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## Trauma and Resilience in "Orphan" Protagonists: A Psychoanalytic Study of Tanika Gupta's *The Waiting Room* and William Saroyan's *Hello Out There*

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### Abstract

Trauma and resilience are the essential elements in understanding human experiences. These two themes provide authors with core insights into the human condition and reflecting it in their literary creation. This study employs post-trauma growth in "orphan" protagonists through a psychoanalytic lens, focusing on Tanika Gupta's *The Waiting Room* and William Saroyan's *Hello Out There*. The term "orphan" is used metaphorically to shed light on the traumatic condition of the characters who experience deep psychological, social, and emotional disconnection, rather than just the literal meaning of parental loss. By analyzing the role of the two main characters in these two plays, the study explores the psychological and emotional challenges and journeys of the protagonists, showing the intersection of vulnerability and resilience. It is the journey of self-discovery and self-reconstruction. The study offers a foundational understanding of trauma narratives in drama, emphasizing and enhancing the argument about fragility and psycho-emotional recovery. While most research projects focus on suffering and distress,

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this study explores and examines repression and resilience in the two plays drawing on theories mainly from Freud, with supplementary insights from Jung and Herman. The study also fills the gap in trauma literature by examining post-trauma growth (PTG) in "orphan" protagonist. This perspective is often overlooked in psychoanalytic trauma studies. The study follows MLA formatting and ends with a list of works cited.

**Keywords:** Trauma, Resilience, repression, "Orphan" Protagonists, Freud, Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), *The Waiting Room*, *Hello Out There*

الصدمة والمرونة لدى أبطال "الأيتام": دراسة تحليلية نفسية لرواية "غرفة الانتظار" لتانيكا جوبتا و"مرحباً بالخارج" لويليام سارويان

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### المستخلص

الصدمة والمرونة عنصران أساسيان في فهم التجارب الإنسانية. يُزود هذان الموضوعان الكتاب برؤى جوهرية حول الحالة الإنسانية، ويُجسّدانها في إبداعاتهم الأدبية. تُوظّف هذه الدراسة نمو ما بعد الصدمة لدى أبطال "اليتامى" من منظور التحليل النفسي، مُركّزة على مسرحية "غرفة الانتظار" لتانيكا جوبتا ومسرحية "مرحباً بالخارج" لويليام سارويان. يُستخدم مصطلح "اليتيم" مجازياً لتسليط الضوء على الحالة الصادمة للشخصيات التي تعاني من انقطاع نفسي واجتماعي وعاطفي عميق، بدلاً من مجرد المعنى الحرفي لفقدان أحد الوالدين. من خلال تحليل دور الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين في هاتين المسرحيتين، تستكشف الدراسة التحديات النفسية والعاطفية ورحلات أبطال المسرحيتين، مُظهرةً تقاطع الضعف والمرونة. إنها رحلة اكتشاف الذات وإعادة بنائها. تُقدّم الدراسة فهماً أساسياً لسرديات الصدمات في الدراما، مُؤكّدةً على أهمية الهشاشة والتعافي النفسي والعاطفي، ومُعززةً إياها. بينما تُركز معظم المشاريع البحثية على المعاناة والضييق، تستكشف هذه الدراسة وتدرس الكبت والمرونة في المسرحيتين، مستندةً بشكل رئيسي إلى نظريات فرويد، مع رؤية إضافية من يونغ

وهيرمان. كما تُشد الدراسة الفجوة في أدبيات الصدمات النفسية من خلال دراسة نمو ما بعد الصدمة (PTG) لدى البطل "اليتيم". وغالبًا ما يُغفل هذا المنظور في دراسات الصدمات النفسية التحليلية. تتبع الدراسة تنسيق MLA، وتنتهي بقائمة المصادر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصدمة، المرونة، القمع، أبطال "الأيتام"، فرويد، النمو ما بعد الصدمة، غرفة الانتظار، مرحبًا بالخارج

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literally the word 'trauma', as Merriam Webster defines it, "is the Greek word for 'wound'." Its detailed meaning is "severe and lasting emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience, or a case of such shock happening : (© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2024)". For Peter A. Levine, trauma is " the most avoided, ignored, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering", he continues; "[w]hen I use the word trauma, I am here talking about the often debilitating symptoms that many people suffer from in the aftermath of *perceived* life-threatening or overwhelming experiences"(7). What can be observed here is that trauma stands as one of the most neglected, overlooked, and misunderstood source of human suffering, leaving its deep impact unaddressed and untreated. The psychological and emotional consequences of traumatic experiences in the life of the individuals are treated as life-threatening or severe distressing. Such experiences or events distort the sense of control, safety, and identity and hence misleading the individual to inability to process and integrate the experience which means inability to engage with life. This unspoken burden accentuates the serious need to address and categorize trauma as a critical dimension of human suffering. It is hard but a fact to say that nowadays trauma and its psycho-emotional effects became the stigma of the modern age. Individuals are in a continuous struggle to recover from the disconnection that trauma causes for them. In literature, in general, and drama, in particular, trauma and the search for recovery are essential themes since literature mirrors the real life . The psychoanalytic framework of the study and its emphasis on the convergence of the conscious and unconscious mind, present an authentic way to understand the psychological complexities of post-traumatic growth. As the psychoanalytic theories inspected, the human psyche is molded by the interaction of conscious and unconscious processes, especially in the case of trauma. According to Freud and his studies in repression and defense mechanisms, human psyche attempts to protect itself from immense experiences usually resulting in hidden or suppressed feelings that come again into surface in various ways. His theory of repression, a cornerstone of psychoanalytic thought, asserts that unfulfilled desires or traumatic experiences are not erased but remain rooted in the unconscious mind. These repressed

