

Traumatic Experiences in Colum McCann's "Apeirogon"

Stephanus Remy Irawan

Universitas Pamulang
E-mail: rexy4527@gmail.com

Abstract

This study analyzed the trauma of the two main characters caused by traumatic experiences in the novel Apeirogon by Colum McCann. It explained how the trauma is portrayed in which it is explained as traumatized responses that the two main characters experienced. It used psychoanalytic perspectives of trauma from Cathy Caruth and qualitative approach to create the analysis. The theory was used to classify the responses of trauma that the two main characters showed. The responses of trauma analyzed are disruption, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. The responses were classified based on how the two main characters respond the trauma including having negative and intrusive thoughts, flashbacks and dreams, avoiding things, places and people, and having negative feelings. The data were collected by highlighting the relevant events that were narrated in the novel. The study also aimed to find out how the two main characters deal with the trauma that affects their daily life. The result has found out that the two main characters have shown the three responses of trauma in the novel and it also has found out the connection of traumatized people in which it leads the two main characters to use the force of their grief to deal with the trauma.

Keywords: *avoidance, disruption, fictional devices, hyper-arousal, traumatic experience*

A. Introduction

Experiencing a traumatic event can make a huge impact on someone's life because once people experienced it, their behaviors change and maybe they will never be the person they used to be. Trauma can be caused of events or accidents that give a serious impact to people lives, for example in the situation of Covid-19 outbreak. It has given a huge impact to people all over the world. Based on the data from WHO (World Health Organization), since the beginning of 2020 until the middle of July 2022, there are more than six millions deaths caused by the outbreaks in all over the world (WHO, 2022). The number increases constantly. It is because of the ability of the virus that can spread through the air that makes the virus can be easily transmitted to other people. It makes people get sick and even lead them to death.

Not only the Pandemic Covid-19 can cause physical health problem, but it also

can cause a serious mental health problem. It is because there are so many impacts caused by the pandemic including for people that have lost their beloved ones because of it. The loss can lead them into mental health issues such as feeling of anxiety, depression and loneliness, including trauma. As Steven Taylor stated, mental health problem such as depression and serious grief may happen to people that have lost their beloved ones during a pandemic, (Taylor, 2017). The pandemic has made all of people more terrified because of there is no exact time when it will ends. It seems as if pandemic has taken many things from people and left nothing but suffering.

The word trauma may be associated with violent events that people experience, but the definition of trauma itself has been explained in many ways. It came from Greek that means injury or wound. It is first used for physical injuries but now it refers to emotional wounds. There are many different ways that people can react and respond trauma, such as feeling helpless, numb and disconnected, having trust issues, and struggling with upsetting emotions, memories, and anxiety. It depends on how bad the traumatic event affects the individual and how the individual's ability to handle the damage. Some people who experience traumatic events can take days to be recovered, some can take months, some can take years, and even the others can never be healed.

Traumatic event commonly affects people to have a range of strong emotions after the event, and it is out of our ability to cope and integrate emotions involved with the experience. Caruth (1995) stated that trauma is a kind of responses that happens outside the range of usual human experience and people who experienced traumatic events will always be haunted by never-ending fear. Trauma makes an interruption and reorientation of consciousness, and the values that is attached to this experience, are influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time. It can be said that trauma can be something that cannot be fully known because it can change depend on various factors that affect it.

Trauma can also be defined as a terrible event or an accident experienced by people that causes many bad feelings that can last for long time or even forever. Sigmund Freud (1920) stated that people experience trauma when there is a disruption of protective barrier in our mind which protects us from harmful and painful excessive simulation. Although there have been many people defined trauma from different perspectives. Trauma has always been unsolved problem until now because of its complexity that needs to be explained clearly. The history of the idea of trauma is full of contradictory theories and arguments from both psychologists and literary scholars that make various definition of trauma and its impacts. Literary trauma theory seeks to identify "trauma texts" that employ intertextuality, repetition, fragmentation, and language manipulation to create meaning due to extreme traumatic stress. Many experts shaped the idea of trauma as an unrepresentable event. In the field of literature, trauma is depicted as the unspoken wound of human that is explained through traumatic narration.

