

Exploration of Trauma in Sebastian Barry's *On Canaan's Side*

Sebastian Barry'nin *Uzak Diyarlarda* Romanında Travma İrdelemesi

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Article Information

Submission: 02.09.2024

Acceptance: 18.11.2024

Doi:

10.20296/tsadergisi.1542269

Key Words:

On Canaan's Side

Sebastian Barry

Trauma

Ireland

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the representation of trauma in Sebastian Barry's *On Canaan's Side* against the backdrop of Cathy Caruth's theory of "Traumatic Realization" and Dominick LaCapra's notion of "Working-Through" and "Historical Trauma." In the novel, Barry depicts various characters who develop traumatic symptoms because of their involvement with large-scale wars and the consequential political affairs that are closely tied to the haunting nature of the Irish history of the 20th century. Within this context, this study claims several characters display the signs of post-war trauma; nonetheless, they cannot entirely comprehend their depressive tendencies due to the delayed realization of the incidents caused by the deficient registration at the exact moment of the traumatic incidents. Only the protagonist, Lily Bere, attempts to work through her constantly repeated traumatic memories by writing her experiences in a journal. The recurrent references to the biblical land of *Canaan* are also significant in creating a "Founding Trauma" that establishes a new "Myth of Origin" for the marginalized Irish immigrants; therefore, it is examined extensively in this study alongside the manifestations of traumatic inclinations on the personal level.

Makale Bilgisi

Geliş Tarihi: 02.09.2024

Kabul Tarihi: 18.11.2024

Doi:

10.20296/tsadergisi.1542269

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Uzak Diyarlarda

Sebastian Barry

Trauma

İrlanda

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı Sebastian Barry'nin *Uzak Diyarlarda* romanındaki travma tasvirlerini Cathy Caruth'un "Travmatik Kavrama" teorisi ve Dominick LaCapra'nın "Çözüm İşlemi" ve "Tarihsel Travma" kavramları bağlamında irdelemektir. Barry, romanında 20. Yüzyıl başlangıcındaki İrlanda'nın kaotik siyasal ikliminden ve paralelinde vuku bulan büyük ölçekli savaşlardan doğrudan veya dolaylı etkilenmeleri nedeniyle travma yaşayan birçok karakteri yansıtır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma içeriğinde romanda bulunan birden fazla karakterin savaş sonrası travması belirtileri gösterdiğini fakat travmatik olayın yaşanış anında eksik kaydetme dolayısıyla oluşan geciktirilmiş kavrama durumlarının kendi depresif eğilimlerini bütünüyle algılamalarına engel olduğunu iddia edilmektedir. Yalnızca ana karakter Lily Bere, sürekli yinelenen travmatik anılarını bir günce vasıtasıyla yazıya geçirerek çözüm işlemi gerçekleştirme yönünde bir girişimde bulunmaktadır. İncil ve Tevrat'ta yer edinen *Kenan* diyarına yapılan referanslar ise marjinalleştirilmiş İrlandalı göçmenler için yeni bir "Başlangıç Miti" tesis eden bir "Kuruluş Travması" oluşturma dolayısıyla önemlidir ve bu nedenle bu çalışma içerisinde yer alan kişisel travmatik eğilimlerin tezahürlerinin yanı sıra kapsamlı bir şekilde ele alınmıştır.

Atıf İçin

Yıldıztaşı, S & Avcu, İ. (2025). Exploration of trauma in Sebastian Barry's *on Canaan's Side*. *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 29(2), 418-429. doi: tsadergisi.1542269

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INTRODUCTION

The award-winning Irish author Sebastian Barry is known for creating multi-dimensional historical works that encompass various landmarks of the history of Ireland by exploring the sensitive evolution of some integral components of Irish identity while also subtly reflecting his existence within the context of his narratives. Most of his fictional works are generated from real-life stories of his relatives from the previous generations which have influenced him to create fictitious plotlines that deepen the importance of the themes that are present in reality. From this information alone, Barry's works give the impression that they are grounded on his relationship with the specific moments of the history of Ireland; however, his masterful aptitude for weaving the extensive history into personal stories makes him a central representative of Irish history and identity in fictitious narrative formats. In his novel *On Canaan's Side* (2011), Barry once again depicts the critical milestones of the history of Ireland. Nevertheless, in this novel, he does not content himself with displaying the complex situation of Ireland in the 20th century alone and also illustrates a detailed picture of the U.S.A. from the eyes of an Irish immigrant, through the agency of his protagonist Lily Bere. While following the life of Lily which is filled with tragedy and sorrow, Barry simultaneously reflects the consequences of the historical developments of the time to establish the context for the corresponding actions of his characters. Lily's grievous life can be seen as a microcosm of the tragedies that have affected numerous people in the 20th century due to the wars and other catastrophic events which caused irreparable physical and mental injuries to those people.