elements, though obscured by a psychological mechanism of inhibition, continue to influence the individual's emotions, behaviors, and mental states. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud explains "[t]he theory of repression, which is essential to the study of the psycho - neuroses, asserts that these repressed wishes *still* exist—though there is simultaneous inhibition which holds them down"(255). To dig deeper in Freud's theory of repression that often plays a significant role in dreams that depict acts of exhibition;

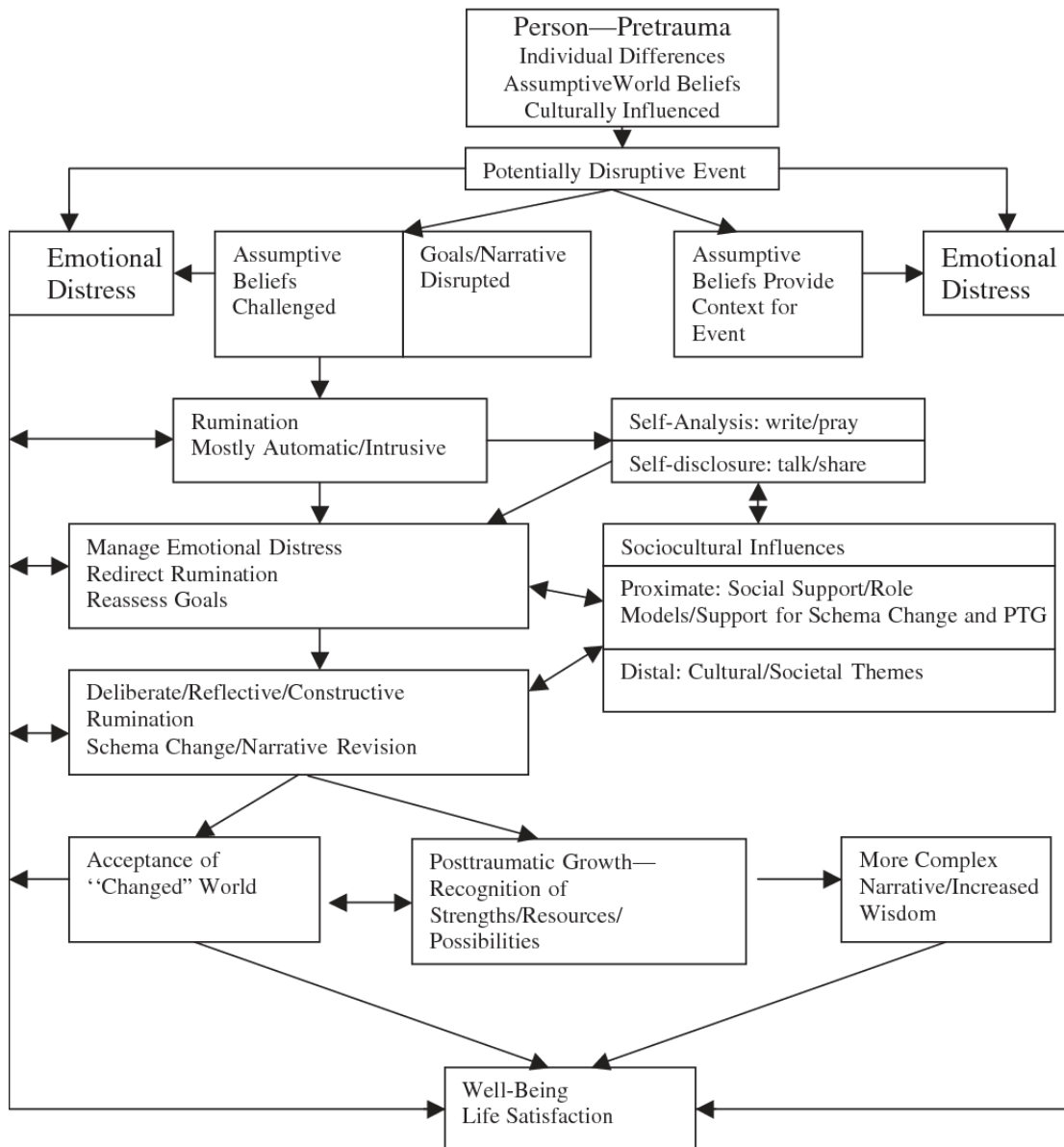
...repression plays a part in dreams of exhibiting;  
for the distress felt in such dreams is a reaction on  
the part of the second system against the content of  
the scene of exhibiting having found expression in  
spite of the ban upon it. If the distress was to be  
avoided, the scene should never have been revived..  
(264).