This study is about analyzing one of Colum McCann's finest literary works, *Apeirogon* (2020), from psychoanalytic perspective which is specifically focused on the concept of trauma in the book. This is a great novel because Colum McCann mixes fictional and nonfictional materials to gain different scenes which make this book complex. The name of the novel is taken from a shape with a countably infinite

number of sides. The story of the novel is about the friendship between a Palestinian, Bassam Aramin, and an Israeli, Rami Elhanan, who share their struggles to each other in building communities that fight for peace. Both main characters have lost their daughters in tragic ways. Rami lost his thirteen-year-old daughter, Smadar Elhanan, by a suicide bomber at Ben Yehuda Street on September 1997, and Bassam lost his ten-year-old daughter, Abir Aramin, by a rubber bullet that was shot by a member of border police outside her school on January 2007. They both try to stop the unbreakable circle by telling people and strangers they met about the story of their daughters who are the victims of the people who are ruled hatred. The novel contains many elements of traumatic, and also a unique way to read to change the reader perspectives about how the storytelling works. The novel is analyzed from the trauma the two main characters experienced and the way the two main characters face the trauma by connecting people

In creating literary works, writers use many components to make their works great. Some of the components that should be included in literary works are fictional devices. According to StudySmarter, Fictional devices are actually components of fiction that are used to conduct a reasonable story or narrative ("Fictional Devices," n.d, para. 3). They can help the writer or reader to make sense of the story and its parts. There are elements of fiction that are included such as plot, character and characterization, setting, and point of view.

Plot is how the author tells events in the story that is used to develop basic idea that the author has. It connects events that make up a narrative in a novel. It contains a beginning, middle, and end. It is simply the storyline and events of the story which make sequence of the story. According to Hale (2009), plot is something that can be abstracted for serious reasons, from the moral qualities of the characters and the operations of their thought. This is just the object continuity of the story considered in relation to the general pleasure we take in any fiction when our curiosity about the impending events is aroused, sustained, and then satisfied to a degree or in a manner we could not anticipate. Plot is also connected to the character in a novel because it can build up the character based on how the story is told. There are some types of plot that are commonly known such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Setting is also one of the main parts of fictional elements. It is about where and when a story is told. According to Birkerts (1993), setting refers to both physical location and time of where the story happens. Setting can influence the characters and how they behave. There can be multiple settings that occur in a story. Setting can include geographic region, climate, date, time, and architecture, and also aspects of culture and society such as language, politics, and fashion.

Point of view is described as the angle of how the story is told. It is where the author wants the readers see the story from. It simply can be defined as the way the writer sees and puts himself in the story. According to StudySmarter, point of view shows the perspectives of which the story is narrated ("Fictional Devices," n.d, para. 31). There are three points of view that are usually used in a story. These are first person, second person, and third person. The first person point of view is the way the narrator puts himself as the person that tells the story from his own point of view. It

usually uses the word “I and We” when the narrator speaks. The second person point of view is a way a writer uses to tell a story which action is taken by the reader. It usually uses the word “You” to address the reader. The third person point of view is the way the narrator relates the action of the characters by mentioning to their names or using the words “He, She, or They”.

Character is what a writer uses to perform the actions in a story such as speaking dialogue, moving, or showing gestures and expression. According to Minderop (2005), Character can be a person, society, race, mental and moral manner, qualities of reasoning, famous people, figures in literary works, reputation and signs or letters. In a story, there should at least one character to make a complete story. Mostly, stories have many characters interacting to one another. Characterization is the way the characters in a story described. It includes the personality of characters and how it is shown in the story. It also takes a huge role in explaining ideas, themes, plots, and motives in a story. Minderop also stated that characterization is a method used to depict personality of character in literary fictional works.

In 1995, the approach of trauma studies in literary criticism has taken huge consideration that Cathy Caruth made by publishing her creation untitled, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. The concept of trauma as an unrepresentable event has been popularized by many scholars bringing up other perspectives about how the concept of trauma is depicted. Caruth introduced a theoretical trend about a psychoanalytic post-structural approach that says trauma as an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language. Traumatic events are repressed into the unconscious part of the mind, where they can influence the behavior and personality of human. Caruth have defined trauma:

Trauma is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (Caruth, 1995, p. 4)

Trauma is difficult to know because of its definition which has not been fully known. It is also because of its occurrence which takes the form of belatedness. Caruth has claimed that the traumatic responses may paradoxically occur not because the reality of the traumatic event but because of the inability of the victims to know fully the reason of the event, (Caruth, 1996). It can be said that the repetitive response of trauma comes because it is beyond the victims’ understanding. It is also because of the characteristic of trauma in which it is related to the belatedness and incomprehensibility.