Within this context, this paper attempts to reveal several occurrences of traumatic symptoms in the characters of *On Canaan's Side*, starting with the main character Lily Bere. In the light of the indications of Trauma Theories that are explained in the first chapter of this study, it is argued that many characters in Barry's novel are suffering from traumatic disorders which may either show themselves in the form of shell-shock resulting from direct involvement in wars or by being indirectly affected by the consequences of these wars to develop variations of PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder). Throughout the novel, various sequences coincide with Cathy Caruth's theoretical approach to "Traumatic Realization," a term she borrowed from Sigmund Freud's studies on Trauma. The belatedness of the realization of their traumatic experiences defines the psychological state of several characters in the novel and its critical impact on the evolution of their personalities will be explained thoroughly. Correspondingly, Dominick LaCapra's take on the concepts of "Acting-Out" and "Working-Through" (also adopted from the theories of Sigmund Freud), series of successive and repetitive mental reactions to deal with the stress after the realization of traumatic events, show parallels with Lily's sudden decision to write down her life story that constitutes the overwhelming majority of the novel, even though she is not eager to engage in this activity. Lily utilizes the method of writing her feelings to work through her depressive state of mind as a solution to deal with the constant Acting-Out process. "Historical Trauma," another theory of LaCapra in Trauma Studies, is also applicable to elucidate certain aspects of the narrative presented in *On Canaan's Side* in terms of the collective approach to Trauma as a part of the grand scheme of history. Thus, it will be utilized in this study to present its influence in shaping the identity of certain individuals and groups in relation to the analogous effects of the haunting state of Irish identity and politics that are relevant in the novel.

Development of Trauma Theory

Trauma Theory has been one of the most prominent study areas of social sciences in the last few decades and the foundation of "contemporary trauma studies can usefully be dated to 1980, when post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first included in the diagnostic canon of the medical and psychiatric professions" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 4). The significance of Trauma Theory in the therapeutic and scientific discourse has expanded to the fields of humanities including historical and literary studies. Innovative analytical approaches developed in parallel with the "[emergence] of 'the ethical turn' that took place during these decades in the related fields of literary theory and moral philosophy, the most relevant of which are Trauma Studies, Memory Studies and the Theory

of Affects” (Onega, Rio & Escudero-Alías, 2017, p. 1). The attached importance of the studies of trauma and memory also started concentrating on the textual products of the contemporary age in order to analyze the ethically questionable issues that are presented in these texts. The deconstructive approach to trauma in literary criticism has spread around the field and has generated an extensive conceptual framework with relevant contributions.

The origin of trauma in modern contexts is mostly derived from the principles of Sigmund Freud who dealt with the subject as a complementary concept of his psychoanalytical theories (Freud, 1981). However, the progress in designating the scope of trauma that extended to various situations and psychical variables has expanded its associated meanings and still continues to evolve the perception of the subject. Duncan Bell (2007) defines trauma with its placement in psychology by saying “trauma is understood as an emotional or psychic injury, and in psychoanalysis it is argued that such injuries are often repressed, remaining unhealed and leading to various forms of ‘acting out’” (p. 7). The concept of trauma is generally associated with certain atrocities that are widely accepted as terrifying or painful experiences and the initial studies around Trauma Theory were focused on these instances; however, while “traditional entries like war, violent rape, concentration-camp experiences, sexual and psychological abuses during childhood still persist, the label of ‘trauma’ has now been effectively extended to many others situated between either extremes” (Ray, 2011, p. 2). The extended meanings and connotations of trauma to define the group of psychological symptoms and reactions that can be observed from a variety of unique experiences paved the way for researchers of Trauma to be able to transcend the limited area of focus. Therefore, nowadays, any incident that causes a lasting impact on the psyche that disrupts the mental health of an individual can be a subject of traumatic inspection.

Cathy Caruth’s Notion of Traumatic Realization

Cathy Caruth, one of the seminal figures of contemporary Trauma Studies, has paved the way for the extensive implementation of Trauma Theory into literary contexts while also defining trauma’s versatility that transcends the boundaries between the disciplines. The major theories of Caruth that define the framework of her studies on trauma are her arguments on the belated nature of traumatic realization and the incompressibility of traumatic events. According to Caruth, the traumatic incident cannot be fully registered as it occurs because “the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness” (2016, p. 92) and it requires a certain amount of time to settle on the memory through remembering it again. Caruth then borrows from Freud’s ideas on mental repetitions to reinforce her argument for the belated realization of the trauma:

The repetitions of the traumatic event—which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing. (2016, p. 92)

Caruth suggests these repetitive visualizations of the traumatic event are caused because of the inability to comprehend the incident as it occurs since trauma “does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned”; thus, resulting in belated registration of the event in the form of flashbacks (1995, p. 151). She further proposes that speaking of these events as recollections does not prompt a cathartic effect on the individuals; on the contrary, it “attests to its endless impact on a life” (2016, p. 7). In this sense, it is plausible to say that “Trauma carries the force of a literality which renders it resistant to narrative structures and linear temporalities,” and continues to occupy the psyche of individuals and groups alike by transcending the restrictions of space and time (Whitehead, 2004, p. 5). With the rejection of the comprehension of the traumatic event itself in the exact moment it happens, Caruth deconstructs the mainstream understanding of trauma as a simplified and easily recognizable experience.