He suggests that the distress experienced in such dreams arises from a conflict within the psyche: the second system reacts against the reemergence of repressed content that has managed to break through its constraints. Ideally, to avoid this distress, the repressed scene should have remained suppressed and never resurfaced. Freud's analysis of repression in dreams provides a valuable perspective to understand the inner conflicts of "orphan" protagonists in *The Waiting Room* and *Hello Out There*. Just as repressed content in dreams resurfaces despite psychological obstacles, provoking distress, the protagonists' buried traumas and suppressed memories emerge in various forms, influencing their actions and emotional responses. This reemergence, while painful, can also be seen as a step toward confronting and processing their experiences and also going through their journey of distress contributes to their resilience and post-traumatic growth.

For the "orphan" protagonists, in the two plays, whose life is distinguished by isolation and the loss of familial ties, trauma is an essential force affecting their identity and their sense of belonging. However, psychoanalysts like Donald Winnicott and Carl Jung elaborated on the possibility of attaining resilience and growth via self-realization, creativity, and relational experiences. In this respect, Jung explains; "the self is relatedness... The self only exists inasmuch as you appear. Not that you are, but that you do the self. The self appears in your deeds and deeds always mean relationship"(qtd. in Society of Analytical Psychology "Relationship"). Thus for Jung it is through relationships with others, with one's environment, and with the unconscious aspects of the psyche itself that one can get resilience and avoid isolation and its traumatic consequences. Within the same context, Judith Herman, in her *Trauma and Recovery*, says "[t]o hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance"(5). According to Herman, for the individual survivor, "this social context is created by relationships with friends, lovers, and family. For the larger society, the social

context is created by political movements that give voice to the disempowered" (5). Thus, acknowledging and processing trauma requires both personal and collective support. On an individual level, it is essential to have a network of close relationships that offer validation and protection. On a larger scale, societal movements that advocate for the marginalized provide a crucial platform for giving voice to the disempowered. Together, these elements create the necessary social context for survivors to confront and share their traumatic experiences.

Thus, the study employs post trauma growth (PTG) theory to investigate how the individual can survive crisis and gain self-realization to achieve resilience. This theory is defined as "positive psychological changes experienced as a result of the struggle with traumatic or highly challenging life circumstances. These changes occur in response to the challenge to what people assumed to be true about the lives they lived" (Tedeschi et al. 3), while resilience "is the psychological quality that allows some people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and come back at least as strong as before" ("Resilience"). It is clear evident that resilience enables the individuals to maintain functioning after facing traumatic events. It is the defense mechanism by which they can process their repression and sublimation. Post-traumatic growth carries a boarder meaning. It is the positive transformation of the individuals by which they can achieve higher levels of functioning and personal growth after trauma. Figure 1 is Tedeschi and Calhoun's Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) model. It shows how individuals can experience positive psychological changes following traumatic events.



**Figure 1.** A Revised Model of Posttraumatic Growth (Tedeschi et al. 44)

While trauma is often associated with distress and negative outcomes, this model emphasizes that it can also lead to personal growth. According to the model, this growth can manifest in several ways: individuals may discover new possibilities in life, gaining a renewed sense of purpose or direction; they may experience improved relationships, as shared struggles deepen sympathy and connection with others; they often develop greater personal strength, feeling more resilient in the face of future challenges; some may undergo spiritual development, leading to a deeper sense of meaning or faith; and many individuals report an increased appreciation for life, valuing aspects of existence they had previously taken for granted(44-45). These positive changes, however, are not

spontaneous and require individuals to process and make meaning of their traumatic experiences.

Thus resilience and post-traumatic growth are interdependent factors in individuals' traumatic experience; resilience provides the foundation for post-traumatic growth to be achieved. About the same concept of growth after adversity, Stephen Joseph and P. Alex Linley, in their essay on "Towards an Integrative Positive Psychology of Posttraumatic Experience", say, "growth following adversity...is about psychological well-being (PWB). The distress that arises from subjective states of re-experiencing, avoidance, and hyperarousal can be understood as reflections of the person's subjective well-being." (11) While in contrast to the subjective well-being, psychological well-being, they state, is "about engagement with the existential challenges of life. It comprises dimensions of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy, positive relations with others, and having a purpose in life" (11). Growth after adversity is closely tied to psychological well-being (PWB), which focuses on how individuals engage with life's existential challenges. While subjective well-being (SWB) relates to emotional experiences, such as pleasure and distress, psychological well-being involves a deeper level of personal engagement with life's difficulties. The emotional distress caused by trauma, such as re-experiencing, evasion, and overstimulation, can reflect disturbances in subjective well-being. However, overcoming such adversity and growing from it contributes to psychological well-being, which includes self-acceptance, mastery over one's environment, personal growth, independence, positive relationships with others, and a sense of purpose in life. This growth signifies a broader, more enduring response to life's challenges because, "it is not the event itself that defines trauma, but its effect on schemas, exposing them to reconstruction" (qtd. in Tedeschi et al. 4). Thus, growth following adversity is not just about overcoming distress but engaging in a meaningful process that enhances psychological well-being. It involves transforming challenges into opportunities for personal development, ultimately leading to a more profound sense of purpose, fulfillment, and mastery over one's life.

