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## Trauma in Drama: Relieving Suppression in Contemporary Monodramas of Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire* and Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife*

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<b>Keywords:</b>  -Trauma - self-destruction -self-treatment - Doug -Raffo	<b>Abstract:</b>  Significantly, human life is reflected in literary works that covered the suffering and painful moments. In literature, the spiritual wounds are functioned to illustrate trauma and its effect on self-confidence. Through acting situations, trauma is connected dramatically with flashback and yesteryears images of self-destruction. Particularly, the wounded self is analyzed through social and political perspectives in which that self is examined and healed by the therapeutic understanding that literature provides. Widely, this genre is given a space in theatres to illustrate the stormy life of real and imaginative characters who deeply discuss the traumatic effect and the foreshadow bonds to the experiences of the past.  In monodramas, playwrights put into consideration the influence of place and events in the reformulation of the self. Therapeutically, the concept of trauma draws attention to the role of place and the subject matter which are dealt with metaphorically by characters. The variant
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<p>-Accepted: 22- 2-2020</p>	<p>means of self-treatment regard importantly the monologues to recover the division and the destruction of identity that won a fruitful chance in drama. Thus, Trauma drama examines the relation between the reformation of self and the recollection of memories. Thus, the aim of the paper is to shed the light on literary trauma theory in contemporary, cultural and literary criticism through its adaptation on traumatic performing stage.</p>
<p>Available online</p>	<p>The paper relies mainly on the contemporary models of trauma presented on stages as monologues. The paper is mainly concerned with Heather Raffo's <i>Nine Parts of Desire</i> (2003) and Doug Wright's <i>I Am My Own Wife</i> (2004) examining the monologue as an expressionist approach to reflect trauma and its extreme destructive change on self and society.</p>

## مسرح الصدمة: تخفيف القمع في مسرحيات المونودراما المعاصرة "تسع أجزاء من الرغبة" لهيثر رافو و "أنا زوجة نفسي" لدوك رايت

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<p><b>الخلاصة:</b> تعكس الأعمال الأدبية التي تتناول الأوقات العصبية ، والمؤلمة واقع النفس البشرية والتأثير الواقع عليها بسبب صعوبتها ؛ ولهذا تسلط تلك الأعمال الضوء على تلك الصدمات العصبية ، وتكشف تأثيرها على النفس والشخصية. تظهر مواقف الصدمة بوصفها انعكاسا لمواقف مأساوية (دراماتيكية) ، وذكريات صورية مؤلمة تعمل على إضعاف الإنسان ، وتشعره بالحزن ، والانكسار، لذلك فإن دراسة موضوع تأثير الصدمات النفسية على الإنسان يتم عن طريق النقاش لعدة أوجه سياسية ، واجتماعية ، وذلك للوقوف على أهم الأسباب ، ووضع الحلول ، او المقترحات المناسبة عن طريق بعض الأعمال الأدبية التي من بينها العروض المسرحية المونودراما. يذهب هذا النوع من الأدب (المونودراما) بشكل واسع الى اعطاء مساحة واسعة للنظر في قسوة المواقف التي تفرضها الظروف السياسية ، او الاقتصادية ، او</p>	<p><b>الكلمات الدالة:-</b> - الصدمة - تدمير الذات - معالجة الذات - رايت - رافو</p> <p><b>معلومات البحث</b> <b>تاريخ البحث:</b></p>
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<p>الاجتماعية ، فدراسة تأثير تلك الصدمات دراسة مستفيضة للخبرات السابقة التي مرت بها الشخصية تعطي فكرة عن هذا الأدب .</p> <p>يؤكد الكتاب المسرحيون من خلال اعمالهم على أهمية المكان والزمان للحدث ، وكيفية تقديمه بشكل مونودرامي يصور بعض المواقف المؤلمة ، والراسخة في الذاكرة وتأثيرها على سلوك الإنسان مما يساعد على الوقوف على أسباب انهيار النفس البشرية وهويتها الإنسانية أو تحطمها.</p> <p>ويتم كل ذلك من خلال مسرح الصدمة الذي وظفه الكتاب المسرحيون بشكل مناسب لاستنكار الماضي وآلامه ، وإعادة تأهيل الذات ؛ لذلك فإن الدراسة الحالية تسلط الضوء على نظرية الصدمة في الأدب المسرحي المعاصر عند بعض الكتاب المعاصرين كوسيلة للنقد الأدبي والثقافي المقدم في العروض المسرحية. تعنى هذه الدراسة بمسرحية "تسع أجزاء من الرغبة" ٢٠٠٣ للكاتبة الأمريكية هيدر رافو ، فضلا عن مسرحية "أنا زوجة نفسي" ٢٠٠٤ للكاتب المسرحي الأمريكي دوك رايت. تعرض المسرحيتين المعاصرتين مواقف مونودرامية كتعبير عن تأثير الصدمات النفسية والاجتماعية على الفرد والمجتمع.</p>	<p>الاستلام: ٢٠٢٠   ٢   ٣</p> <p>القبول: ٢٠٢٠   ٢   ٢٢</p> <p>التوفر على النت</p>
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## Trauma

Considerably, literature shares people's memories, their functions and genres to find a space for introspection, retrospection, flashback, and reviewing of the past course of events in certain periods of time. Literary works take the data from the remembrance of unforgettable events. Yet, cleverly, these works bond the creativity of writing with the spiritual and psychological situation effects of real or even imaginative characters.

A central claim of contemporary literature emphasizes the significance of studying trauma and the recovering of identity out of traumatic experiences. According to trauma theory, the modeling destroyed identity is subject to be analyzed and studied psychoanalytically depending on the diverse representations of that identity followed the traumatic situations. Thus, literary works drew an attention to the memories including time and place and the role of each in effecting painfully the identity. Hence, the considerable descriptions of the traumatic experience and its effect on future human behavior has to be tackled in relation to the cultural context of social appreciation that asserts the importance of recalling the past events and their influence upon self.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Sigmund Freud marked that human behavior lives in a conflict between Eros, that produces creativity, harmony, sexual connection, reproduction, and self-preservation; and Thanatos that brings destruction, repetition, aggression, and self-destruction. Freud asserts that the patterns of suffering are hidden but persistent in the life of certain individuals, “the experience of a trauma repeats itself” (Caruth 2) as in the case of those who participated in wars or witnessed deaths in battlefield. To Freud, those individuals are subject to experience the repeated past events they already passed through. Terrifyingly, these events seem to be repeated unconsciously out of their owner’s wish or control predicting, to a certain degree, the sort of fate they may face. Cathy Caruth clarifies Freud’s traumatic approach of fate as he referred to in Torquato Tasso’s romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581):

Its hero, Tancred, unwillingly kills his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. After her burial he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders’ army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again. (qtd. in Caruth 2)

The repeated wounded memory of Tancred of his beloved Clerinda simulates Freud’s evidence that trauma repeated itself through unwilling action. Regardless of the repetition of the trauma injury, the echo of pain that metaphorically symbolizes the released voice of painful memories cried out for the second time and addressed its owner’s recalling as a witness and a doer.

The injurious repetition and the echo of the past offered a suitable relation to Freud’s psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experiences importantly find their real meaning and interpretation of wounds when Freud asserts more explicitly that the mind’s wounded experiences are more injurious on self than the wound of the body. The wound of the past experience might be not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again repeatedly in the nightmares (Caruth 4). To Freud, “the wound or injury inflicted simultaneously works as a rule against the development of a neurosis” (Freud 6). Clearly, the wound that comes out of past trauma is unwillingly linked to fear and anxiety to produce definite or, sometimes, indefinite expressions. Furthermore, dreams which happen during the psychic trauma repeatedly bring the dreamer back to the traumatic past event and run him/her the state of being frightened in sleep. The power of the psychic trauma upon the patient’s dreams is a constant proof of the certain strength of that past experience.