Dominick LaCapra's Working-Through and Historical Trauma

Originally a historian, LaCapra derives viewpoints from the historical framework as well as the theories of psychoanalysis. In his studies on the psychoanalytical side of trauma theory, LaCapra mainly focuses on some of the theories of Freud with a pronounced emphasis on the process of "Working-Through". As it can be understood from the phrase itself, the term working-through is used for the process of mental confrontation with traumatic memories in order to cope with "Acting-Out" phase which refers to the psychological struggle with constantly reiterated recollections of the haunting events. In his book *Representing the Holocaust* (2016), LaCapra states that he insists on the significance of "working-through" because "it has been underemphasized and relatively undeveloped in post-Freudian psychoanalysis. Even in Freud it did not receive much theoretical elaboration" (p. 205). In the book, he continues to assert the cruciality of having a healthy cycle between acting-out and working-out phases to be able to cope with the traumatic event. He elaborates on the acting-out, a much frequently discussed part of the post-trauma period, by confirming its recurrent occurrence possibilities: "Victims of severely traumatizing events may never fully escape possession by, or recover from, a shattering past, and a response to trauma may well involve 'acting-out' (or emotionally repeating a still-present past) in those directly affected by it" (2016, p. xii). He even suggests the necessity of "[a]cting out and even extreme resistance or denial may be necessary prerequisites of working through traumatic events" (2016, p. 116) in certain cases.

LaCapra also touches upon the subject of Cathy Caruth's theory on the belated realization of trauma through the agency of the subsequent encounters with similar events and delayed comprehension of the fragmented memories, and unlike Caruth, he adopts a more optimistic stance and proposes a solution for this phenomenon: "Working through trauma brings the possibility of counteracting compulsive "acting-out" through a controlled, explicit, critically controlled process of repetition that significantly changes a life by making possible the selective retrieval and modified enactment of unactualized past possibilities" (LaCapra, 2016, p. 174). LaCapra claims that a properly directed confrontation with the acting-out process may lead people to successfully work through their traumatic fixations. He is; however, aware of the indefinite nature of the complex structure of the human psyche and does not insinuate a magical recovery from the traumatic disorders. Therefore, he claims "working-through" should not be considered an elevated concept in contrast to "acting-out." He believes that these two phases are interdependent with each other in order to create a well-balanced resistance against the destructive effects of trauma.

Another important concept LaCapra theorizes on is the relationship between history and trauma. He draws attention to the tendency of the inaccurate understanding of "Historical Trauma" and makes a distinction between transhistorical trauma and exclusive historical traumas (Onega et al., p. 3). The former type, transhistorical trauma refers to mythical or religious narratives that affect people on the unconscious level. They mostly specify the "absence" of the unfulfilled expectations that stem from the collective memories of the ancient world and cannot be traced back in certainty. The latter, on the other hand, indicates the traumatic events in the recorded past which still influence the people and the world because of their impact. By their nature, transhistorical traumas may induce people to turn them into historical trauma because of idealistic obsessions (Onega et al., p. 3).

The notion of Founding Trauma, which can be linked to both transhistorical trauma and historical, forms the basis of the collective identity of a group of people that share kinship and cultural background as LaCapra elucidates in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2014) by stating that "the trauma that is transformed or transvalued into a legitimating myth of origins. A crisis or catastrophe that disorients and harms the collectivity or the individual may miraculously become the origin or renewed origin of the myth" (p. xii). LaCapra proposes a direct connection between founding trauma and myths of origins and suggests the possibility of their utilization as ideological instruments through populist propaganda. He also touches upon the people's tendency to use newly

experienced trauma to replace the previous ones in order to revitalize the national or tribal identity (LaCapra, 2014, p. xii). This inclination, in a sense, stems from the unconscious requirement of attaching significance to collective history; nevertheless, it is also an apparatus that is repeatedly exploited for the sake of political ambitions.

Post-War Psychology: Shell Shock and PTSD

In contemporary times, the mental effects of war on people who actively experienced them is an eminent subject, and “[t]he application of psychiatry to war and terrorism is highly topical and a source of intense media interest” as well as being “a legitimate subject for academic study” (Jones and Wessely, 2015, p. xiii). Nevertheless, this was not the case merely a century ago before the dawn of the highly technological grand-scale wars. The shift in the comprehension of traditional values in modern times, the pronounced precedence of individualism, and the emergence of contemporary psychology thanks to the groundbreaking studies of Sigmund Freud have changed the perception of wars and how they impact human awareness. Although there were always cases of mental breakdown among the soldiers and war veterans, the overwhelming scale of the Great War (World War I) resulted in an enormous increase in these cases.

The term Shell-Shock originated around that time to make sense of the countless similar cases that show similar yet fluctuant symptoms in numerous individuals. Thus, it is important to understand that “[t]he relationship between shell shock in the Great War and later war neurosis is clearly crucial, as it was during this period that medical and military authorities began to develop systematic and comprehensive methods of dealing with psychological casualties” (Reid, 2014, p. 21). Shell-Shock is technically associated with the Great War era for medical experts; however, in practical usage, “‘shell shock’ is part of our everyday language and it is used widely to describe any great emotional shock” (Reid, 2014, p. 21). In this study, the term is utilized in explaining the conditions of war veterans in the cases of Willie, Ed, and Bill; nonetheless, its usage to describe the various facets of traumatic incidents is not denied. In his book *Remembering War* (2006), Jay Winter defines “Shell-Shock” by its structural relevance to wartime consequences:

Shell shock is a condition in which the link between an individual’s memory and his identity is severed. A set of unassimilable images and experiences, arising from war service, either in combat or near it, radically disturbs the narrative, the life story, of individuals, the stories people tell themselves and others about their lives. (pp. 52-53)

Both Shell-Shock and PTSD are used interchangeably in discussing the cases of post-war trauma despite the existence of some ideas that suggest “(PTSD) simply do not carry the same symbolic weight” (Reid, 2014, p. 21) compared to the historical significance of “Shell-Shock”; therefore, in this study, it is mostly attributed to consequences of recent wars or to people who are indirectly affected from the wars without being a direct participant as soldiers.