## **2. A CONCISE OVERVIEW OF THE PLAYS**

### **2.1 *The Waiting Room***

Tanika Gupta is a British playwright, screenwriter, and director. Her work often reflects her own experiences as a woman of Indian heritage living in the UK. Gupta's *The Waiting Room* (2000), performed at the Royal National Theatre in London and recipient of the esteemed John Whiting Award, tells the story of Priya Bannerjee, a 53-year-old Indian immigrant woman living in Britain. Though surrounded by a family, Priya is still the "orphan" who seeks a native familial ties and a sense of belonging to her native country and heritage. Priya Banerjee is dead, but her life is not ended yet. She has just three days left to roam the earth before she can go on in her journey. As she impatiently

watches and listens to her family, Priya is guided by her favorite star and immortal soul in the guise of her Bollywood idol, Dilip Kumar (<https://www.dramaonlinelibrary>).

In a unique twist, she is not only a living character but also a ghost, giving the play a supernatural dimension. The story of the play unfolds during the period around Priya's death, a time when she is caught between the world of the living and the afterlife. In the two-act play, Gupta deals with Priya's complex emotional journey. The protagonist, as a ghost, is unable to fully leave the earthly realm and is left to confront her past. The play follows Priya's efforts to correct the wrongs she has committed, seek forgiveness, and come to terms with her life's choices. Through this process of reckoning and redemption, Priya slowly comes to terms with her past and finds peace with her life before ultimately passing into the "waiting room," a concept that symbolizes a universal, non-religious form of heaven (von Czarnowsky 1). This space, free from any particular religious connotations, serves as a space of final rest or spiritual transition for souls, where they await the next step in their journey to whatever lies beyond. Priya's final station gives her an outlet to understand her confused feelings and unresolved issues and helps her to make her mind and find resilience.

## **2.2 Hello Out There**

"Hello Out There" is a one-act play by William Saroyan, "born to Armenian immigrants in Fresno, California, in 1908, was a playwright, director, song writer, painter, and the only American author to win both an Academy Award and a Pulitzer Prize" ("William Saroyan"). The play is set in a small Texas jail where two main characters—Emily Smith, a teenage cook and a travelling gambler. The play tells about the bad luck of the traveling gambler who is arrested and jailed in a small Texas town, charged with rape. The charge is a lie, but the only one who hears his call for justice and understanding is a young girl who cooks for the jail (Emily Smith). The gambler gives all his money to the girl before a mob breaks into the jail and the lying woman's husband shoots him (O'Malley). They form an unlikely connection. The young man, initially believing he is completely alone, repeatedly calls out, "Hello—out there!" until Emily hears him and engages in a conversation. This interaction, which hints at both developing romance and indirect manipulation, explores themes of loneliness, injustice, and the fate of the young man. As the two share their feelings of isolation and desire for a different life, they form a temporary bond, but their hopes are dashed when a mob arrives and the young man is killed, underscoring the harsh realities and fleeting moments of connection in a world where the powerless are often crushed by injustice. Through concise, emotionally packed dialogue, Saroyan paints a vivid picture of human vulnerability, the desire for companionship, and the brutal inevitability of fate (Bythesea).



### **3. ANALYSIS OF *THE WAITING ROOM* BY TANIKA GUPTA**

The story of the British- Indian protagonist, Priya Banerjee, and her spiritual journey of self –discovery and acceptance can be analyzed to represent the challenges and sufferings of people caught between two cultures. It also represents the sufferings of the trauma survivors with unresolved grief. Hence it symbolizes the inner turmoil of those "orphans" who feel disconnected from familial and cultural roots, seeking a sense of belonging and wholeness. In her experience of loneliness, Priya is trapped in a transitional and uncertain space, caught between the realms of the living and the dead. This "waiting room" becomes a metaphor for her emotional isolation and unresolved past. Though she is surrounded by the living, she is unable to fully engage with them, and conversely, she cannot move on to the afterlife.

PRADIP walks over to the body and stares at it.

The woman who has been asleep on the couch stirs. It is PRIYA. She sits up and looks around, slightly dazed. Then she notices the half empty bottle of whisky. (She is dressed in a track suit-type outfit.)

PRIYA: Oy! That's my best malt whisky you're guzzling down there!

AKASH and FIROZ don't see her. She waves her hands about in front of their faces but gets no response(Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 26).