To be traumatized means to be possessed by an event or an accident repeated through an image. The returning to the event against one’s will is really a definite need to ignore the literal going back to the old situation. The disturbing memories, thoughts, and situational images of the old traumatic experience haunted typically their possessors as constant instances. Thus, it might be true that veterans in Vietnam War were under the

impact of symptoms that occurred after being exposed to the traumatic experiences of war. The veterans of Vietnam War increasingly became psychologically hyper-aroused. Most of their reactions were under hyper-vigilance toward life's normal conditions and news and of startle-response that unexpectedly show a physical reaction immediately after awakening, or suffering the trauma-related nightmares:

I had to move out of our bedroom. I would be thrashing around at night, and making noises so loud that my wife couldn't sleep. And a few times, when she tried to wake me up, I struck out at her....It wasn't safe for us to sleep together. The dreams focused and refocused until past scenes and the present became a raging reality within him, images of the present and the past merging to double the impact and the smell and atmosphere of the jungle there in the room with him. Wave after wave of agonizing memories washed over his mental shores. (qtd. in Sourfield 80-81)

The survivors of Vietnam are pre-occupied with the feeling of blame to those who lived led a meaningless life after and to those who died out of nothing before. To them, random chance and fate are directed with the traumatic symptoms. The veteran's journey of recovering of war trauma comes to offer a description of the experience and lessons learned to heal from the trauma.

Robert Jay Lifton, a winner of the 1969 National Book Award in science, worked on studying the catastrophic events of modern age such as Hiroshima, Vietnam, the Holocaust, and the nuclear threat upon the concept of trauma. Lifton stresses that the experience of trauma can be studied through the psychology of the survivor and the struggle to heal the traumatic experience is a sensitive meaning of challenging for them. To Lifton, the adult traumatic experience in the form of war neuroses was given a very important role by Freud in the latter's point of view of development and of death as well. Lifton believes that the stress given by Freud on studying trauma out of war neuroses was purposely directed to define death in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Yet, the impact of trauma of World War I had less intention from Freud than his considerable elaboration of death itself. For Lifton, the perceiving of trauma as a struggle for survival was not generalized as that concerns death and emotion influenced by the traumatic experiences. Hence, what is quick possible is to pin the unusual difficulty in dealing with traumatic events caused after death or significantly contributed to vision possible suppression after individual or community crises.

### **Literary Trauma Theory:**

Freud listed mental trauma within his clinical agenda during the 1890s when he asserted that neurosis is productively the outcome of mixing old traumas occurred due to emotional tensions, stresses, unrest, or disorders, relived in disguise. Although Freud's psychiatric formula found a welcoming interpretation to clinically diagnosis of traumatic cases, yet there was a 1900 focus that shifted Freud's assumption into another

when neurosis became the outcome of the infantile originals. The presumption of the infantile originals had been followed either by the psychoanalytical trauma theory stressing on the hereditary genetics more and the environmental factors less in reliving trauma. The proper trauma pathological treatment was recognized more in the psychiatric diagnostic category “Post Trauma Stress Disorder” (PTSD) during the 1980s taking into consideration bodily suffering violence of traumatic individuals and the defensive memory.

In recent years and specifically after 1996 with the publication of Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma Narrative and History*, and Kali Tal’s *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, the study of trauma paid much attention as a genre in literary criticism though most of the scholars looked at the field of trauma as a part which is mainly studied and written for documenting unpleasant flashback and memories. Though worthy references to trauma as a concept of a referential relation with psychoanalysis by Freud, yet it became a theoretical trend when it was introduced by Caruth as the latter pioneered a linkage between trauma and psychoanalytic post structural model. More importantly, Caruth claims that trauma popularizes the thought that the concept of trauma appeals to study the unsolved problem that lies in the unconscious and affects the present behavioral and physical expressions. Caruth assumes that these unsolved problems of the unconsciousness explain the contradictions of experience and language depending mostly on Jacques Lacan psychoanalytical approach that gathered post-structuralism, critical theory, and linguistics.

As the most controversial psycho-analyst since Freud, Lacan elaborates that Freud’s ideas of “slips of the tongue”, jokes, and the interpretation of dreams emphasize the role of language in subjective constitution, and the unconscious is structured like a language. To Lacanian theory, the unconscious is separate from the conscious in which the recognition of the word may not lie in the memory of the consciousness. He defines the unconscious as speech suggested by the technique of talking outlet, while the symptom is a kind of message that has core of truth (Soler 89-93).

The theory of trauma, due to Freud’s perspective, suggests a crucial link between literature and traumatic theory. Mostly, literary products present how the repeated infliction of a wound has a clear effect upon the mind more than the body. The wound of the mind is hardly exposed to the healable event and simple treatment since it examines the morals, beliefs and ideals of the wound. However, soldiers of WWI and WWII suffered physically and mentally. Most of their real suffering was stripping of dignity and self-esteem. Physically, they got shell shock and body shaking, and in many cases, they experienced unwilling urinating and uncontrolled defecating. Furthermore, the undignified and insulted souls were profoundly exhausted by the disturbed capacity of sleep. Ex-war soldiers of various wars (WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Iraq War, etc...) suffered the combat trauma that was more applicable to those who

witnessed the grief for fallen comrades and the scaring scenes of killing and cutting body parts.

The symptoms of PTSD are stuck in survivors of repeated trauma memory with little changes for many years after getting free from the memory of captivity. For example, the soldiers who had been taken as prisoners of war in WWI or the Korean War suffered the persistent flashbacks, nightmares, and sudden aggressive reactions after 30 or 40 years of release. Relatedly, after 2003, the prisoners in Iraqi prison Abo Ghreeb who persist the sexual abuse and body torture inside the prison will be subject to the same trauma even after long years after their release.

People in yesteryears captivity have symptoms that are extremely severe and dissociative personality of solitary mental abnormality. Some prisoners are able to create and develop a state dissociated personality through negative hallucinations. Judith L. Herman explains how a South African political prisoner, Elaine Mohamed, describes her psychological alternations of her captivity:

I started hallucination in prison, presumably to try to combat loneliness. I remembered someone asking me during the period of my trial, "Elaine what are you doing?" I kept whipping up my hand behind me, and I said to him, "I'm stroking my tail". I had conceptualized myself as a squirrel. A lot of my hallucinations were about fear...I would hallucinate something coming to my cell, like a wolf...and I started talking to myself. My second name is Rose, and I've always hated the name. Sometimes I was Rose speaking to Elaine, and sometimes I was Elaine speaking to Rose. I felt that the Elaine part of me was the stronger part, while Rose was the person I despised. (qtd. in Herman 79)

On the other hand, some of the traumatized war prisoners develop another captivity which is voluntarily chosen to suppress their thoughts (Herman 79). Moreover, in an attempt to suppress the memory of war, prisoners may give an impression of mental and behavioral normality while psychologically they are bound to the conditions of the past prison. In that sense, studies analyzed the astonishing actions of those prisoners beside the dissociation they have in which they married them after liberation have never discussed their experiences in the prison not even with their children or wives. The constant refusal of retelling the yesteryears experiences remarks their captive present thoughts with the past memory causing excessive insomnia and pathological irritation.

Along with the idea of living as captives and another as free, the past-memory prisoner copes with the double thinking in more than one reality. Determinably, he thinks more how to live calmly rather to think how to get rid of the chronicle traumatized situations. Mauricia Rosencof, a political dissident, describes the difficulties of returning to the normality of living after years of imprisonment: "Once we got out, we were suddenly confronted with all these problems...I'd come to a closed door and find myself momentarily stymied. I couldn't remember what to do next or

how to make a dark room light. How to work, pay bills, shop, visit friends, answer questions..." (qtd. in Herman 80).

The combat trauma of wars participants drove individuals increasingly to suffer posttraumatic stress disorder in which the nervous system had been descended to the breaking level and the body structure had been shattered. While PTSD of combat trauma generally centers on other past ex-war soldiers, it was also PTSI marked those young Iraq veterans who called the combat anguish and referred to their pain as "I" (injury) instead of "D"(disorder) as that trauma is an injury, not disorder (Levine 34) that can be managed but not healed.