The first character we see glimpses of Shell-Shock in *On Canaan’s Side* is Willy, the older brother of Lily who joined the war on the side of the British Empire in the midst of an internal crisis in Ireland. In her recollections, Lily remembers the time Willy had gone to the Great War in a vibrant and proud mood and came back in a completely different state:

Willie went out to the Great War as they called it, he was only a boy, just like Bill in the desert, and he was very happy to go, and when he was a few years in it, I don’t know if he ever came home, even when he did on furlough. Something of him was lost in France, buried into the ditches they dug there, so that he would appear in our house in the castle right enough, but dressed in shadows, disguised by the thin dust of terror he carried on him maybe. (Barry, 2011, p. 34)

The effect of the Shell-Shock in the psyche of Willie is so enormous that even his own sister cannot be sure if he sees the same person he knew and loved before the war. The circumstances Willie survived through until that point left psychological scars and made him lose his sense of being coupled with the social factors of his homeland that made him question the purpose of his role in the Great War. Additional argument that applies to the psychological condition of Willie is that he cannot grasp the reality of the trauma he withstood because of the harrowing experiences he had in WWI. Willie cannot register the traumatic events in the exact moments they happen. Therefore, their reappearance in his consciousness is incomprehensible for him, and thus unspeakable.

A more apparent illustration of this symptomatic reaction can be observed in the process of Ed Bere's mental transformation after the Vietnam War. In the Vietnam War, Ed did not partake in combat directly; nonetheless, he was given an extremely critical and distressing task: "He was in the engineering corps, and had lately taken to specializing in landmines.... Lots of his buddies were blown up doing that work. But Ed had some knack" (Barry, 2011, p. 155). The account of Lily in her journal feels distant to the nature of the job Ed was entrusted in the war due to her mental state at the time being. Nevertheless, this type of duty can be considered as the model agent for causing Shell-Shock in an individual's psyche. Thus, unavoidably, the ramifications of PTSD manifest in Ed's consciousness after the war:

Ed died clearing landmines in Vietnam, I mean, he did not die, of course not, but in the long toil of defusing bombs, out in the wild jungle with a buddy to hold a torch on the work, or his own sweat making his hands dangerous to himself, Specialist First Class Ed Bere as good as died, or at least did not come home, or ever could find his way. (Barry, 2011, p. 157)

The impact of the war and the tremendously stressful burden he was given within it, which induces a ceaseless sense of death risk alters the personality of Ed completely, and he develops severe symptoms of PTSD. His integral personality becomes an amalgam of his current and past self and he re-experiences the traumatic instances over and over again in his consciousness as a never-ending acting-out process. The belated realization of the repressed traumatic experiences makes it difficult for him to confront them as they were not registered to his psyche in the moment of action. Therefore, he cannot comprehend his mental reactions to these events and continues to act out the traumatic memories repeatedly.

The next war that results in creating a haunting effect on the tragic life of Lily is the Gulf War of 1990-1991 as his grandson Bill enlists in the US army to fight in the "desert" as they recurrently call it in the novel. The pattern of being involved in the wars in the lineage of Lily also correlates with another notion of Caruth which proposes that trauma is "transmissible through society, as if it were an infectious disease. It is capable of being passed on not only between people, but also across generations and cultures" (Bell, 2006, p. 7). This argument can be supported in the novel by how the descendants of the war veterans are drawn to the wars while being aware of the history of their family members alongside the cultural influences of the wars in society. Bill shares the same fate with his father by coming back home with PTSD:

Bill's desert war was short, victorious. But he came home stunned, like a calf in the slaughterhouse. In the slaughterhouse, they drive a bolt into the brain of the animal. There is a moment when the calf balances between life and death. I mean, it is neither alive nor dead. (Barry, 2011, p. 178)

As opposed to his father, Bill's time in the war was moderately short since it was an awfully one-sided campaign that resulted in a complete victory for the US and its allies. However, Bill was seriously affected by the anguish of their enemies while they were struggling for their lives. The possibility of him coming across atrocities committed by his fellow soldiers is left ambiguous in the novel, but one thing is for certain, Bill felt like he experienced something infernal. In the

following period, the repetition of the unregistered memories in the form of flashbacks or nightmares lingers in the psyche of Bill and because of the delayed realization of the gravity of the events he witnessed, the traumatic event becomes incomprehensible. As a result, Bill resorts to committing suicide without giving himself an opportunity to work through his trauma.