Priya's struggle is not only physical but deeply psychological; her loneliness stems from her inability to bring together her inner world and the outside one, making her feel disconnected from both worlds. This isolation shows the sense of alienation Priya feels as an immigrant. Living in a foreign country, she faces the challenges of cultural displacement, which embody her feelings of estrangement. The "waiting room" symbolizes not just her death, but her unresolved issues and her longing for the peace of mind in which she meets, DiliP, "*Upper-class Bombay drawl.*"(Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 29).The presence of this Bombay star gives Priya's case a more native sense. His is deeply symbolic, serving as a connection between past trauma and the protagonist's journey toward healing. He represents unresolved grief and deep emotional wounds, obliging the characters—particularly the "orphan" protagonist—to confront suppressed memories rather than remain trapped in cycles of avoidance and repression. His presence comes in terms with psychoanalytic theories, particularly Freud's idea of the return of the repressed (has been discussed in the introduction), where buried traumas resurface in unexpected ways. As a motivator for emotional awakening, he initiates crucial moments of self-reflection and transformation, guiding the protagonist toward resilience and psychological integration. Furthermore, his role relates to Donald Winnicott's object

relations theory, suggesting that external figures play a crucial part in an individual's psychological healing. The protagonist's interaction with Dilip Kumar shows the struggle between internalizing trauma and using external relationships as a means of healing. Additionally, the name "Dilip Kumar", associated with the legendary Indian film actor, adds a cultural characteristic to the play. This reference to cinema evokes nostalgia and escapism, suggesting how popular culture and memory shape personal identities. His role, therefore, extends beyond an individual character, reflecting broader themes of loss, identity, and the psychological elements of coping with trauma.

*DILIP produces a piece of paper from his pocket and runs through it with his finger.*

DILIP: I like to write these things down so I don't get anything wrong – yaar?

Ready?

PRIYA: Ready?

DILIP: (*Getting formal.*) Okay, so, tomorrow's the big day when your body will dissolve. It is, as they say, a shell – so it is of no use to you now. I must warn you that there will be – how shall I put it? A sudden power surge. (*Pleased with his description.*) Yes, that's rather good – a release of energy when your essence is finally drawn out from your navel.

Then you have three sunrises left to roam the earth. First you must visit your past, pay homage to this life then you may talk to your family in their dreams. I will help you in that department – it's fairly simple.

Then on the fourth sunrise you will depart the earthly world entirely. You will be free. That is when you and I will part company and you enter the spirit world. (*DILIP squints at the piece of paper.*) Ah yes 'The Waiting

Room'. Some call it Paradise, others call it heaven – whatever (Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 30).

The emotional weight of her life in Britain, filled with unspoken tensions, unresolved relationships, and a sense of not truly belonging, prevents her from transcending to the

next stage but her journey in this space, where she interacts with her past mistakes, allows for a process of reckoning. In this process of self-reckoning that comes in the aftermath of trauma, "a person's core beliefs may become more complex than prior to the trauma. This increased complexity can be perceived as a positive outcome, allowing the individual to gain a broader and more profound understanding of life and the world"(qtd. in Keidar 9).

It is through confronting these unresolved aspects of her identity—both as a woman and as an immigrant—that Priya begins to find some peace, signaling her readiness to move beyond the waiting room. By engaging with her emotional wounds and confronting her regrets, Priya eventually reaches a moment of understanding, which paves the way for her final transcendence for as Dilip tells her "it is important that you face your past"(Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 52). Her experience, then, serves as a affective commentary on the immigrant experience and the struggle to reconcile one's past with one's present self as she confesses to Dilip; "then you'll know how much I suffered. Pushed out, ridiculed, thousands of miles away from my land" (Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 62). She continues to release the suppressed emotions;

PRIYA: My feet cracked with chilblains from the cold – hobbling around.

Couldn't even afford to buy fish! I'd wait outside the fishmongers until the end of the day and wait for him to see me as he was throwing away all the fish heads and guts. I'd catch his eye and if he was in a good mood – he'd wrap them up in some newspaper and hand them to me.

DILIP: They were hard times.(Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 62).

Following her emotional release and acceptance of her past, Priya begins to experience a form of post-traumatic growth. Her trauma doesn't disappear, but she starts to find meaning in her suffering. This could manifest in her gaining a sense of resilience, strength, and self-awareness. By sharing her experiences with others (members in her family) in the waiting room, Priya forms stronger connections and develop a deeper appreciation for her survival and the new sense of life she gets. She also comes to understand the importance of community and support in overcoming the effects of trauma .She may not return to the person she was before the trauma, but she grows into a more empowered version of herself, integrating both her past and present identities. The psychological journey of growth through struggle is a central part of her character's development in the play. Priya convinces Dilip to give her time to talk to her son (Akash), her traumatic experiences are shown once more but this time it is deeply emotional and reflects the psychological complexities of trauma and resilience:

AKASH: You thought I was a failure.

*PRIYA is distraught.*

PRIYA: I was the failure. Every year I sent off for the application forms to go back to university, to finish my degree. I never did it. I was desperate for you and Tara to succeed. Not to feel outcast and unworthy. I escaped, came here with so many dreams...

I didn't want you to make the same mistakes as me. My mother and father lived and died without ever uttering a word of comfort or affection to me.

All their hopes and dreams were pinned on my brother. I was nothing. (*Priya looks at Akash closely.*) Terrible thing is – I turned into them. Treated you like they treated me. I never meant that to happen.

*AKASH looks at his mother with feeling. He starts to sob.*

AKASH: And now – you're gone. And I'll never, ever see you again.