The delayed responses of trauma may occur in many different forms. Caruth believes that the delayed response of trauma takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucination, dreams, thoughts, or behaviors that comes from the event. Sometimes, the responses can be seen clearly from people traumatized people through their daily lives. She stated that the appearance of the responses in people can be seen as some

forms such as disruption, avoidance, and hyper-arousal, (Caruth, 1995). Traumatized people may react to traumatic event differently. It may depend on how impactful the trauma that people receive and how strong the individual's ability to cope with it.

Disruption is a response of trauma. It can come to haunt the traumatized people repeatedly in forms intrusive thoughts such as re-experiencing responses, nightmares, and flashbacks. Traumatized people will not be easy to get out from the situation of disruption because it come and haunt the survivors unpredictably. Cathy Caruth stated that one of the responses of trauma is the disturbing thought which takes form of nightmares, flashbacks, or somatic reactions, (Caruth, 1995). Traumatized people who experience this response may feel fear, anxiety, depression, and guilt. The inability of traumatize people to understand this response of trauma can affect their activities in their lives through mood changing.

Avoidance is one of the responses of trauma that is commonly seen in traumatized people. It is behavior that people do to escape or distract themselves from negative thoughts, feelings, and situations. It can be seen from the way people try to avoid things that can trigger their trauma. Erin Martz stated that avoidance is a kind of defensive response that is used to cope with stressors that occurs in facing trauma and negative effect, (Martz, 2010). The avoidance may include avoiding places, people, sounds, smells, activities, and situations. It can be good for the victims because it can make them to avoid negative output and it also can be bad for the victims because it can also lead them to have bad feelings that affect their behavior such as feeling disconnected to others, sadness, guilt, shame and frustration.

Hyper-rousal is a kind of trauma responses that makes people with trauma often in high alert condition on receiving any unwanted feeling. It often occurs because traumatized people feel unsafety about things around them, even though the things they imagine may not happen. Cathy Caruth stated that during the high arousal the survivor tends to choose familiar behavior because they feel afraid avoid something new whatever the output they will get. Physiological arousal leads to the events, nightmares, flashbacks, and reenactments of traumatic experiences in people that are released by visual and motoric, (Caruth, 1995). People who experience the response of hyper-arousal may have bad feelings and emotions such as irritability, panic, irrationality, hypervigilance, constant anxiety, guilt, shame, mistrust and scare. The negative feelings and emotions caused by hyper-arousal may lead the victims to many negative behaviors such as getting offended easily, having negative assumption on things and people, having sudden mood changing and it may also lead to self-destructive behaviors such as drinking alcohol, taking drugs, and etc.

The responses of trauma occur in the victims differently as it is shown from the explanation above. Cathy Caruth stated that in its general definition, trauma is such an overwhelming and unpredictable event or destructive events that the response of the event such as repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena that often come delayed, (Caruth, 1996). It can be concluded that people can have various responses depend on how their minds respond to the events and the response which they experienced is actually in a form of delayed response that comes after the traumatic events. She also stated that people who experience traumatic events may have hallucination that come and haunt the victims repeatedly and unpredictably.

It means that the belatedness of trauma will not only come once to haunt the victims but they will come unnoticed in various times continuously.

Caruth emphasized that what comes to haunt the victims of trauma is actually not any event but it is specifically the shocking and unexpected occurrence of an accident. The concept of trauma itself is never fully known as if it gives opportunities to new thoughts of the concept of trauma as time goes on. People who experienced traumatic events in their life will suffer with the traumatic thoughts and it is never be easy for traumatized people to get out of the terrible events they passed through, and they sometime can feel each other from the way they communicate it to others. In her study, Caruth also described that “trauma is never simply one’s own and one’s own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s trauma” (Caruth., 1996, p. 24). She believes that it is possible too for traumatized people to connect and understand how traumatic event is felt from the one’s own trauma by listening to their speech about their wound.

B. Method

The writer uses qualitative method to conduct and finish the writing. “qualitative research method is a research method which is classified by the search for meaning and understanding that makes the researcher as the major element of data collection and analysis” (Merriam and Grenier, 2019, p. 6). Qualitative research method can also mean non-numerical data which focuses in understanding concepts, opinion, thoughts, or experiences in the object used for the study. The writing also uses narrative analysis which is used to analyze the story of the novel from the characters’ internal thoughts. The author focuses on the condition that the two major characters experienced in which it can be characterized psychologically as trauma in the novel.