Certainly, in addition to WWI and WWII, trauma theory responded to the flaw of various world changing concept of crises. Aime Cesaire points out that to Nazism as that barbaric trauma applied in Europe on non-European people:

Absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole Western, Christian civilizations in its reddening waters, it oozes, seeps and trickles from every crack. (Cesaire 14)

In terms of barbarity, trauma theory took associated meaning bonded to the genocide of the Holocaust, for example, and the increasing medical attention to posttraumatic stress disorder particularly when the American Psychiatric Association declared that PTSD is a disease. However, interest in scoping trauma theory was stimulated strongly by works of writers who found their real sources in the memory of the groups beside the memory of individuals.

In Pierre Nora and Yosef Yerushalmi's book *Zalkhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982), the concept of individual memory and the group memory formed the rediscovery of trauma as a horrible argument of living in disorder state. Ian Hacking combines not only between the individual and the group memory, but also between the meaning of wound suffered in France between 1874 and 1886 when trauma found its self-representation in what Hacking called memoro-politics. To Hacking, the flashback of spiritual injury turned into monumental. Memoro-politics explains the meaning of pathological forgetting that leads to the psychoanalysis of certain terms such as amnesia, dissociation, and repression. Hacking's suggestion of memory traces the battle of truth to the false memory and the recovered memory to get then the recovered identity. To Hacking trauma is "a wound to the soul" (Gilmore 25), and in that sense, wound is linked to the memory that lies in the soul not the body. For instance, Hacking asserts that child sexual abuse is the distorted memory of the present soul illness and the struggle about memory to cope with the soul injury. Laura Brown in her "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma" (1995), suggests feminist contributions to find a logic therapy of trauma that linked especially to sexual abuse. As a therapist of a young woman abused sexually by her stepfather for many



years, Brown concludes that the therapy takes a long time to heal the traumatic damage and distorted memory of that woman as similar to many cases of incest survivors. Brown, however, sets up her questions about mother role in a family, the sort of culture and community produced fathers who rape their own daughters, and the number of victims' therapist clinicians that are responsible to heal. Through one of her therapist colleagues, Brown relates that the former developed a concept of "insidious trauma", in that the violence has much to do with the soul and spirit than body (Brown 100-103). Thus, Brown suggests:

Often the only way to avoid these manifestations of trauma is to assiduously rely upon the defenses of denial and minimization ... Insidious rape trauma is a part of everyday life for those women whose denial structures are less well padded. And each day, new assaults upon that denial greet us. (Brown 107)

Trauma, due to feminist perspective, is affirmed as different due to gender study. Janice Haaken, an American clinical psychologist, believes that women's trauma in the contemporary calls is "a strong echo of them in the selling of tragedy" (Haaken 61). She states:

Throughout the 1980s, as social services were being reduced and U.S. society was getting meaner, trauma stories became best-sellers, increasingly graphic in their tales of childhood torture and family barbarism. And still there was a pervasive public silence concerning the mundane suffering of daily life and the mounting, wearisome responsibilities of countless women. (Haaken 61)

As images of feminist traumatic lives, Haaken shares Laura Brown's real examples of women's traumatic clinical cases. In that imaginative suffering through storytelling art which enriched the discussion of traumatic care and psychological healing for women shared their stories and would be swept sympathetically by hearers. Queen for a day, a TV show run in 1945 in an American radio and television, presented four or five time-worn women who tell their stories. Each of which reported bitter memories and hardship they faced and lived such as losing a son to leukemia, mourning a husband's heart attack, or remembering a death scene in war. Each woman succeeded in conveying her memory of misery waiting to wear the crown over the gray hair by the host of the show after a private vote given over the most painful and strongest traumatic memory.

On the other hand, Haaken argues that hysteria and shell shock are distributed due to gender term. The trauma model is excessively linked to male and female response. Haaken asserts that research into trauma investigates that hysteria is more applicable in women in comparison to the shell shock in men. "Hysteria and shell shock offered two models for understanding disruptions in memory" (Gilmore 26). Although both bear

the trauma of behavior disorder, but Haaken thinks that men are more apt for shell shock that comes to war ex-soldiers.

The double meaning of trauma between man's shell shock and woman's hysteria states that the harm of the past experience and the mark of the wound are not easy to be healed, besides, it might suggest that the wound is under the reopening of the process. In mental life, the memory of the wound or soul injury offers a permanent record of detailed document of all events which can be irritatingly accessed by analysis and repetition.

Mental disorder is set up systematically when signs and discourses are controlled by the clinicians who try professionally to turn the irrationality into rationality. In hysterical conditions, individuals are controlled by the contemporary variants that have a clear relationship with past objects. Most hysterics suffer from the tension between being subject and object, and between past and present. The process of the sudden awakening from such fantasies and infantile world over time will cause psychopathological conditions such as hysteria. Theoretically, Freud relates hysterical condition of women to the fact that woman is less able to express the infantile emotion than man. Evocatively, the text of traumatic memory repeats through the acts of its owner and against his/her will. The repetition of past pain is usually accompanied and moved by the sorrowful voice released through the wound. Again, to Caruth, the voice Tancred heard was his beloved's call pain:

For what seems to me particularly striking in the example of Tasso is not just the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent and unwished for repetition, but the moving and sorrowful voice that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released through the wound. Tancred does not only repeat his act, but in repeating it, he for the first time hears a voice that cries out to him to see what he has done. The voice of his beloved addresses him and, in this address, bears witness to the past he has unwittingly repeated. (Caruth 2)

It is worth nothing that this double pain of act and voice was increased probably because the continuation of hearing the voice of guilt stored in the unconscious even after change in the normal regulations of life.

The one, who suffers stressful and traumatic pain memory, and voice of the posttraumatic disorder, appears to be subjected to psychotic experience. Most of those involved people who hear a voice of pain and sorrow feel humiliated and spiritual displacement and suffer of disbelongingness. Thus, some cognitive models are working necessarily on the basic premises that offer a psychological intervention. The key premises of the cognitive model "are that adverse childhood events shape the development of care beliefs about oneself and the world, that thoughts determine emotions, and that behavior maintains beliefs"(Steel 165). Key premises involve the development of all cognitive behavioral interventions including cognitive behavioral

therapy for psychosis (CBTP) (Steel 168). Thus, CBTP is a psycho-social intervention which aims to improve mental health. It guides to mend the unhelpful cognitive distortion such as thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. In this sense, the key premise presents therapeutic explanation for the heard voice out of the past emotional experiences. As a part of the cognitive analysis of voices trauma, the voice hearing is a sort of mental processes resulting from the state of dissociation and mental separation that goes toward independent reaction.

The model of PTSD is recognized as a mental health condition promoted by a terrifying event either experiencing or witnessing it. The symptoms of this kind of disorder contain flashbacks, nightmares, uncontrolled thoughts about the past events, and weird reactions. PTSD interprets the voice hearing of trauma as that case allows its owner to enter a dissociative state. The model of PTSD goes on to present a functional and protecting tool during the time of trauma, and it offers information about the changes in the process of trauma positive development in case of remembering flashbacks. Hence, most of the cognitive models deal with the voice hearing as that launch of flashback call which came out of sorrowful experience Thus, in drama, the voice hearer is the reflection of torture whether the voice hearer is a victim or an abuser and the therapist's function is traumatizing the voice to release its final call.

As a matter of fact, individuals suffer severe mental health disorder experienced past traumatic events and subjected their cognitive state to damage and torture. They are also at an increased risk when additional feeling of traumatization and victimization overcome thoughts and negative self evaluation (Swan 168). Rates of post-traumatic stress disorder are increased when individuals are treated in ignorance or when the re-experiencing symptoms like flashbacks and nightmares overwhelmed as promoted negative changes. Most of the clinical professionals and mental health guidance are arguably facing the PTSD symptoms with either repeating the trauma condition with specific limits releasing by stress pressure the voice of fear and recommending trauma treatments for individuals of psychosis, or treat PTSD symptoms due to the literature intervention by subjecting the voice hearer to a similar situation and condition of controlled case. However, the baseline significance of relieving suppression, releasing the voice or subjugating reports that the participant suffers the posttraumatic disorder that needs a psychological treatment. Accordingly, traumatized people have no clear baseline state of stability and calmness. In considerable situations, they feel captive by the thought when they feel that their bodies are their enemies turn against them and oppose their will.

