the past traumas of the characters, Camegy's verdict becomes more acceptable, because neither Maud nor Grenville verbalise their pain. They keep them silent just like Sirin and prefer to speak of anything but war and its consequences. One may argue that in Sirin's muteness what makes more sense is not a metaphorical response to the secrets but a very traumatic reaction to what he has gone through. Arguably, he remains silent because of his 'semiotic incapacity,' for he is too inexperienced to shoulder the burden of war and define it with his existing vocabulary. Because children's capacity for verbalizing is limited compared to an adult's, and Sirin's known world cannot provide any precedent for what has happened and is still happening. Therefore, it is particularly difficult for him to put his traumatic experience into a narrative and share it with others, which is a prerequisite for trauma recovery. He fails at creating a narrative for his experience and pain, hence with his absolute silence he becomes a symptom of the history he cannot possess, as Caruth expresses it (1995, p. 5).

Aside from dumbness, repetitive behaviors of Sirin underline a beleaguered psyche. Upon smashing glassware on the ground, Maud asks him to clean his mess. Upon getting a brush, he incessantly sweeps the same place until Maud tells him to stop, later mobs the same spot to a degree of obsession (2004, p. 13, 14; 2). One of the remarkable features of trauma is unarguably repetition. Drawing on Freud's conception of 'repetition compulsion' (1962), Caruth on the nature of traumatic event says that "the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it (1995, p. 4). Even though Sirin's repetitions are not the repetition of any traumatic event, they reach to the level of obsession indicating a behavioral disorder like obsessive compulsive. Surfacing in form of "repetitive behaviors (e.g., hand washing, ordering, checking) or mental acts (e.g., praying, counting, repeating words silently) that the individual feels driven to perform in response to an obsession" (APA, 2013, p. 237), OCD has strong connections with PTSD. David Adams in his book on OCD, refers to many war victims or soldiers developing OCD later in their life (2015, p. 259). Due to carrying wounds of war deep down in his soul and his inability to communicate this distress verbally, Sirin manifests obsessive behavior which becomes another indicative of trauma.

2.2. Trauma of War Comes Home

Grenville, the only soldier character, is delineated as another traumatized and transformed subject created by the war. By virtue of being a soldier and experiencing the war directly, he exhibits violence and frontline trauma. Harris, instead of narrating the ethos of heroism or resilience, portrays the destructive effects of war on soldiers through him. Rather than glorifying his experience in the war and dignifying the medals he has been given in return for his service for the county, Grenville celebrates breaking all his bonds with the army instead:

Grenville: Ah, we have company. I feel like celebrating.

He gets out a bottle of whisky from his pocket.

That is my last ever engagement from the army. That is the last I ever have to see of the lot of them, and look –

He takes out a whole handful of medals.

-look Maud, medals and medals. We can hang them on the mantelpiece. You can play with them, Isaac, put them in your treasure box. We can use them as buttons if you like. Would someone please smile at me. This is a celebration. (2004, p. 49; 6)

From Grenville's statements indicating his happiness at breaking his bonds with the army, it is not difficult to imagine that what he has experienced during his service is not something he is proud of. Michael Billington calls *Midwinter* a "moral parable" (2004) for its role in highlighting the subjects of war and its effects on soldiers and civilians as well as in commenting on its realities. Harris, in confirmation, underlines the futility of war by showing what the soldiers, and some civilians, got when it ended: a handful of medals signifying nothing in comparison with what they have given away. Grenville fights in the war for ten years, and he is given the medals for his service and bravery. During these same ten years, however, he loses his wife and his child, not to mention his health.

Soon it is revealed that medals are not the only thing that the army and his experiences during his service have given Grenville. He leaves the army and returns home with the worst of several legacies: acquired violence, sore eyes infected with a parasite which gradually blinds him, and obtrusive memories. According to Freud a trauma survivor can walk away from the scene of the trauma event unharmed, only to suffer symptoms of the shock later (1955, p. 109, 110). Because, Caruth writes, what "precisely *not known* in the first instance returns to haunt the survivor later on" (1996, p. 4). Grenville similarly returns home from the war in good shape and never clearly shares any information about any disturbing event. By all appearances, he returns from the war unharmed, albeit the traumatic experience of war comes to light by way of intrusive nightmares or flashbacks, and the enigmatic virus

in his eyes. Whenever he closes his eyes, he remembers the vexing memories of war that haunt him in the form of compulsive, painful repetitions. In one of his speeches his anxiety and a constant fear that they are going to ruin his life come into the light:

Grenville: Just there chasing my tail, just right there behind me. Catching up. Faster faster, getting there. And the only thing you can do is open your eyes and see that it is nothing. It has gone. Gone. Until you close your eyes again. But if you can't open your eyes, if they stay closed, or you can open your eyes but you can't see... then what? (2004, p. 42; 5)

Caruth says that “the painful repetition of the flashback can only be understood as the absolute inability of the mind to avoid an unpleasurable event that has not been given psychic meaning in any way” (1996, p. 59). Grenville’s being flooded with the reminiscences of the war and painful emotions when he closes his eyes denotes the overwhelming nature of the events he experienced and his inability to grasp them at the time of happening. During the long years of war, he is exposed to many traumatic experiences but he cannot put them into words. He avoids remembering and talking about them both because of not wanting to recollect and also because of the traumatic nature of the memories that resists narration. Consequently, his traumatic experiences cannot be fully assimilated into his consciousness and thus cannot be narrated. On the other side, they continue to impose themselves against his will in non-verbal forms and traumatize him again leaving him “to chase his tail” as Grenville himself appropriately puts.