The data taken is from the novel entitled *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann published in 2020. The novel is used as the object of the analysis. The novel contains the traumatic aspects that is analyzed from psychoanalytic perspective and the theory used. The data is also taken from theory books by Cathy Caruth untitled *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). The other supporting data collected are from sources such as books, essays, article journals, articles, and other related sources. All of the data taken are first identified by the author to make sure that they are appropriate and related to be used in the analysis.

In collecting data, the writer firstly read the literary work, which is novel entitled *Apeirogon*, that is used as the object of the study. After reading the whole story in the novel, the writer looked for the issues that are portrayed in the novel. The writer formulated the dominant issue that is used as the topic of the analysis. After getting the dominant issue, the writer looked for the quotations that showed evidences of the issue to strengthen the analysis and marked on each quotation to make them easy to find. The writer then classified the quotations based on the theory used in the analysis.

The analysis of the novel entitled *Apeirogon* uses psychoanalytic perspective from Cathy Caruth. The analysis focused on the two main characters, Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin. It focused on the traumatic experiences that the two main characters show in the novel. The analysis of the traumatic experiences in the novel,

was obtained from analyzing the setting, plot, and conflict which contain the elements of study. The analysis described the conflict or issue about trauma. The trauma was defined and classified based on the responses that the two main characters show. The analysis also explained about how the two main characters deal with the trauma that caused their lives by connecting one of the characteristics of trauma that is explained in the theory book.

C. Findings and Discussion

Traumatic Experience Portrayed in the Apeirogon novel

The disruption responses of trauma of the two main characters are analyzed by each character. The analysis of traumatic experiences first started from one of the main character, Rami Elhanan. He is an Israeli and a seventh-generation Jerusalemite, a graduate of the Holocaust. He served the Israeli Army when he was a young man. He has stopped to be a soldier and started to be a graphic designer. The analysis is started to be explained from his traumatic experience in the quotation below.

Foolishly, at the beginning, I thought I could go on with my life, pretending as if nothing had happened. I got up, brushed my teeth, I tried to lead a normal life, went back to my studio, to draw, to make posters, to create slogans, to forget. But it didn't work. Nothing was normal anymore. I wasn't the same person. I had no idea how to get up in the morning. (McCann, 2020, p. 221)

The quotation shows the delayed response of trauma. It is depicted from the way Rami thought about the effect of the shocking event he experienced. He, at first, assumed that he could go back to his life normally or handle the pain he felt easily. He also thought that he could pretend as if nothing happens and he could live a normal life and get back to his routine normally. He tried to do that in order to forget the fact that his life will not go back to normal. In fact, the terrible response of trauma will not be felt directly by people, but it haunts people later on as Rami points out when he realized that his life will not be like it used to be. He even, as it is stated in the quotation, had no idea how to get up in the morning which could affect his routine because the event traumatized him. People with trauma will not realize until its response affect them. He tried to not think of the event by doing his daily activities as a graphic designer, but he ends up being in sorrow because he realizes that the disruptions that come repeatedly affect his life.

The sound of the rollers on the cold metal tray. The slide of the plastic shoe covers on the shiny tile floor. The soft hiss of the refrigerator door sealing behind them. The morgue, then, silent as Rami walked through. (McCann, 2020, p. 45)

The quotation above tells about how Rami can exactly remember the sounds which he heard in the hospital when he walked through the morgue. It is also narrated

in the following quotation, “I can still hear the slide of the rollers on that cold metal tray” (McCann, 2020, p. 48). This explains how one of the responses of trauma affects him because of the definition of trauma in which it cannot be easily forgotten by the victims. The response of trauma that Rami showed from the quotations above can be classified as the response of disruption. It is because the depiction of trauma as intrusive thoughts that comes to haunt Rami repeatedly in a form of memory of his traumatic experience.

The other disruption responses of trauma are analyzed from the other main character, Bassam Aramin. He is a Palestinian academic that is interested to study Holocaust. He is also a freedom fighter that fought for Palestinian when he was a young man and he spent seven years in an Israeli jail because of that. The analysis is started to be explained from his traumatic experience in the quotation below.