Interplay Between Memory and Trauma

The story of Lily Bere spans decades in the 20th century. Nevertheless, the first phase of her life, her childhood and teenage years in Ireland, had the most crucial impact on the direction of the rest of her life. Those years correspond to a very sensitive historical period of Ireland filled with political and social turmoil in the midst of World Wars and independence efforts: “The years predating, during, and following Ireland’s struggle for independence certainly went down in Irish history as part of the darkest ones in a country whose past is littered with suffering and sacrifice” (Pomaskis, 2021, p. 1). After the limited reminiscence of her early childhood years, Lily’s consciousness drifts towards her first memory of a war (World War I) that affects her family because of her brother Willie’s direct participation. Whereas there were immense diplomatic fractures between Ireland and the British Government, many Irish young men joined the war on the Empire’s side: “from 1914 to 1918 Ireland counted about 200,000 men—Catholics slightly outnumbering Protestants— who joined the British army, in addition to many expatriates in Britain, the empire, and the United States” (State, 2009, p. 230). While those young people risked their lives for a common cause with British soldiers, other groups within Ireland planned to benefit from the situation as “[t]he war’s distraction afforded them the opportunity to act on their long-standing premise that Britain’s distress would mean Ireland’s success, and they jumped at the chance to plan an insurrection” (State, 2009, p. 230). These internal and external developments within Ireland dramatically affected the war veterans who came back both physically and psychologically exhausted. The given historical context of the novel is masterfully adapted into the fictional setting of *On Canaan’s Side* “[t]hrough the medium of historic memory,” and as expected from his narrative tradition, “Barry allows his characters to encounter with the prescient political turmoil connected with the Anglo-Irish experience and subsequent crisis of identity” (Ciliotta-Rubery, 2023, p. 215) that causes them to develop traumatic inclinations which haunt their memories throughout the rest of their lives.

On Canaan’s Side is based on the recollections of Lily Bere as a foundation. Therefore, anything we learn over the course of the story including the remnants of traumatic experiences is presented to us through the filtered perception of Lily. We do not know the exact developments of the narrated events because it is reflected from her subjective point of view which is mostly unreliable as she herself doubts what she writes on more than a few occasions. Traumatic memories affect the psyche of Lily throughout her life as the initiation of her emigration to America is generated by a traumatic fear of death and a desperate attempt to survive through it. The sense of terror that stems from this danger lingers on Lily’s consciousness until the later years of her life; however, that feeling cannot be comparable to the undefinable impact of the realization of this fear with the assassination of Tadg. For Lily, the details of this traumatic memory are still incomprehensible and she cannot make sense of some of the memories of that tragedy even after all these years. Moreover, when she recalls the actual event in her writing; her mind wanders around to another traumatic memory, greatly inferior in scale, because of the bizarre connotations it awoke in her consciousness:

But as I looked down I saw the blood on my clothes, a continent of it, ragged and spread like an elephant’s ear, infinitely clean and dark-looking, glistening, slippery. The very selfsame mark I had seen as a child on my aunt’s apron, when she was bleeding the pig in Wicklow. The poor lonesome pig hung up by the trotters in the barn, and his throat slit, and all the black blood draining down into the bucket beneath, that the black puddings would be made of. (Barry, 2011, p. 71)

This second reference to the same memory, which is mentioned earlier in the novel, demonstrates the acting principles of memory that transcend temporal limitations and the fragmented nature of the remembering process. These two different and completely unrelated memories on the surface, are constituted from the awareness of the traumatic injuries that are instinctively assembled together because they were never properly registered as knowledge before. Trauma is dependent on fragmented memories and in order to properly cope with their destructive impulses one should confront the recurring memories. By deciding to write her feelings and experiences, Lily takes a step towards the “working-through” process.

Despite repeating acting-out phase countless times, none of the war veterans depicted in the novel are shown as making the right effort to work through their traumatic memories. Lily, on the other hand, commits herself to the process of working-through by writing her feelings and memories associated with them even though she is not aware of the curative process of writing:

Narrative at best helps one not to change the past through a dubious rewriting of history but to work through posttraumatic symptoms in the present in a manner that opens possible futures. It also enables one to recount events and perhaps to evoke experience, typically through nonlinear movements that allow trauma to register in language and its hesitations, indirections, pauses, and silences. (LaCapra, 2004, pp. 121-122)

While revoking her experiences again amid a dire emotional state, Lily manages to confront her traumatic memories and comprehend some of the implications of these instances for her sense of being; hence, she undergoes a successful working-out process that allows her to adopt a more optimistic stance towards life. She repeatedly mentions the therapeutic influence of writing whilst penning her memoir and sometimes even touches upon the sensitive balance between acting-out and working-through principles: “To remember sometimes is a great sorrow, but when the remembering has been done, there comes afterwards a very curious peacefulness. Because you have planted your flag on the summit of the sorrow. You have climbed it” (Barry, 2011, p. 164). Remembering the events by acting them out in the form of a narrative helps Lily to work through her traumas to reclaim control of those memories and unwind her negative emotions.

***Canaan* as a Founding Trauma**

Up to this point, the focus was on exploring the personal traumatic experiences and indications that arise from historical trauma that can affect people individually or collectively due to the sense of “loss” they stimulate in the people after the traceable tragic incidents. On one hand, historical trauma on a personal level can be attributed to any incident that causes PTSD in individuals. On the other hand, when it functions in the collective sphere, historical trauma can influence the traditional narrative of certain groups or nations as a whole. On the structural transhistorical side of things; however, the foundation can be located in considerably abstract narratives. In *On Canaan's Side*, Barry whether consciously or not, offers an alternative Founding Trauma for marginalized Irish people who were forced to emigrate or had to continue to live in their country in an alienated state. The land of *Canaan*, which is based on the promised land of Israelites in the Old Testament, is continually referred to by Lily to draw parallels with America.