### **Cultural Trauma:**

Cultural trauma is that feeling of horrendous event that happens to a group of people and leaves unforgettable marks in their consciousness, singing their memories forever and altering their future with symptoms which are sometimes irrecoverable.

Cultural trauma is theorized as an empirical and scientific concept that suggests new meaningful and casual relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions (Alexander 1-31). It offers a significant insight on common related memory shared by social groups or national societies through identifying the source of human suffering. The theory assumes moral responsibility that covers the suffering of groups done by other groups. It allows the expansion of suffering and injurious memories and projects the responsibility of peoples' participation in causing and suffering the trauma.

Several definitional and explanatory contexts must be made. Cultural trauma describes the social traumas that recessively threaten social life. It refers to the social unit examined by common crises such as disease, famine, or war. The Great Depression of the 1930s in America can be regarded as a social trauma, because people shared economic breakdowns that affected the political and legal systems. Cultural trauma also refers to the collapse of grouping elements that came out of a common environment such as wars. So, values, norms, beliefs, ideologies, appreciations and meanings are examined by the conflict of the majority. Although some cultural traumas were played down and some considered them as a chance to restart, yet covertly, part of their negativity is defined as becoming positive. Hiroshima particularly had largely lived the social and cultural trauma for many decades after the atomic bomb during World War II witnessing completely all sorts of economic, political, and social ruins, yet, today, it lives the unconditional exposure to scientific success.

The felt guilty of felt pain connected to 'Whys' and 'Wherefores' is in fact the matter of individuals' reliving trauma out of his/her will. Here, traumas are sounded out rightly not relived but remembered and preserved in the memory by most of them, or may be all, are being ashamed of, disgusted, humiliated, and denied by one's own will and need.

It would be impossible to avoid the experience of Hiroshima and the extreme horror of the event without connecting it with trauma. Traumatically, Hiroshima represents a universal human experience that caused a particular kind of psychological conflict to the survivors. The trauma and the survivors lived interconnected shift that clarified the tragic meaning of World War II.

The definition of cultural trauma was widely used in the context of historical documented memory. In both cases of Hiroshima and Holocaust, people realized the politics of victimhood. Culturally and individually, the survivors lived the complex life dynamics either as real witnesses, or as post-paid –cost human mental cases. Hiroshima allowed for the enlargement of traumatic cases following World War II “when psychiatrists and other mental health experts dealt with huge number of refugees, veterans, bombing victims, camp prisoners, and others who suffered the consequences of that global conflict” (Zwigenberg 147).

War of 'out choice' makes individuals and veterans visually express the various ways of violent subjugation. The atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki chronicled the lives of people under fear even after the two-kilometer atomic bomb that was deeply enough to cause the ultimate damage and injury to millions of Japanese victims during and after the bomb. The traumatic tragedy of Hiroshima history was analyzed in many respects which all spotted the war stories and the defeat of the nation. Men, women, children, young, and aged all sacrificed their peaceful memories and turned them into traumatic destructive war memories. Their civics memories produced the cultural trauma that serves not only to inform and educate, but to warn and treat. For example, in May and June of every year, children of school trip season used to visit traumatic areas such as Hiroshima and Kyoto for sightseeing and study. The museums of these places remind school children of war environment, military uniforms, flags, the model of a nuclear bomb, and photographs of soldiers. Akiko Hashimoto says "A volunteer guide speaks in the tone and style common to elderly grandparents telling stories to their grandchildren. But unlike everyday family talk, the topic here is nothing less than brutal mass death" (Hashimoto 84).

The analysis of deep wounds of aggressive war goes further than Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Phan Thi Kim Phuc Oont, who is referred to as 'the Napalm Girl' of 1972, is a South Vietnamese-born Canadian best known as the nine-year old child, running naked on a road after being burned by a South Vietnams air force attack. The now Phan Thi Kim traumatized that memory of nine year child who lived implicitly the cultural of injurious remembrance and brutality.

Recounting the significant analysis of cultural trauma, Jeffery Alexander in his book *Trauma: A Social Theory* (2012), believes that cultural trauma "occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" ( Alexander 1). Theoretically, cultural trauma signifies the responsibility of the society or some of its individuals of the existence of other's traumas. Hence, it is that cultural truth of bad memory affirmation which does not return to buried flashback, but it creates new ones. In this sense, slavery was traumatic and its notion was completely bad influence upon people whose relatives were ex-slaves in the civil war period.

Sever experiences of the African Americans added physical and psychological trauma through experiencing the daily degradation and humiliation especially during slavery. It was the memory of black identity that suffered emotional anguish by individuals and white community listed that identity within the accounts of traumatic effects. Toni Morrison in her 1987 novel *Beloved* shows how the ghost of the baby slaughter saves her from slavery. Traumatically, Morrison recalls the physical and psychological wounds of slaves through the protagonist Sethe who lived with her sin as a killer of her daughter under the memory threat and horror of the dead-daughter's ghost. Hence, to Jeffery Alexander, the memory of struggle accompanied by pain and

social responsibility is called the cultural trauma that most African Americans experienced in searching for their lost identity.

### **Heather Raffo's *Nine Parts of Desire*: Releasing the Imprisoned Voice**

*When the grandson of Genghis Khan,  
Burned all the books in Baghdad  
The river ran black with ink  
What color is this river now?  
It runs the color of old shoes  
The color of distances  
The color of soles torn and worn  
This river is the color of worn soles*

*(Nine Parts of Desire: Part One)*

Through a one act-play and a one act-woman actress, Heather Raffo presented her *Nine Parts of Desire* (2003) that expresses collective experiences and traumatic recalls of Iraqi woman calling for identity and other targeting themes through Iraqi trouble line history. Traumatically, nine stories are told by nine characters, each of which recalls secrets, memory, desires, and painful feelings. Raffo's single character interchangeably staged the scenes of the nine parts and acted them closely to Heather's intention.

Raffo, who was born in Michigan in 1970 to a Christian Iraqi father and an Irish Catholic mother, was inspired by her 1993 visit to Iraq interviewing Iraqi women and collecting traumas of those women who suffered politically, socially, and domestically.

In the play, one woman expresses collective experiences and various identities of traumatic Iraqi woman. She raises questions which are importantly addressing people's reactions against war trauma and painful involvement. For Raffo, the play performer holds the message to the world that this art is meant to be performed to change powerfully the negativity of audience's impression and ideas into positive judgment about Iraqi involvements in wars and conflicts. On the other hand, Raffo strongly reflects the Iraqi women's suffering when they live in long-time dialogue of trauma. She meant to make a difference in the world and shift in ways of thinking and believing as well.

Through the one woman actor, Raffo addresses the western audience about the real life in Iraq during the 1980s and the 1990s; Iraqis' suffering after two wars, their endurance of fourteen years of sanctions, deep provocative western involvement in Iraqi affairs, and the western audience's attention to know more about Arab traumatic crises.

Provokingly, American woman of Arab origin seek new narratives about eastern problems, whether domestic or public. They center in stories, which are mostly real about their mothers, ancestors, or culture leveling their conflict at the top of modern

human suffering. For these women, reading of Arab culture is a matter of raising world interest about feminism in particular and culture critiques in general.

Most of Arab-American women's traumatic stories focus on telling the world their real experiences under sexual harassment or war time crises believing that world response would be more acceptable and welcomed rather than telling these traumas in terms of political and social activism. For instance, Raffo, reasonably, thinks that American audience would care less to woman's stage performance if she performs out of any personal experience. To Raffo, American audience would find more attractive theatre stories when stereotype Iraqi women perform personal experiences and inner thoughts. On the other hand, when a feminist solo performance is mostly headed to criticize sharply, the political critique would be received in less importantly evaluation than when the audience involves and exchanges a real empathic connection with true humanist levels.