*PRIYA watches as AKASH cries. He cries like a child. PRIYA stands close (Gupta, The Waiting Room 88).*

Priya's confession about her past and her feelings of failure exemplify how unresolved emotional trauma can manifest across generations, affecting familial relationships. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Priya's experiences reflect the basic effects of emotional neglect and unfulfilled aspirations, which have shaped her sense of identity and parenting approach. In the context of post-traumatic growth, this exchange illustrates how Priya is gradually coming to terms with her past mistakes and the emotional wounds she has inflicted upon her son. Akash's grief and the mother-son connection in this scene reflects the psychological impact of trauma and recovery explored in psychoanalytic theory, particularly regarding the "orphan" protagonists who navigate their past struggles in an attempt to find peace and settlement. Through this interaction, Gupta provides a significant portrayal of the emotional journey toward resilience, where both acceptance and the recognition of past trauma become integral to the recovery process:

*PRIYA walks into the light. We see her silhouette as she begins to disappear.*

PRIYA: (*Ecstatic.*) My goodness! It's so beautiful.

*DILIP listens with a knowing pleasure as PRIYA's excitement grows.*

I could pluck fistfuls of it and put it in my pockets...I know. I know! And  
the children...Look at the children!

*The light dissolves and PRIYA's laughter dissolves until it is just a distant  
echo.*

*DILIP stands on his own, breathes a sigh of relief and consults his notebook (Gupta, *The Waiting Room* 94).*

Priya's reaction to the light symbolizes an overwhelming emotional experience—one that can be linked to trauma. The light represents something pure, beautiful, and transformative, which could be seen as a moment of post-trauma growth or healing. Priya's ecstatic reaction suggests a moment of profound discovery or relief, as though she is finding something meaningful after a period of suffering. Her desire to collect the beauty around her, to "pluck fistfuls of it," could reflect an attempt to hold onto this new sense of peace. By the end of the play, Priya arrives at a place of acceptance and transformation, as she begins to understand that her trauma is not something that defines her in a negative way, but rather, something that can lead her to a deeper understanding of her strength and resilience. This final psychological shift is part of Tedeschi's theory of post-traumatic growth, where Priya is able to rebuild her sense of self with newfound meaning, which allows her to move without hesitation as before.

In summary, Priya's psychological and emotional journey in *The Waiting Room* mirrors a process of repression, trauma confrontation, and post-traumatic growth. She develops a stronger sense of gratitude for the small things in life after facing hardship, her interactions in the waiting room shows deep emotional connections, sympathy, and reconciliation. Also she likely discovers inner strength through the challenges she faces and her experience works as a reevaluation of her spiritual or existential beliefs. The play explores how confronting one's past and finding support from others can lead to healing and a more resilient sense of self.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF *HELLO OUT THERE* BY WILLIAM SAROYAN**

Saroyan's play provides another insight into another kind of human suffering. Through his outstanding style, Saroyan deals with man's isolation and entrapment. His "style became an adjective in the American lexicon — Saroyanesque, filled with gentle humor, optimism, and a spinning, poetic spontaneity" ("William Saroyan"). The play is not only about the instant moments, it's about a whole life spent in suffering but explored in a limited span of time. The Yong Man's confinement can be seen as a traumatic experience. He is isolated, emotionally and physically confined, and desperate for human contact. His internal struggle during the play could be seen as a representation of the psychological

impact of this trauma. Saroyan presents actions and dialogues which carry real hidden meaning of the characters' psychological and emotional trauma.

A prison cell, tapping slowly on the floor with a spoon. After tapping half a minute, as if he were trying to telegraph words, he gets up and begins walking around the cell. At last he stops, stands at the center of the cell, and doesn't move for a long time. He feels his head, as if it were wounded.

Then he looks around. Then he calls out dramatically, kidding the world.

YOUNG MAN. Hello—out there! (Pause) Hello—out there! Hello—out there!

(Long pause) Nobody out there. (Still \_more dramatically, but more comically, too) Hello—out there!

Hello—out there! (Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 51).

The young man in the play is involved in loneliness and a sense of emotional confinement, imprisoned in a physical jail, he is also trapped by his own repressed desires for connection. He is without family, friends, or even anybody to ask about him, he is an "orphan" seeking care and help in this chaotic world. His repeated cry of "Hello out there" becomes both a symbol of his inner struggle and a manifestation of his trauma and a desperate need for someone to acknowledge his existence. He is repeatedly crying out "hello out there":

THE VOICE. Well, you sure are in trouble. Are you scared?

YOUNG MAN. Scared to death. (Suddenly) Hello out there!

THE VOICE. What do you keep saying that for all the time?

YOUNG MAN. I'm lonesome. I'm as lonesome as a coyote. (A long one) Hello\_out there! (Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 51).

Freud's theory of repression suggests that individuals push painful or distressing thoughts, memories, or desires into the unconscious to avoid confronting them. This can manifest in behaviors, speech patterns, or signs that are linked to the repressed material:

Linguistic usage hits the mark in speaking of the 'suppression' [i.e. the 'pressing down'] of these impulses. The psychical arrangements that make it possible for such impulses to force their way to realization remain in being and in working order. Should it happen, however, that a suppressed wish of this kind is carried into effect, and that

its inhibition by the second system (the system that is admissible to consciousness) is defeated, this defeat finds expression as unpleasure (Freud 255).