There are recurrent references to *Canaan* in the Old Testament to portray its significance: “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of *Canaan*, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (*King James Version*, 1769/2012, Genesis 17:8). *Canaan* is promised to Abraham and his descendants as a holy land. Hence, it is known to be a land of prosperity that inspires hope and peace for the people. The emphasis on it being a foreign land which Israelites are not familiar with can be equated to the situation Lily and Tadg found themselves in at the start of their migration. When descendants of Abraham face tortures and hardships, God fulfills his covenant and leads them to *Canaan* with the guidance of Moses: “I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God” (*King James Version*, 1769/2012, Leviticus 25:38). In the

novel, America metaphorically becomes *Canaan*, a safe haven that is promised to pious Christians or oppressed victims of the chaotic situation in Ireland during the revolution:

He was suddenly full of plans. It was as if he had awakened to being in America, abruptly made manifest to him as a place of safety, maybe infinite safety.... [A]nd now it was all laid out before him, before us, like a glittering Canaan. (Barry, 2011, p. 65)

The structural Founding Trauma of *Canaan*, which has been transformed into a myth of origins over the course of the millenniums, controls the collective consciousness of people as a transhistorical trauma. The “absence” of a real sense of “home” during the time of forced emigration, generates a need for the fulfillment of another “absence” at the subconscious level. Therefore, people who lost their sense of belonging due to exile, embrace the hope of their “covenant” with God to be fulfilled in the symbolic representation of the promised land of *Canaan*. Barry, however, subverts this notion in the upcoming parts of the novel by indicating the everlasting vulnerability of people even in the land of *Canaan* itself: “That they wouldn’t allow us to cross into *Canaan*, but would follow us over the river, and kill him *On Canaan’s Side*. The land of refuge itself” (Barry, 2011, p. 71). Even the exodus to the promised land cannot offer complete safety for marginalized people like Lily and experiencing new traumas cannot be avoided; thus, the value of the modern *Canaan* as an alternative myth of origin that is evolved from the established founding trauma is deconstructed and refuted within the narrative itself.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates the traumatic inclinations of the characters that are present in *On Canaan’s Side* by Sebastian against the backdrop of contemporary Trauma Theories. The conceptual framework is mainly based on the theories of Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra alongside the utilization of the relevant complementary theories based on postmodern and literary connotations of the concept of trauma. According to indications of the extensive analysis, there are various characters who suffer from some form of Traumatic Stress in the novel, and those inclinations manifest in several distinctive structures.

First of all, it is important to recognize that traumatic narratives within the novel are based on the real stories from Sebastian Barry’s extended family history similar to his other works. Therefore, his intangible relationship with his identity and his subjective perspective on history is also reflected in the novel. The historical and political context provided to establish a necessary background for characters’ trauma also plays a monumental role as it is a critical point of Irish history.

Secondly, the portrayal of Shell-Shock and PTSD is also undeniably significant in terms of displaying the traumatic consequences presented within the novel. Several characters show the symptoms of post-war trauma; nevertheless, they cannot comprehend the true nature of their depressive state of mind because of the belated realization of the events caused by the incomplete registration at the exact moment of the traumatic incidents. The fragmented memories recurrently emerge in their consciousness to haunt them and they constantly act out the same traumatic episodes in their psyche.

Thirdly, Lily is also haunted by the traumatic memories over the course of her long life. It starts with her escape to the US and resumes to evolve and disturb her soul with additional tragedies. However, as opposed to Shell-Shocked characters, she unconsciously attempts to work through her trauma in the form of writing a memoir. By transferring her traumatic memories to a journal in a narrative format, Lily manages to establish a successful equilibrium between the acting-out and working-through phases; thus, completes the registration of the scattered memory fragments.

Finally, the recurrent references to the land of *Canaan* are also vital because of their symbolic worth. Since Lily comes from a devout Catholic family, her frame of mind is strongly interconnected to the traditional values of Christianity and its foundational principles continue to influence her psyche on the subconscious level over the course of her life. For this reason, she

quickly associates *Canaan* with America when she realizes the similarities between their journey and the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. Through the agency of Lily, their migration to America is presented as an alternative Founding Trauma to replace the widely accepted historical trauma of the Irish War of Independence. Nonetheless, Barry deconstructs the ideals attributed to both "transhistorical trauma" and "historical trauma" and rejects their faculty to provide any sense of salvation by causing his characters to experience new traumas in the promised land as well.

All things considered, his study contributes to existing yet sparse numbers of research that is made about *On Canaan's Side* by concentrating on the traumatic inclinations depicted in the novel. Theories applied to the novel are methodically analyzed and the selected arguments are organized according to their innovative contribution to the established body of literature. While there are a few studies that touch upon the trauma in the novel, the focus and scope of this study deviate from their content through the extensive exploration of the traumatic disorders from multiple standpoints with the inclusion of Shell-Shock and Founding Trauma.