*Nine Parts of Desire* is one of the most prominent Arab American monodrama written in 2003 and performed at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh. The play got many awards; Lucille Lortel Award, Susan Smith Blackburn, and Marian Seldes-Garson Kanin playwright Award. Moreover, Raffo, as a performer, was nominated for the Helen Hayes, Outer Critics Circle, and Drama League Awards.

Raffo, who wrote and performed the monodrama, based her one-act woman play on what she calls a "life-changing trip" (Najjar 1) to Iraq in 1993. She depended upon non-interviewing documents but rather, she found a great interest through arousing her inspiration by meeting some Iraqi women, listening to their stories, and spending time in analyzing their untold pains. For Raffo, such stories were deserved to be researched and written in a form of drama in a poetic style similar to song writing (Najjar 1). Hence, Raffo sided away from the traditional style of writing a play in that she addresses professionally the ability to write a series of monologues where the text is read poetically in semi-real conditions and environments.

Raffo followed the international reactions in that she believes that rejecting aggression and dehumanization is a moral and universal role. To her, the traumatic recall is the matter of sweeping away many painful illusions about war and death, and that Iraqi meanwhile time created also a series of conflicts. In addition to experiencing the trauma of war and life basement destruction, as a performer who has embraced American culture, Raffo found herself experiencing through various performances a personal trauma about feeling others' pain, loyalty abused and trust betrayed. She recalls others' confusion and cries her need to reassess perfectly the dreamt constructed image of Iraq. In her performances, Raffo felt that her sense of being tortured was deeply personal and the suffering of her gender is much related to her personal discovery of life and humanity.

Indeed, as Raffo points out, trauma of war and regions of conflicts is being a real enemy that should be defeated via professional literary treatment. She challenged the complicated notion that war is a place for heroism and nobility. To Raffo, war theatre bears the currently writings of the sociological and political developments which happened in Iraq and Arab world. Realizing people's suffering on stages is another way of throwing out burdens especially to those who were exiled from country, or left it willingly for a set of necessities.

In 2003, Raffo chose to write pieces of women's stories of prime importance. Traumatically, Raffo connects between the real story of Iraqi crises through monodramas in the language of the new home-English. Michael Billington of the Guardian asserts the benefit of *Nine Parts of Desire* when it reveals not only the plight of Iraqi women, but also to realize more importantly the moral issues during and after war.

In 1993, Raffo visited her family in Baghdad. During her visit to the Saddam Art Centre (Baghdad's Museum of Modern Arts), Raffo noticed a painting entitled "Savagery" of a naked woman held on a tree. This painting inspired Raffo to write her play relying on the meaning of the painting and the painter Layla Al-Attar. Prominently, Al-Attar character inspired Raffo to investigate how such woman as Layla can hold an important political position during that period. Each episode talks about a certain situation to enrich the playwright's point of view. In her 10 years of interviews, Raffo chose different social backgrounds of Iraqi women who were either strangers or relatives to her.

As an American citizen, Raffo was helped through the time when people found it hard to speak about their suffering. In her play, Raffo wore an (abaya), a traditional robe like garment always in black, differently each time she performed a character, and she used various Iraqi accents to portray various regional and social class background. She symbolized the real adventures of Iraqi women either by their wearing or by nervous reactions and traumatic recalls. The nine parts of nine women characters were presented in order, Mulaya, Layla, Amal, Huda, the doctor, the girl, Umm Ghada, the American, and Nanna.

Raffo's stories from the time of her visit to Baghdad in 1993 until 2013 have had added updated materials to include the most important and recent conflicts in Iraq that had much negative effects especially on Iraqi women. For instance in the second part of the play (Layal), Raffo presents an artist from Baghdad as the curator of Art Centre. Layal is driven from and based on an Iraqi artist named Layla Al-Attar, who had a privileged position and who was allowed to paint nudes. On stage, Raffo symbolizes how Layal's inner conflict, fear and struggle to keep artificially bright self-image. Dropping abaya by Raffo on her shoulders is Layal's shattered self-confidence of being morally empty. Layal has that feeling of being a victim although she was a favorite figure during that critical period:



Maybe that's it, maybe I stay because I feel lucky, I am charmed, what can touch me? Besides what's to paint outside Iraq? Maybe I am not so good artist outside Iraq-Here my work is well known. Hardly anyone will paint nudes anyway but this is us our bodies-isn't it? (*Nine Parts of Desire: Part Two*)

Layal is deeply traumatized by what she has experienced and witnessed. To Raffo, Layal was torn between the regime at that time and her appreciation. Her paintings represent her sympathy toward victimized and oppressed Iraqi women who were morally bankrupt. Layal says:

I do not ever want to expose exactly another woman's body so I paint my body but her body, herself inside me. So it is not me alone it is all of us but I am the body that takes the experience. Your experience, yourself, I will take it only you and I will know who it is and the others let them say oh Layal, again she is obsessed with her body! [*She laughs.*](*Nine Parts of Desire: Part Two*)

She painted part of the truth of Iraqi women as her super objectivity appeared when she got that right to portrait the nudity of morality. Joel Hirschhom in her 2014 article "Review Nine Parts of Desire Variety" argues that Layal is the most fascinating personality of the play, who brings to life the image of oppression and victimization. Moreover, Raffo helps her audience to realize how a Muslim woman protects her morality by covering up her body and how the power of the patriarchal authority disdains the sexual mores.

Professionally, Layal paints realistically. Her creativity of the new style in drawing reflects her deep passion and sacrifice (Douglas 19-37). She chose to remain in Iraq, despite other offers to live abroad, realizing that her dangerous political role was not only to appease the regime but also to expand the limits that Iraqi woman suffers. Her artistry and open sensuality represent the controversial lifestyle and the balance between the emotional expression and mystery. She painted other women's experiences dressing over their hidden identities by their nude bodies. Iraqi women's unrevealed identities painted by Layal formed the stories told by anonymous tongues. In doing so, Raffo, could not mute Layal's voice when she symbolizes Layal as Shahrazad who devoted her life to entertain the king in *One Thousand and One Night*. To Raffo, Layal was not that prostitute, but rather that ransom who sacrifices the other virgin daughters of Muslims. Layal's sexuality and sensual paintings clarify women's struggle to keep going their fainted power to preserve the modesty of others. Moreover, she portraits women's stories symbolically and transforms their suffering into art product. In one of her painting, Layal artistically painted the painful story of a young woman who was beaten and later killed beastly by releasing angry dogs to attack her:

See in my painting she is the branch's blossom leaning over the barking dogs they cannot reach no matter how hungry they are not unless they learn to climb her but they are dogs, they never will.

You see, nobody knows the painting is her but I believe somewhere she sees.

That is me, [*laughing*] my philosophy! These stories are living inside of me each woman I meet her or I hear about her and I cannot separate myself from them I am so compassionate to them, so attached-*la, la, (Nine Parts of Desire: Part Two)*

Protestingly, Layal could not stop herself expressing such a violence practiced against a woman when she painted a blossom on a tree branch above a pack of dogs (Douglas 22). To Layal, the blossom represents woman who could be away from the barking dogs that may reach her body but never her soul. Through a clear resemblance between Layal and Layla Al-Attar, the latter portrayed a nude woman leaning against a tree attacked by ghostly creatures to over steer her.

Teatrically, Raffo presents Layal's affairs with political names who offer her protection and the frank discussion of sexuality helped Raffo to express how Muslims react toward the unacceptable sexual deeds in an opposing account. Raffo's audience easily understands that Layal's loss in sexual affairs will be counted dangerous and deadly punished by her husband who shot her. She claimed later she was subjected to a shooting accident to cover for her husband. Hence, Raffo's depiction of Layal's received shootings that Muslim norms of rejecting women's faults by a spouse and by society since it is God's teachings and Islam's instructions.

Through Layal's irresponsible actions, though some of them were devoted to ransom other women, Raffo asserts that experiencing sexual affairs out of spousal bond should not be avoid without punishable reaction by the husband and by God's Law. Raffo also draws attention to the fact that most of the political regimes enforce their people to reach self indignation in terms of life necessities. Layal found safety and power only when she felt that giving up her honor and using her sexual attraction would provide her with forms of liberation and this consequently would "maintain her personal freedom in order to create art that symbolically releases women from constrictive roles and abusive situations"(Douglas 23).