Once again Freud's theory of repression is apt to analyze the young man's condition. He explains that when certain impulses or desires are repressed, they are pushed down into the unconscious mind. However, these impulses don't disappear; instead, they remain active and can still force their way into conscious awareness. Freud also describes the psychical arrangements (mental defense mechanisms, like the ego) that work to suppress these impulses and prevent them from becoming conscious. If, however, a repressed desire manages to break through and is not properly stopped by the ego, the individual experiences "un pleasure"—psychological discomfort or distress—because the expression of the suppressed wish creates internal conflict as it is evident in the "orphan" protagonist's repeated phrase. The young man describes his state as that of the "coyote", a wild animal that usually "travel and hunt alone"("Coyotes"), he says, "I'm lonely as a coyote,". This statement is a powerful metaphor that conveys the depth of his isolation. Coyotes are often depicted in literature and culture as solitary creatures, typically associated with being alone, wandering, and howling at the moon. By comparing himself to a coyote, the young man emphasizes that his loneliness feels extreme and unending—like a wild animal that is alone, with no company or comfort.

Not only the "orphan" protagonist seeks relief and outlet to get rid of his traumatic situation, but the girl also suffers from a similar case, she says" [i]t's so lonely in this town. Nothing here but the lonesome wind all the time, lifting the dirt and blowing out to the prairie. I'll stay here. I won't let them take you away"( Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 61). They both share "a magical bond of loneliness and a desire to escape – he, a prison cell; she, a stifling small town. The two dream plans of escape to a better place"("Hello out There"), but life gives them something different:

YOUNG MAN. Ah, you're sweet, (Pause) I'm going to marry you. I'm going away with you. I'm going to take you to San Francisco or someplace like that. I am, now. I'm going to win myself some real money, too. I'm going to study 'em real careful and pick myself some winners, and we're going to have a lot of money.

THE GIRL. Yeah?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah. Tell me your name and all that stuff.

THE GIRL. Emily.

YOUNG MAN. I know that. What's the rest of it? Where were you born? Come on, tell me the whole thing.

THE GIRL. Emily Smith.

YOUNG MAN. Honest to God?

THE GIRL. Honest. That's my name—Emily Smith.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, you're the sweetest girl(Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 52).

The young man's hope for a new life and his dream of escaping to San Francisco could signify an attempt to find meaning in the wake of his trauma. Tedeschi's model(as it has been discussed earlier) suggests that individuals who experience trauma often undergo psychological growth by reassessing their lives and finding new purposes. The young man's aspiration to "win real money" and his belief that he can make a fresh start that might be a form of trying to rebuild his life, showing an attempt to transform trauma into positive change, even if his idealism is somewhat unrealistic. His suffering is huge since he suffers from injustice such as his false accusation of 'rape', but as an early stage of his emotional and psychological growth , he faces his past and hopes for resilience:

THE GIRL. Sixteen or seventeen miles. Didn't you know they moved you?

YOUNG MAN. How could I know, when I was out—cold? Somebody hit me over the head with a lead pipe or something. What'd they hit me for?

THE GIBL. Rape—thats' what they said.

YOUNG MAN. Ah, that's a lie. (Amazed, almost to himself^ She wanted me to give her money.

THE GIRL. Money?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah, if I'd have known she was a woman like that—well, by God, I'd have gone on down the street and stretched out in a park somewhere and gone to sleep.



THE GIRL. Is that what she wanted— money?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah. A fellow like me, hopping freights all over the country, trying to break his bad luck, going from one poor little town ,to another, trying to get in on something good somewhere, and she asks for money. I thought she was lonesome. She said she was. (Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 52).

Trauma and hardship can lead to potential growth, particularly in the context of relationships and self-understanding. The young man ,though quickly, transforms his state from a desperate man into a man with plans and hopes for the future. He gets into the field of understanding himself and having a real connection or relationship with the girl, something he lacked in the past and acknowledged recently. The young man's idealistic, but real desire to escape his current circumstances and find meaning in a new life could be seen as an attempt to regain control after experiencing emotional or psychological hardship and as a part of PTG theory which suggests that individuals who face significant trauma often experience profound personal transformation, redefining their sense of self, relationships with others, and worldview:

THE GIRL. Do you think you'll have better luck, if I go with you?

YOUNG MAN. It's a cinch. I'm a good handicapper. All I need is somebody good like you with me. It's no good always walking around in the streets for anything that might be there at the time. You got to have somebody staying with you all the time—through winters when it's cold, and springtime when it's pretty, and summertime when it's nice and hot and you can go swimming through all the times—rain and snow and all the different kinds of weather a man's got to go through before he dies. You got to have somebody who's right. Somebody who knows you, from away back. You got to have somebody who even knows you're wrong but likes you just the same. I know I'm wrong, but I just don't want anything the hard way, working like a dog, or the easy way, working

like a dog—working's the hard way and the easy way both. All I got to do is beat the price, always—and then I don't feel lousy and don't hate anybody. If you go along with me, I'll be the finest guy anybody ever saw. I won't be wrong any more. You know when you get enough of that money, you can't be wrong any more—you're right because the money says so (Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 52).