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Uzun Öz

İrlandalı yazar Sebastian Barry, ülkesinin tarihindeki dönüm noktalarını İrlandalı kimlik sorunsalının hassas evrimi üzerinden ele alan çok boyutlu tarihi yapımlar üretmesiyle ve bu meselelerle olan şahsi ilişkilerini içeriğe örtük biçimde yansıtmalarıyla bilinir. Barry'nin çoğu eseri önceki nesil akrabalarının gerçek yaşam öykülerinden derlediği fikirlerle ortaya çıkmıştır. Hayatın içeriğinde var olan ancak zaman içerisinde arka planda kalmaya yüz tutmuş bu temaların önemini kurgusal düzlemler üzerinde yeniden yaratma fikri yazar için değerli bir ilham kaynağı olmuştur. Bu çerçeveden bakınca Barry'nin eserleri kendisinin İrlanda tarihindeki belirli dönemlerle olan şahsi ve kimliksel ilişkilerinden ibaretmiş algısı oluşturabilir ancak yazarın geniş kapsamlı tarihsel olayları farklı perspektiflerinden oluşan kişisel hikayelere yedirebilmek konusundaki olağanüstü mahareti onu İrlanda tarihinin ve milli kimliğinin kurgusal anlatılar alanında ana temsilcilerinden birisi haline getirmiştir. 2011 yılında yayımlanan *Uzak Diyarlarda* romanında Barry bir kez daha İrlanda tarihindeki kritik dönüm noktalarını tasvir eden bir anlatı oluşturmuştur. Fakat yazar bu romanda sadece kendi ülkesinin 20. Yüzyıldaki karmaşık dengelerini ele almakla yetinmemiş ve İrlandalı bir göçmen olan ana karakteri Lily Bere'nin gözlerinden detaylı bir ABD portresini okuyucularına yansıtmıştır. Lily'nin hüznü ve trajedilerle bezenmiş hayatını okuyuculara aktarırken, Barry aynı zamanda karakterlerinin eylemlerini ve seçimlerini bağlamsal olarak mantıklı bir zemine oturtacak önemli tarihsel değişimlerin etkilerini arka planda hissettirir. Lily'nin keder dolu hayatı 20. Yüzyılda yaşanan ve sayısız insan üzerinde telafisi olmayan fiziksel ve zihinsel yaralar bırakan savaşlar ve diğer yıkıcı olayların ekseninde yaşanan trajedilerin küçük bir örnekleme ve temsilcisi olarak görülebilir. Bu bağlam üzerinden değerlendirildiğinde, bu makale ana karakter Lily Bere öncülüğünde *Uzak Diyarlarda* romanında yer alan karakterlerin sergilediği travmatik semptomların bulgularını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. İlk bölümde açıklanacak travma teorilerinin göstergeleri doğrultusunda roman içerisinde tasvir edilen birçok karakterin travmatik bozukluklardan muzdarip olduğu ve bunlara bağlı semptomların savaşlara direkt katılımı ile oluşan “savaş bunalımı” (shell-shock) veya bu savaşların etkilerinden dolayı olarak türeyen “Travma Sonrası Stres Bozukluğu” (PTSD) varyantları olarak kendini gösterdiği iddia edilmektedir. Roman boyunca anlatılan çeşitli sekanslarda psikolojik dışavurum tezahürleri Cathy Caruth'un Sigmund Freud'dan ödünç alıp geliştirdiği “travmatik kavrama” (traumatic realization) konseptinin teorik çerçevesiyle örtüşmektedir. Eserde tasvir edilen birçok karakterin travmatik tecrübelerinin farkına varma süresinin gecikme eğilimi göstermesi şahsi psikolojik durumunu tanımlamaktadır ve bu olgunun karakterlerin kişiliklerinin evrimi üzerindeki kritik etkisi makale içerisinde detaylıca irdelenmektedir. Benzer şekilde Dominick LaCapra'nın travmatik olayların algılanmasının ardından stresle başa çıkabilmek için birbirini takip eden mental reaksiyonları ifade etmek için kullanılan “semptomatik dışavurum” (acting-out) ve “çözüm işlemi” (working-through) kavramlarına yaklaşımının da Lily'nin ani bir kararla aldığı hayat hikayesini yazıya dökme fikriyle paralellikler göstermektedir. Lily sürekli yinelenen semptomatik dışavurum süreciyle başa çıkabilip depresif ruh halini çözümleyebilmek adına duygularını kâğıda dökme metodunu kullanır ve bu durumda LaCapra'nın teorik yaklaşımındaki yazmanın iyileştirici etkisini doğrulamaktadır. LaCapra'nın travma çalışmaları alanındaki bir başka teorisi olan “tarihsel travma” (historical trauma) da *Uzak Diyarlarda*'nın anlatısında vuku bulan belirli konuların, travmaya tarihin bir parçası olarak bakan kolektif yaklaşımlarla izahı açısından uyarlanabilir. Bu doğrultuda, LaCapra'nın tarihsel travma nosyonuna olan yaklaşımı, bu kavramın bireylerin ve grupların kimliğini şekillendirme konusundaki tesirinin İrlanda tarihi ve milli kimliğinin benliklere olan etkisiyle olan benzer izleyişini detaylandırmak için kullanılmıştır. Analiz kısmında öncelikli olarak vurgulanması gereken kısım *Uzak Diyarlarda* eserinde işlenen travmatik anlatıların Sebastian Barry'nin ailesinin ve akrabalarının önceki nesillerdeki üyelerinden bazılarının gerçek yaşam hayatları baz alınarak oluşturulmuş olmasıdır. Bu sebeple Barry'nin kendi kimliği ile olan soyut ilişkisi ve tarihe karşı olan öznel bakış açısı esere yansımaktadır. Karakterlerin travmatik eğilimlerinin tezahürünü mantıklı kılmak adına gerekli zemini hazırlamak için oluşturulan tarihsel ve politik bağlam İrlanda tarihinin hassas dönüm noktalarından birisini üzerine inşa edildiği için hikâyenin kurgusal ve dramatik işleyişinde kilit bir görev üstlenmektedir. Savaşın neden olduğu buhranın ve Travma Sonrası Stres Bozukluğu vakalarının resmedilme biçiminin önemi de roman içerisinde sunulan travmatik dışavurumların okuyucuya aktarılması konusunda değeri yadsınamaz derecede büyük olan bir başka konu başlığıdır. Birbirine aile bağları veya soyut tarihsel münasebetlerle bağlı olan birden fazla karakterde savaş sonrası travmasının semptomları açık bir şekilde gözlemlenebilir. Fakat bu karakterler travmatik olayları tecrübe ettikleri anlarda olayları zihinlerine eksik kaydetmeleri dolayısıyla gecikmiş travmatik kavrama yaşamaktadırlar ve bu da depresif ruh hallerinin gerçek doğasını bütünüyle anlamalarını engeller. Parçalanmış hatıra kesitleri zihinlerinde ve bilinçlerinde mükerrer ve ısrarcı şekilde ortaya çıkarak onlara musallat olduğu için bu karakterler aynı travmatik anların tekrar ettiği bir semptomatik dışavurum döngüsünü kıramamaktadır. Ana karakter Lily de tıpkı savaş sonrası bunalımı yaşayan ve kendi soyunun birer üyesi olan diğer karakterler gibi travmatik hatıralar ile sürekli olarak boğuşmaktadır. Nişanlısı Tadg ile birlikte Amerika'ya kaçışları ile başlayan bu süreç hayatı boyunca başına gelmeye devam eden yeni trajik olaylarla birlikte sürekli olarak evrim geçirmiş ve Lily'nin ruhunu rahatsız etmeye devam etmektedir. Ancak