Echoing inexpressibility of trauma, Anne Whitehead says “the ‘memory’ of trauma is thus not subject to the usual narrative or verbal mechanisms of recall, but is instead organized as bodily sensations, behavioural reenactments, nightmares, and flashbacks” (2009, p. 115) as it is utterly visible in Grenville’s case. Herman, addedly, contends that trauma symptoms that cannot be spoken, sometimes manifest themselves in somatic forms. “Over time,” she writes “[trauma victims] begin to complain, not only of insomnia and agitation but also of numerous types of somatic symptoms” (1997, p. 86). One of the most striking examples of the trauma that manifests somatically in the play is the ominous outbreak of a parasite in the eyes of the soldiers that is going to kill them all. This parasite stands as a metaphor for the internalized war trauma that affects the soldiers’ lives. It is acquired during soldiers’ service in the army under extremely hard conditions. The way it emerges after some time and perturbs the victims’ lives all evoke trauma symptoms. Just like any other symptom, it now and then intrudes into soldiers’ lives and destroys them. Similar to all of the soldiers, Grenville is also infected by this enigmatic parasite, and on returning home, he starts to suffer from it.

His vision is impaired and it apparently gives him severe pain. The somatization of trauma in the form of this ominous blinding parasite, which can be considered as a legacy of the war, and its violence that all the soldiers have inherited, also denotes a form of communication for the soldiers. Whereas Sirin communicates his trauma by staying silent, Grenville and other soldiers' psychic pain finds expression through this parasite. Inasmuch as it haunts each of them, it also renders a communication of what they are going through possible.

With reference to the APA definition of PTSD as a response to a witnessed or life-threatening event involving extreme fear, helplessness and horror, it can be posited that Grenville, a soldier served in the war, clearly suffers from post-traumatic stress. As a result of this, besides the intrusions of the memories and his sore eyes, due to his post-traumatic stress, he suffers from difficulty in adapting to the post-war society and reclaiming his civilian life after coming home. While Maud sacrifices a lot and tries hard to maintain a domestic context, Grenville cannot reconcile himself to it as he is stuck in the war and its continuing traumatizing effects. He attempts to be a proper husband and have a strong father-son relationship; he takes Sirin to fishing, tries to teach him talking, yet, unfortunately, he cannot be successful in either of those. Now that he was destitute of social life in connection with other people during his ten-year military service, he cannot get involved with them again no matter how much he desires to. Instead, the after-effect of his trauma surfaces in the form of violence. Unable to recover from the war-time experiences, he succumbs to violence and terrorizes the people around him. With regard to this, Grenville's trauma in the form of PTSD is manifested through aggressive behavior inflicted on his son and wife. Thus, he, a victim of war, becomes the victimizer and brings trauma of war home. When he first comes back home, Maud's concerns about the problems a soldier experiences upon returning home foreshadow what is going to happen,

Maud: You are a soldier, you're used to different things now.

Grenville: I love you, that is the same.

Maud: You will kill us.

Grenville: Don't be stupid.

Maud: You'll get angry and –

Grenville: No. never. (2004, p. 22; 2)

As a result of his subsequent aggressive behavior, the repercussions of war and its trauma are felt in the house when, as Maud asserts, he turns "back into a soldier" (2004, p. 64; 9). Although he does not kill anybody, Grenville assaults old Leonard in order to extract information about Maud and Sirin's real identities, mistreats the boy when he learns that he is not his real son, throttles the pedlar who tells him that all the soldiers will eventually go blind, and torments Maud for deceiving him. All this violent behavior signals his

inability to work through his trauma as he cannot face or get away from the memories of war and what it has done to him.

Even though trauma steps to the fore in different forms and ruins each character's life in a variety of ways, each one's trauma affects Maud in a roundabout way. Assuming the role of the mother, she feels coerced to hold the family together meanwhile providing both Sirin and Grenville food, shelter, and support. In return, on the top of her own battered life, she is psychologically tormented with the boy's erratic attitudes and subjected to Grenville's violence. Thereby, it becomes much harder for her to keep a good frame of mind. Nevertheless, even under such circumstances, she perpetuates her determination to recreate a new life untouched by outside factors. She holds on to her hopes which are symbolized with the herbs, whose germination is impossible because of the unsuitable soil. Maud's hope for a better future and her efforts, just like the herbs, however, are devoid of essential requirements that are appropriate soil for the herbs, acknowledgement of the past and present for Maud in order to get over trauma. Even so, she perpetually ignores what has happened and sedulously abstains from a working through while staying focused on a better future.