To this day, Bassam is haunted by his daughter’s candy bracelet. In the hospital he was met by the taxi driver and the shopkeeper who had traveled in the back with Abir. Abir’s shoe had been slipped back on her foot, but the candy bracelet had disappeared: it was not in her hand, not on her wrist, not in her pockets. (McCann, 2020, p. 14)

The quotation above tells how Bassam is haunted by the trauma of the loss of his daughter. He remembers the things his daughter, Abir Aramin, did before her death. The candy bracelet Abir held before she was shot in the back of her head by a member of border police outside her school makes Bassam unable to forget the critical situation of before his daughter died. It shows that the response of trauma comes to haunt Bassam unremittingly as a memory of the candy bracelet that had disappeared which he wished Abir had a chance to eat. The response of trauma that Bassam shows in the quotation above can be classified as disruption because it tells how the traumatic event is tied to his life and how it comes to haunt him repeatedly even until the present time. Another evidence of disruption can also be seen in the following quotation.

I try to understand it too. It’s so difficult to explain. I still sit in that ambulance every day. I keep waiting for it to move. Every day she gets killed again and every day I sit in the ambulance, willing it to move, please move, please please please, just go, why are you staying here, let’s just go. Rami was in the hospital, waiting for us. He put his arms to my shoulders. We had no idea what was in store for us. (McCann, 2020, p. 241)

The quotation above shows how Bassam explains how he could not get out from the response of trauma that haunts him. Although he tries to understand and explain what happened, it still comes repeatedly beyond his understanding and ability to cope with it. The trauma is depicted as the way Bassam could not get out in the situation when Abir was being taken to hospital. He wanted to change what had happened. He wished Abir was taken to the hospital earlier so that she may be still alive. The terrible situation, that traumatized him, is narrated clearly by Bassam as if he is taken back to the situation when he was at the ambulance that brought Abir, hoping that it move so that he could still save her. The narration also explains the response of disruption that

happens to Bassam as a form of flashback that come repeatedly and unexpectedly.

Avoidance is another response of trauma that can commonly be seen in traumatized people. It is how people with trauma avoid things, places, feelings and thoughts that can trigger the memory of traumatic experience they have past. It is used as defensive response to face the trauma. Although, it benefits the victims, it may lead them to have negative effects such as feeling disconnected, sadness guilt, shame, frustration and etc. The avoidance can be seen in the evidences below.

My job included bringing in ammunition and taking out the dead and wounded. I lost some of my very close friends, carried them out on stretchers. I emerged from the war bitter, angry, disappointed, with just one thing on my mind—to detach myself from any kind of involvement or commitment, to block myself off from anything official at all. (McCann, 2020, p. 217)

The quotation above explains about Rami's duty as in the military that caused him a traumatic memory. He explains that he was ordered to bring in ammunition and taking out the dead and wounded. He had seen and lost many of his close friends in the war. He also had a responsibility to carry them out on stretchers. His experience in the military service had left him a huge impact on his mind because he had witnessed many terrible things during his duty. He argued that there is nothing the war left him, except bitterness, anger and disappointment. Avoidance occurs as a response of trauma that the victims of trauma experience in order to distract themselves from the pain by avoiding some things that may trigger it. From the quotation above, it can be concluded that Rami has shown the avoidance response when he finally decided to stop getting involved in any kind of official duty. It is because he knew that it will only recall the past memories and bring out the pain he suffered from.

Another portrayal of avoidance is also found in the following quotation, "After the bombing Rami took long and frequent showers so Nurit couldn't hear the sound of his sobbing" (McCann., 2020, p. 320). The quotation explains the sorrow that Rami feel after the loss of his daughter. The avoidance response of trauma also can be seen in this quotation. It is depicted in how Rami tried to avoid showing his suffer to others. He took long and frequent showers to avoid being known by his wife. He tried to hide his feeling either to avoid bringing up the feeling of sadness more in him or in the others who see him. Traumatized people who show the response of avoidance usually try to be disconnected and socially isolated to anyone because of the anxiety which appears as a nightmare that haunt them and make them afraid of intrusive thoughts that may occur from things they try to avoid. It can be concluded that Rami has shown the avoidance response which he did to avoid the things to get worse.

The other character also shows the response of avoidance. The avoidance is portrayed through Bassam's daily life. It is explained from the analysis of the narration below.