Traumatically, Raffo recalls how the climax of Layal reached the end when the portrait of George H.W. Bush was painted by Layal in the lobby of Al-Rashid Hotel in Baghdad. The traumatic call of Layal's death leads Raffo to point out that the burden of war imposed on Iraq by American troops brings up to the audience's memory and to Iraqi women how Layal was killed by bombing her house after painting coarsely a mosaic. The mosaic of the American President George H.W. Bush's face and the

written words “Bush is a criminal”, was in fact a commissionable piece Layal accepted to create because she lacks the unchained decision to refuse. The location of the mosaic on the floor of the hotel lobby and the walking over the painted face by the soles of feet ended Layal’s life by a U.S. bomb and the inspirational character Layla Al-Attar as well. Raffos’s best message, the U.S. wars on Iraq, the American involvement and the false enquires of democracy prove the Americans’ ignorance of peoples’ rights to live out of occupation leaving Iraq with many unsolved problems. Raffo explains how Layal knows she is targeted by a bomb:

You know my house was hit, from Bush’s war, aa,aa,  
I wasn’t there, il-hamdu lillah,  
But we lost everything, my paintings for the new exhibition  
My family’s things, everything.  
That’s why I’m living here, at my sister’s house.  
It was only eight houses from here.  
This neighborhood they bomb. Mansur, can you believe it?  
So how smart is this bomb  
If it bomb a painter? [ she laughs]  
May be think I am dangerous?  
May be I am. I am attached like I will die if I leave.  
(*Nine Parts of Desire: Part Two*)

Along with the effect of war, Raffo uses a dramatic and naturalistic approach. She does not feature the war itself, but rather she presents the emotional and psychological effect of war on the hearts and minds of the survivors. In traumatic literature, war is the source of stories Raffo dramatically weaves her real tales from and this differs from *Arms and the Man* as war was treated by Bernard Shaw as targeting wit and satire. To Raffo, war is not that possibility of adventures or that opportunity of falling in love with a “chocolate soldier”, yet, it is the set of questions of shame, identity, guilt, violence, and most importantly, the trauma. Through this identification of Raffo’s beliefs, *Nine Parts of Desire* transformed the public act into private pain reflected throughout human conditions during and after wartime. It is highly responding to the traumatic pains of wars presenting that pain to Americans and focusing on female experience of war. The play presents witnesses to war and initiates ways of healing. Raffo purposely reaches reasonable assessments of the possibilities to overcome ex-war trauma:

The documentary theatre formed in poetic structure enables audience to respond to the real images of trauma more effectively and symmetrically. As Carol Martin points out, while contemporary documentary theatre might draw its material exclusively from the archive (interviews, hearings, records film footage, photographs not everything that in the archive also becomes part of the documentary. (Saal 1)

In *Nine Parts of Desire*, the horror of the war has less effect than its tragic ends on its survivors. In Iraq, war has continued for three decades and still the scene of violence and messy living exists when children and women pay the ultimate price.

Raffo deems the absolute necessity through nonviolent methods of addressing the American audience. While Layal genders her identity through sensuality and female freedom in the midst of war, Raffo's audience feel the burden of continuous effect everyday life bears to Iraqi women. *The American*, living the war from New York is another play from within *Nine Parts of Desire* weaves its threads from Raffo's own experience of growing up in Michigan then visiting Iraq to re-bond with her Iraqi relatives. The character keeps watching Iraqi news on TV to see if her family's neighborhoods have been killed or not. She starts performing how Iraqi people in America are instantly following news about tragic war in Iraq and how America considers this dramatic intervention in the Whole Middle East as championships.

Traumatically, the character keeps her recalling how media covered the war on Iraq as that demanded job and how the ongoing bombs do the best while the Americans are 'sporting' their normal and daily exercises. In her flashback, the character's Iraqi family could be killed at any moment, may already be dead. They are in momentary and daily risk either to be killed or to be imprisoned in Abu Ghraib by U.S. soldiers. Recalled scenes of abused prisoners in photographs near a smiling soldiers ruins the memory of the play character in that she recounts "painful evidences of civilians whose lives have been torn apart by wars as well as by the sanctions and sectarian violence that fill the void left by Saddam Husain's regime"( Douglas 25).

In that scene, Raffo never forgot to popularize one of the foremost repeated memories of Al-Amiriya shelter. Adequately, she links between the evidence of Abu Ghraib prisoners' torture and the crises happened to those who searched safety during American's bomb in Baghdad. Umm Ghada, witness of terror, is another war-witness play characterized by Umm Ghada, a middle-aged Iraqi woman who symbolizes the real dramatic trauma of hearing the voices of 408 civilians killed by U.S. bomb under what is called "the civilian deaths" where women, children, men, aged and young were killed in February 1991. Sometimes, people who have been exposed to a traumatic event would live a time of distress before they could manage to get rid of the haunting memories. Yet, this is not always the case. Others mostly, could not have a way to cope well with the ex-situation they passed by. Umm Ghada, or Fatima, whose family died in Al-Amiriya shelter, could not avoid being the sightseer of burnt people inside the locked doors of the shelter. Fatima became an unofficial keeper of the shrine after the bombing. As the area was being cleared, Ghada was the only body of Fatima's family members who was identified after the attack. Traumatically, Fatima is hardly increasing coping skills and resilience to endure irrational thinking of deadly challenges.

In *Nine Parts of Desire*, the plot presents a woman wearing 'abaya' who watches the war on TV and recalls her neighborhoods. She prays with her rosary as a Christian. In

the play, the woman derides what she “considers the typical American desire to see everything resolved on Oprah, where those who have experienced devastating tragedy are somehow healed on national television” (Douglas 24).

For Raffo, the awful realization that the ultimate security has become insecure which Al-Amiriya story explores the exceeding loss of control by American government. Such a trauma stresses on the loss of control over the unreliable sources of information reported by Americans. It is in this area, the critical reality has been performed by Al-Amiriya play character concluding that killing over 400 people inside a wall-constructed and special shelter had ignored the typical standards of the exception of the civilians from the American democracy. John Tulloch and Richard Blood describe clearly in *Icons of War and Terror: Media Images in an Age of International Risk* (2012), the images of dead people who were victimized severely:

an image in blue and grey of ‘a child’s hand burned into the wall’, and the black –and-white close-up face of an Iraqi girl...the most shocking images in colors of red-orange and grey, which show the faces of children burned into the wall. The first of these images show how bomb exploded, it carburized people and the wall, creating imprints of bodies, faces, hands, small hands of children. The second image is the ‘wall imprint of a mother holding her child’. The third shows the clear, skull-like image of a ‘face burned into a wall’. (Tulloch 77)

In *Nine Parts of Desires*, Umm Ghada named herself by her daughter ‘Ghada’ who was the only body identified among Fatima’s dead family members. To Fatima, the shelter was purposely attacked by an American bomb for various reasons that lay most on the presence of important figures of the regime in the shelter at that time. It may test the shelter construction against busting bomb, or for other reasons that all resulted to create a traumatic up to date call:

Umm Ghada: I named my daughter Ghada.

Ghada means tomorrow.

So I am Umm Ghada, Mother of Ghada

It is a sign of joy and respect to call a parent by their Kunya.