Acknowledging the past and grieves that Maud was oppressed with means facing the realities and mourning them. Mourning, intrinsic to the healing trauma, is a process of accepting and integrating the traumatic loss by repeating and remembering it. Although confronting what happened and voicing the upsetting event and mourning are favored by many trauma theorists, others have suggested alternative methods for overcoming trauma and its destructive impacts. Eric Santner in his "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle" defines his term 'narrative fetishism' as the "construction and deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place" (1992, p. 144). Unlike mourning, Santner writes that narrative fetishism is "the way an inability or refusal to mourn employs traumatic events; it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere" (1992, p. 144). This means while mourning necessitates acceptance of the loss and the trauma it causes; narrative fetishism removes the need to mourn. Dominic LaCapra describes this phenomenon as "fetishized and totalizing narratives that deny the trauma that called them into existence by [...] harmonizing events, and often recuperating the past in terms of uplifting messages or optimistic, self-serving scenarios" (2001, p. 78). Partaking in narrative fetishism a traumatized person can pretend that he or she is untouched by the trauma by relating the trauma in an untruthful and optimistic way. Unable to come to terms with the trauma, Maud is seen succumbing to narrative fetishism. She pretends all is fine with her and her life and disregard or deny any unpleasant happening. Furthermore, if anything

gets into her way that cannot be disregarded, she annihilates them. Realising Grenville's health and violence will deteriorate, she kills him by pouring lime on his eyes. In this way, she eliminates hardships and creates a *better life* in appearance.

The suppression and silencing of her trauma, however, cause Maud to relive it repeatedly for "the penalty for repression" as Kali Tal asserts "is repetition" (1996, p. 7). Besides domestic problems springing forth from war trauma, the coming of another war also denotes to the repressed reality of war. As the characters, primarily Maud, cannot face and work through its effects, similar to the traumas it has caused, war repeatedly haunts their lives. Upcoming war as the previous one is not acknowledged by Maud and play ends with her remarks "In this house, whatever happens out there, in this house... [...] Peacetime. That's all I know" (2004, p. 76; 12). While this new war attests to the traumas that are not worked through, it also draws a parallel with never ending warfare that modern world is grappling with.

3. CONCLUSION

"It is perhaps not realistic to expect that we will ever be on easy terms with the past" (2015, p. 206, 207) Julie Hansen argues alluding to the traumatic incidents of the past. Because, once trauma visits, it refuses to leave easily and perturbs the present continually. Inspired by and based on his personal collective traumatic memories with regards to his Jewish background, Avishai Margalit in his seminal work *The Ethics of Memory* (2002) elaborates on this discomfort with Freud's prison metaphor.

In his prison ward of the unconscious, disturbing memories are locked up by a censor-jailer. They are removed from consciousness, but they are not destroyed; Freud's metaphor is the prison of repression, not the guillotine of forgetfulness.
(p. 2)

Thus, memories that give pain never go away, but are stored in a metaphorical prison. Trauma, encapsulating excessive amount of disturbing memories, turns into the prison itself for it incarcerates its victims, make them stay stranded in a never-ending present which is occasionally haunted by the painful memories. It is only possible to alleviate the pain of the memories that come to stay by verbalising and sharing it with others. Under these circumstances, it seems more likely that while trauma continues to preoccupy modern consciousness, it will feature in art and literature that offer safest fields to reach others and share the burden of the past. Theatre, as a field of art and literature too, will continue to imagine and question the past, and to serve as an arena for representing and sharing trauma while enabling a liberating force.

In view of contemporary realities permeated by war and its ever-present memories, Harris' piece offers a picture of traumatized individuals, each of whom responds to war and develop trauma in a different way. The soldier of the play Grenville epitomizes the close witnesses and victims of war sustaining its trauma as a legacy even upon returning home. He is disillusioned with war, infected with a parasite, and brings terror back home. Leonard and his grandson Sirin embody desperate situation of a war-torn country. They struggle to hold on life without any purpose and attachment. By virtue of being a child, Sirin manifests graver effects of trauma reminding how children become the speechless victims of war. Maud the protagonist, becomes the symbol of futile hope locked in her own prison as her hope is unaccompanied with the healing of former wounds. Unfortunately, her neglected trauma averts the new, peaceful life surfacing now and then in search of a working through.

Therefore, *Midwinter* provides a fruitful arena to elucidate traumatic effects of war and accentuates the role of theatre in confronting its audiences with these gruesome realities. The play does not only demonstrate a network of connection between the past and ongoing wars by eroding the borders but also reveals the universality of human suffering that originate in these catastrophes. Traumas surfacing and disturbing the characters are not peculiar to them. Regardless of where or when the wars brake out, they devastate the lives sparking off severe psychological trauma. Proving herself as a playwright of the times she lives in, Zinnie Harris successfully makes a point of these problems and how they transform the societies on the contemporary stage.

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