The young man's dialogue can be understood through PTG principles, particularly in terms of his desire for transformation and resilience after trauma. PTG suggests that individuals who experience trauma can emerge with significant personal growth, often seeking new possibilities, stronger relationships, and increased inner strength. The young man's belief that having the girl with him will improve his luck and bring success reflects his yearning for new possibilities and a way out of his current difficulties. He thinks of a better future, where having someone trustworthy by his side helps him pass life's hardships. His emphasis on needing someone who "knows you" and still "likes you just the same" shows the importance of deep, supportive relationships, which are essential for PTG. The young man also expresses a desire to transform himself, saying that if the girl joins him, he will be the "finest guy anybody ever saw," indicating his wish for personal growth and overcoming his flaws. While his idealistic plans reflect a hope for a better life, they also reveal a struggle to settle inner emotional recovery with external goals. In sum, the young man's aspirations embody the early stages of PTG, where individuals often seek change and improvement. He is in the early stages of getting his growth, but he will not be allowed to continue because "[a]n individual is only as resilient as their environment allows", and it is important "to consider the impact of systems and context when exploring resilience" ("Risk, Resilience, and Growth"). The young man is in a challenging and constricting environment: he is in jail, which can be seen as both a literal and metaphorical representation of a constrained space where his choices, actions, and opportunities are severely limited. His desperation to escape and his belief that he can "get away" or "beat the price" are attempts to deal with the sense of being trapped. In this sense, his resilience is directly tied to the limitations imposed by his environment but still he tries to overcome his trauma especially when he promises the girl to meet her in San Francisco:

YOUNG MAN (swiftly, desperately). Listen, if I'm not here when you come back, how do you know I haven't gotten away? Now, do what I tell you. I'll meet you in Frisco. I've got a couple of dollars in my other shoe. I'll see you in San Francisco.

YOUNG MAN. That's right—San Francisco.

THE GIRL. I've always wanted to go to That's where you and me belong.

some place like San Francisco—but how could I go alone?

YOUNG MAN. Well, you're not alone any more, see? "( Saroyan, *Hello Out There* 61).

The young man's words reflect a desire to protect the girl and ensure her safety, even though he finds himself in a difficult and seemingly hopeless situation. His promise to continue with her and his encouragement for her to go to San Francisco, despite being in jail, can be seen as an attempt to ensure her well-being in the face of hardship. Here, the young man's desire to spare the girl from harm and to send her away, even at the cost of his own comfort or desires, can be interpreted as an example of growth in the form of selflessness and emotional resilience. It is "claimed that the final goal aspired in the PTG process is comparable to attainment of selflessness or having no-self"(qtd. in Dursun and Söylemez 60). This "orphan" man is in the early stages of post-traumatic growth (PTG), but his transformation is constrained by his environment and the emotional burden he carries. His desperate desire for escape and belief that external change—like moving to San Francisco or having money—will lead to improvement, reflects the ability to use mechanisms often employed by those facing trauma. While his aspirations for a better life and his selfless concern for the girl's safety indicate a desire for personal growth, his environment (being in jail) limits his ability to fully process his post traumatic growth.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both *The Waiting Room* and *Hello Out There* illustrate the impact of trauma repression, showing how the "orphan" protagonists confront and process their pasts, leading to personal growth. In *The Waiting Room*, the "orphan" protagonist Priya, represses traumatic memories as a defense mechanism, which conforms to Freud's repression theory. Similarly, in *Hello Out There*, the protagonist, the Young man, shows repression through detachment and avoidance of emotional fragility, reinforcing Freud's notion that unresolved trauma remains in the unconscious. Despite initial repression, both characters experience moments of confrontation with their past, marking a shift from avoidance to acknowledgment, an important step in post-traumatic growth (PTG). The struggles of these characters demonstrate how repression can lead to internal conflict, mirroring Freud's idea that unprocessed trauma manifests in neurotic symptoms and psychological distress. Through their journeys, they undergo transformation by finding meaning in their suffering, ultimately agreeing with PTG's principles of personal strength and resilience. *The Waiting Room* presents this transformation through the protagonist's eventual self-awareness and emotional breakthrough, suggesting that trauma, when confronted, fosters growth. Also the "orphan" protagonist in *Hello Out There* shows more readiness towards his growth, his final moments suggest a shift in understanding, even if

external circumstances remain unchanged or restricted. Both plays illustrate that while repression initially serves as psychological protection, true resilience emerges when trauma is consciously confronted, reinforcing the interplay between Freud's theory and PTG.

The broader implications of these findings point to the complexity of trauma recovery and the complex ways individuals respond to emotional suffering. The integration of trauma, as explored in these plays, is not a linear process; rather, it involves a series of confrontations with painful memories and emotions. This suggests that psychological resilience is deeply tied to one's ability to acknowledge and assimilate their experiences. Furthermore, these narratives invite future exploration into how repression and post-traumatic growth manifest differently across various cultural, social, and psychological contexts. Future research could benefit from examining how these themes play out in other literary works, or even in real-world stories, offering a fuller understanding of trauma's long-term effects on individuals and society. Ultimately, the plays emphasize the idea that trauma, while challenging, can lead to personal growth when consciously confronted, offering a powerful reminder of human resilience.

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