In Baghdad, I am famous now as Umm Ghada

Because I do live here in yellow trailer

Outside Amiriya bomb shelter

Since the bombing

13 February 1991.

Yes I was inside

With nine from my family

Talking, laughing

Then such a pounding, shaking

Everything is fire

I couldn’t find my children

I couldn’t find my way out

But somehow I did.  
In the whole day later  
I am searching, searching charred ladies  
Bodies they were fused together  
The only body  
I did recognize is my daughter Ghada.  
So I did take her name [ with so much proud]  
I am Umm Ghada, Mother of Ghada  
I am hard to understand  
Why I survive  
And my children dead.  
I asked to Allah why?  
Why you make me alive? (qtd. in Barton 137-8)

Making American audience test their senses of the agony of those dead, Umm Ghada asks the audience to sign witness books that no one can deny to forget what the price women and children paid. Psychologically, Umm Ghada identifies the feeling of recalling the screams, final words of the dead, the victims, sound of explosion, and the melting bodies closed to shelter walls by fire flames. Typically, she devotes the political trauma to dramatically highlighting how survivors suffer the consequences after war and the burden of the recalling could be unbearable:

This is Amiriya a bomb shelter  
Here they write names  
In chalk over the smoked figures.  
Here, on the ceiling, you can see  
Charred handprints and footprints  
From people who lay in the top bunks. And here a silhouette of a woman  
Vaporized from heat.  
This huge room became oven,  
And they pressed to the walls to escape from the flames.  
In the basement too  
Bombs burst the pipes  
Hot water came up to five feet  
And boiled the people. (qtd. in Barton 138)

Raffo was deeply surprised in the sympathetic reception given to Umm Ghada play when she felt that her audience were allowing themselves to be affected by the traumatic calls and the antiwar message. In addition, Raffo was aware that the extremely cruel acts against women in wartime and after creating negative experiences of Iraqi women who may live in everlasting trauma.

Although Umm Ghada could cope hardly with the scene of the civilian death including her family members, Mullayah “the Mourner”, who opens the play, keeps her mourning from the time of Iraqi’s journey from the Garden of Eden until the current time. She mourns the hardness and difficulties Iraqi people witnessed and lived in back to the creation of the world. Mullayah’s recalling of the far ancient times and the

Babylonian creation myth of Apsu and Tiamat indicates that Raffo chooses first a prominent approach to remind the American audience of rich Iraqi civilization and heritage that record deeply the time of the Garden of Eden, and second to clarify that Mullayah mourns not only the American strikes over Mesopotamia, but also the country which is ultimately the source of gods of water and rivers. Raffo helps her staging character to refer to humanly and religiously to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam which all came from Ur.

In her echoing mourning, Mullayah approaching shifts to Iraq of the closing time. Her mourning is a complete mood to undermine the pain of killing people and Iraqi civilization. As a woman, she functions her power to remind the world of the political and social trauma her country lives waiting for something to happen and some forces to resurrect. She focuses on fear and horror threatening that civilization and how war may act to destroy generations. To Raffo, the exact moment for Mullayah is her call to recover from the pain of trauma. Her ideals of Babylon and other pinpointed Iraqi icons should be out of risk. The long flashback is antiwar, anti-dehumanization, and anti-ignorance. Mullayah is different from most of the rest. Raffo chooses to raise the public opinion about the conflict of civilization that traumatizes the resourceful details. In wearing that 'abaya', Mullayah filters the other stories of the play by speaking chosen phrases from each one. Raffo's play was presented with nine parts, but the present study has mainly dealt with three monologues only. Here, the researcher has discussed three characters as representative of the wide-spread of suffering shown clearly through the stories of Layal, Um Ghada and Mullayah. Raffo, however, stresses that the trauma of war would certainly create disappointed people among whom millions of the enlisted within the sheets of dead or unrecovered mental and physical cases. Raffo opens gates for more questions about the traumatic impact of peoples' suffering which declares the severance of brutality.

### **Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife*: Traumatic Flashbacks**

At Out Front Theatre Company, Atlanta, *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright (2004) ran on March 14-30, 2019 as one person show. It is the first professional production to have a single trans performer who portrays all 35 characters. This Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning play is based on a true story inspired by interviews conducted by Doug Wright. It is based on the tale of Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf, a German trans woman who managed to survive both the Nazi onslaught and the repressive East German Communist party. It was that coincidence when an American journalist named John Mark discovered Charlotte's story and then passed it on to the American playwright friend Doug Wright who found much interest to explore professionally Charlotte's openly homosexual life style. Through his sequent visiting to Charlotte's home-like museum, Wright desirably was fascinated by the collection of historic German household items such as gramophones, clocks, vases, pictures, furniture, and things preserved from Nazis and the war.

*I Am My Own Wife* sheds light on an eccentric person of the current time, Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf, who was born in Berlin and lived behind the Berlin Wall under Nazism and later communism. The award-winning play was cleverly written due to multi interviews with Charlotte by Wright throughout the 1990's. Importantly, the play stresses on a set of heading points which are mostly seen as crucial and factual. Besides, the story's reality of a surviving woman out of war in the core-hurted city, the play thematically explores the current attitude of gender politics, the distorted reality about story-telling cases, the truth-seeking policy, and the accuracy of history events transformed by a commentary.

Through monologues, the character's speech goes not only through remembering the dark days of Nazi, warriors, survivors, and hard times, but also it addresses the tidbits and insights into a world which is utterly outlandish in the present time. In this sense, Wright stresses on such a remarkable story as a real tale that moved his audience and readers as well for it stages the beauty of reflecting the hurt, trauma of remembering the past, and the deep insight into the personal side of some people whom Wright does not think he is a part of their world.

The one-act man play presents cleverly one character for over thirty-five characters who masterfully manages to weave monologues, conversations, deep thoughts, talk-show hosts and themes, radio announcements, and news reports. Through these single performances, the traumatic remembrance of the East Berlin from the 1940's to the 1990's had passed by various places in Berlin that all held the flashback of decades.

### **Lothar Berfelde and Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf**

On March 18, 1928, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf was born in Berlin- Mahlsdorf as Lothar Berfelde, son of Max and Gretchan Berfelde. Although physically male, Lothar's soul attitudes were kept more toward femininity. He was interested in antiques through collecting things mostly unfit to his age. He took an opposite side of his father as the latter was a devoted member of Nazi party and then a leader. Among the traumatic collection of memories, Lothar admitted that he had beaten his abusive father to death in 1944 in self-defense to be subjected later to a psychiatric healing and eventually sentenced to four years as a juvenile delinquent.

Lothar's increasing interest in collecting historical items, his preferable eighteenth century mansion, and his work to restore the old building lined Lothar's life style after releasing from short-term prison due to the fall of the Nazi. He dressed in a feminine way and referred to himself as a woman adopting the name Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. In 1960, Charlotte opened a museum that displayed articles from the Grunderzeit period of Germany to be a favorite place for cinematic location, art gallery, a gathering for celebration, and gay circles. Charlotte's public involvement in German Stasi in 1991 encouraged the Neo-Nazis to attack the participants in one of *her* celebrations in the



museum. *She* died on April 30, 2002 to be memorialized of *her* first anniversary with the inscription “Ich bin meine eigene Frau” (I am my own wife) (WWW.milvankeerep.com)

### **Documentary Theatre and Traumatic Art in *I Am My Own Wife***

In the new millennium, particularly after September 11, many playwrights find in political theatre or political-documentary theatre a significant media for a significant change in theatre. However, on-stage plays of traumatic theatre are marked by well-professional monologues in which violence and trauma artistically might be perfectly played and significantly documented. *I Am My Own Wife* (2004), argues the reliability of monologues over thirty characters used as a means of communicating and examining trauma through oral way of expression.

Prominently, *I Am My Own Wife* got the Pulitzer Prize as the first one-person show to encourage Wright to declare his debt to the opportunity of meeting Charlotte through an interview with Gerard Raymond after winning the prize. Wright stated, “I keep calling my boyfriend every two hours and saying, ‘I still have my Pulitzer!’” (Gale 2). Explicitly, Wright is not pleased with his role in the play, but also he traces back his admiration to Charlotte as a gay figure who struggled to prove the case. He heavily puts a weight on Charlotte’s character when it was staged in silence and Charlotte started out at the audience to smile and to disappear again. Her reappearance gave the empty stage a necessary pause followed by the main interest of the character of the antique admirer and collector. Among them, the Edison phonograph was set down by Charlotte’s hands. Through her admirable gaze at the phonograph, Charlotte gives her talk to the audience about its history, development, and its unique use. The real figure of the phonograph came from Wright’s theatrical structure concern of moving the playwright’s thoughts forward with the real-like objects as part of the documentary drama. He dramatically connects between the preservation of history of real and antique objects, and human’s own decision of life line that Charlotte followed as transvestite who publically donned a dress before Nazism and then Communism.