savaş bunalımı yaşayan diğer karakterlerin aksine, Lily naçizane bir biyografi yazma eylemiyle farkında olmadan travmalarıyla baş edebilmek adına bir “çözüm işlemi” oluşturma girişimi başlatır. Lily travmatik hatıralarını anlatı formatında bir günceye aktararak dışavurum ve çözüm işlem aşamaları arasında geçerli bir denge kurmayı başarır. Böylelikle Lily, dağılmış travmatik hatıra parçacıklarını bilincine kaydetme işlemini tamamlar ve travmaları ile başarılı şekilde başa çıkmış sayılabilir. Roman içerisinde içerik inceleme açısından tahlil edilmesi değerli bir diğer konu başlığı ise olay örgüsü içerisinde kendisine birkaç defa yer bulan *Kenan* diyarı referanslarıdır. Eserin orijinal isminde de (*On Canaan's Side*) geçen bu bölge Musevi ve Hristiyan dünyasında önemli bir yere sahiptir. Dindar bir Katolik aileden gelen Lily'nin düşünce yapısı Hristiyanlığın geleneksel değerleriyle sıkı şekilde bağlantılıdır ve roman içerisinde mensubu olduğu bu dinin temel prensiplerinin Lily'nin karakterinde oluşturduğu etkinin bilinçaltından yansıyan yönlendirici bir unsur olarak resmedildiği görülmektedir. Lily'nin Katolik inanış öğretileriyle bu denli iç içe bir tedrisattan çıkması, İrlanda'dan çıktıkları yolculuk ve İsrailoğulları'nın Mısır'dan toplu göçü arasındaki benzerlikleri fark eder etmez Amerika'yı *Kenan* diyarı ile bağdaştırmasına neden olur. Ana karakter ve anlatıcı konumundaki Lily'nin aracılığıyla birçok İrlandalı sosyal ve siyasi nedenlerle Amerika'ya yapmak zorunda kaldığı bu göç İrlanda içerisinde yaygın kabul görmüş yakın zamanlı son büyük tarihsel travma olan İrlanda bağımsızlık savaşına alternatif bir “kuruluş travması” önermesi niteliği taşımaktadır. Ne var ki Barry karakterlerine vadedilmiş topraklarda dahi birçok yeni travma yaşatarak hem “tarihötesi travmalara” (transhistorical trauma) hem de “tarihsel travmalara” (historical trauma) atfedilen ütöpik değerlerin yapısökümünü yapar ve bu kolektif etkiye sahip travmalarla tetiklenen “başlangıç mitlerinin” (myth of origins) insanlığa herhangi bir şekilde kurtuluş sağlayabilme ihtimalini reddeder. Detaylı şekilde irdelenen ve kuramsal altyapılarla desteklenen argümanlar nihayetinde bu çalışma Sebastian Barry'nin *Uzak Diyarlarda* romanı üzerinde yapılmış olan araştırmalara eser içerisinde yansıtılan travmatik eğilimlere odaklanarak katkı vermektedir. Roman üzerinde okumak üzere kullanılan teoriler dikkatli analiz edilmiş ve kullanılan argümanlar mevcut alanyazın içerisine yenilikçi bir etki yapabilme değerlerine göre organize edilmiştir. Barry'nin bütün yapımlarının genel olarak ele alındığı travmatik çalışmalar bünyesinde *Uzak Diyarlarda* romanındaki travmatik bulgulara değinen kısımlar mevcuttur. Ancak bu makale konu aldığı eser içerisindeki travmatik bozuklukları “savaş bunalımı” ve “kuruluş travması” kavramlarının ekseninde şekillenen birçok farklı teorik noktadan ele alması sayesinde odak ve kapsam bakımından diğer çalışmalardan ayrılmakta ve literatüre yenilik katmaktadır.