Charlotte creates her own world of preserving antiques and self, and Wright creates in turn his self-confident role as the presenter of Mahlsdorf’s career. What drives Wright’s ambition for staging the personal line of real characters is what the audience’s desire to react with truth and history. And more, what was necessary to Wright is his determination to dramatize love, disillusion, historian needs, and the public acceptance of Charlotte as a transvestite. The performer Jefferson Mays’s skill played attractively 34 of the 35 character roles, wearing a simple black dress with pearls and showing them all, but one, like cross-dressed. As transgendered, Mays involves in Charlotte’s thoughts and the audience’s demand incorporation and sympathy. Differently, Mays moves in roles from a German News Ancher, Markus Kaumann, Ulrike Liptsch, and Ziggy Fluss, all of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf (Martin 7). Mays’s varied performance

gives the play a true parallel in living a documented history shaped by antiquity and human's inner thoughts.

Once again, Mays/Charlotte breaks her silence when she has been transformed into John Marks, the bureau chief of the Berlin office of U.S. News and her World Report. In her speech, John addresses Doug Wright via a letter which is read loudly about Charlotte and her living in Berlin. The role is headed towards Mahlsdorf where Charlotte lives near the East Berlin and turned to recall things about the Berlin Wall that has been torn down. Historically, the speech records how the wall witnessed waves of troubles and how people suffered that spiritual and physical separation. Traumatically, Wright scopes the recall of German people and that place uniqueness which was blended with lost thoughts by Nazism and Communism. Cleverly, the speech is shifted by John to Charlotte and her continuous will to hold antique things after every disaster in Berlin. Shifting the one-character conversation to Charlotte allows the talk to go through to Tante Luise and Cross-dressing. Through Tante Luise, Charlotte learned "about a book that states that everyone has various proportions of male and female elements in their bodies. Some people do not fit in the normally defined classifications, being neither fully male nor fully female" (Gale 2).

Not away from war trauma, Charlotte recalls the happenings of World War II when Berlin was under the Russian splatter bombs. Although the scene bears heavy pains of the damaged city and history, yet Charlotte simultaneously remembered how she was asked by the German S.S. officers whether *she* is a boy or a girl to recruit. To Charlotte, war is not only the phase of time full of damaging physical things, but it is that documented history when violence overwhelms human's spirit and thoughts. Significantly, trauma in *I Am My Own Wife* is embodied theatrically through the image of Charlotte's devoted father to Nazism, and the recalling of beating the father to death out of his brutality toward his son 'Lother'. Politically, the traumatic performance involves in the atmosphere of war during and after World War II, the Wall of Berlin and its separation between the East and West, and the coming of Communism.

The play's dramatic strategy for hitting trauma on stage is based primarily on the author alongside with the survivor who lives entirely traumatic situations. And more, the audience responds through an effective expression. David Bisaha in his article "Visualizing Postmemorial on Documentary Stages: Postmemorial Dramaturgies in Annulla: An Autobiography and *I Am My Own Wife*", argues that traumatic technique is functioned as a documentary approach structured by the effective involvement among the character survivor, the playwright, and the audience. This strategy of engagement describes an emotional response in a way of a hybrid method that creates a real appreciation for a traumatic situation from the audience part of non-witnesses. In the play, Wright reactivates and re-embodies what Charlotte witnessed and experienced through a familiar from expression. Charlotte remembers:

The Neo-Nazis were flailing away at the guest. Everything was happening with terrific speed. From close range with a flare gun, one particularly brave guy shot my second co-worker Sylvia in the face, right near the eye. A young woman from Munich wasn't so lucky he managed to hit her eye, badly damaging the retina. Then someone smashed a fence slat over the head of an eighteen-year-old girl. (Mahlsdorf 1)

The post memorial audience engagement draws a special relationship between Charlotte's experience as a survivor of the Nazis and the representative of the very recent generation. The historian Dominick LaCapra believes in what he calls "Vicarious Victimization", in which though he points the common sharing trauma of non-witnesses, yet traumatic flashback can truly affect the non-witness audience. In Wright's *I Am My Own Wife*, the traumatic transmission from the character to the audience can be also classified as a secondary traumatization when the audience feels closer to the trauma of the survivor and to the story of the past throughout the course of the play. The non-witness audience realizes how the story of Charlotte narrates the cruelty of Nazis and the violent nature of war: "I saw many deaths in the past days of the war, but this young woman shocked me the most-murdered for a few bottles of wine. May horror and pity and the feeling that I could be of no use made me linger for a few seconds" (Charlotte 61).

Through the monologues expressing Charlotte's life nature, the traumatic performance places Wright in uncertain sympathy with Charlotte's story when he discovered through interviews with her that she worked as Stasi spy (State Security Service) and her Stasi file indicates that Charlotte was assured protection by informing on friends she hosted in her bar and meeting place gays and lesbians during the communist regime. Hence, the documentary mode of *I Am My Own Wife* assumes the search for the correct account of the private life of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf and the public environment of Nazi violence during World War II, and later the Communism. The nature of the dramatic action and the emotional atmosphere of the play released Wright's talent to zoom out the human case that records and preserves the past shaped by transgenerating mode and raised issue of human fundamental freedom. The play also encouraged other writers to foreground questions of reality. Nels Highberg emphasizes that the play offers a sort of truth that cannot be denied nor ignored and Wright brought of this reality to the audience traumatically with a sense of much possibility or less doubt in the defined truth of Charlotte. Michal Schiavi confirms that *I am My Own Wife* brings that reality of retelling events which is typically related to biodrama (Bisaha 184-9). However, Highberg and Schiavi identify the true relation between Charlotte and the play audience which is carefully examined the audience's trust and sympathy.

The reciprocal relationship between Charlotte's story and her viewers shifts successfully to the significant role of Wright to function dramatically that relation into another reciprocal trauma that Wright and Charlotte shared. Hence, what is staged is not only Charlotte's private recalling, but also Wright's own involvement in believing

in Charlotte's turning life path question toward transgendering and history preservation. Moreover, Wright articulates his own motivation to discover more about Charlotte's family and the possible similarity between his own and that of Charlotte. Wright admitted through his interviews with Charlotte that her private life has brought truth and knowledge that he never knew before or identify. He writes a letter thanking Charlotte: "All I can think about is the story of your life ... you are teaching me a history I never knew I had" (Wright). In an interview, Wright connects his interest to know about gay history with his own family attitude toward gay mode:

When you're growing up as a gay child, you rarely have strong role models. Although this is changing, straight parents raise almost every gay child, so in a funny way your parents are never fully equipped to educate you about the challenges that life will pose for you. Charlotte felt-in many ways-like a parent I never had. (Stanescu 101)

In that, Wright admits how Charlotte might actually fit into his real-life family: "There were many synchronicities: Charlotte was an avowed antique collector like my father. She was a homosexual person, as I am. She also had a grandmotherly quality that reminded me of my own grandma" (Stanescue 107).

## **Conclusion**

Through monologue techniques, both plays *Nine Parts of Desire* and *I Am My Own Wife* show deeply the traumatic results of war and severe experiences practiced or experienced by the characters. In the play presented by Raffo, the one-woman show magnificently asserts that the play "Lifts the Veil" on the deep suffering of Iraqi women in wartime and after. The play dramatizes nine figures of women to shed light on the deep suffering that might be not highlighted forever. In Wright's *I Am My Own Wife* and through the playwright's personal echo, the traumatic tragedy presented through Charlotte identifies the specific context of the playwright himself. The play dramatizes his personality as well. It establishes a documentary staging technique for the character and the author extending that choice into the audience thoughts and access. Yet, most importantly, Wright and Charlotte are characters of similar stage influence and history in that both are present in the body of the monologue actor. Studying these plays, marks the case in which trauma is studied as a personal and the considerable effects of the problems which go beyond the personal; it can be explained into cultural.

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