When they finally moved to the house in Jericho, they packed up their car, hefted their belongings down the steps, and filled a trailer with clothes and furniture. On

the way out they avoided the road where Abir had been shot. (McCann, 2020, p. 314)

The quotation above tells about Bassam and his family when they wanted to move to a new house in Jericho. It shows how Bassam tried to avoid the road where his daughter had been shot in the back of her head. He did that as if he was afraid the place could bring back the pain he tried to forget. He knew that it was not going to be easy for him and his family to remember the terrible event that had happened. It explains that Bassam showed avoidance because he did not want to take a risk by avoiding the unforgettable place that caused so much pain to him until the present time.

Hyper-arousal is the other response of trauma. It is a response of trauma that makes traumatized people often in high alert condition. It makes the victims of trauma to always feel unsafe every time there is any unwanted feeling. The victims may also be afraid and irritable of something new that comes to their life. Hyper-arousal may occur when the victims of trauma are afraid that something may bring their traumatic memory back. The responses of hyper-arousal can be seen in the following quotations below.

After a while the blimp began to press down further upon him, like a light hand upon his chest, the pressure growing firmer, until all Rami wanted to do was find a place where he could not be seen. It was so often like this. The desire to vanish. To have all of it gone in a single smooth motion. To wipe it all clean. (McCann, 2020, p. 35)

The quotation above shows about Rami's feeling when he looked at the blimp that rose over Jerusalem. The blimp has triggered Rami's emotion. It made Rami feel angry because he assumed that there are many cameras in it and it is used to control everything from the sky. It happens because after his daughter passed away, because of the tragedy of suicide bombing, he thought that what happened to his daughter was the result of what the government has been doing. He supposed, everyone that caused the never-ending chaos are supposed to take the responsibility. Rami has shown the hyper-arousal response in which he explains his desire to vanish and wipe everything away in a single smooth motion.

Not only Rami but also Bassam shows the response of hyper-arousal. It can be seen from the quotation below.

The very bone of my heart was rattling. And so I asked him, in Hebrew, if he had a child. And he stared at me and said, "Yes, I have a son." So I said to him that I would give him four hundred thousand dollars and all he had to do was give me his son. "Why?" he said. And I said: "So I can kill him and forget about it." His face, you should have seen it. (McCann, 2020, p. 240)

This quotation shows a response of hyper-arousal that Bassam experienced. It is because of the anger that Bassam showed to an Israeli man that tried to mock him by asking him as if he tried to win the court to get money from it. The anger that he

showed can be seen when he asked the man that he want to give him the money by only giving his son to Bassam to be killed. The angriness that he showed can be classified as a response of hyper-arousal because of the trauma he felt that made him offended. He did that in order to silence him because he was terrified. The trauma had made Bassam mood changed even when he should be happy because he had won the court and brought justice for his daughter. He could probably leave the man that asked him nonsensical questions but he chose to shut him up.

From the analysis above, it can be concluded that the two main characters have experienced trauma from the traumatic event in their past. It is because of the responses of trauma that were found in the evidences in the novel. The evidences have shown that each main character has experienced the three responses of trauma response; disruption, avoidance, and hyper-arousal. Both main characters show the responses through their live differently.

The main characters deal with the trauma in the Apeiogon novel

The analysis of this part is firstly about Rami, one of the main characters, who struggle to deal with the trauma he has experienced. It starts from the beginning of his story struggling with the trauma, until he found the way to handle and reduce the response of trauma he felt.

I went inside to meet these people. And here they were, and they were shaking my hand, hugging me, crying with me. I was so deeply touched, so deeply moved. It was like a hammer on my head cracking me open. An organization of the bereaved. Israeli and Palestinian, Jew, Christian, Muslim, atheist, you name it. (McCann, 2020, p. 223)

The quotation above shows that Rami felt shocked at the first time he went to the meeting. It is because everyone in the room showed their condolences to each other as if they know exactly how it feels to be the others. The situation continued when they started to share everything to each other as it is shown in the quotation below.

Together. In one room. Sharing their sorrow. Not using it, or celebrating it, but sharing it, saying that it is not a decree of faith that we should live forever with a sword in our hands. I cannot tell you what sort of madness it seemed. And I was completely cleaved open. It was like a nuclear event. Truly, it seemed mad. (McCann, 2020, p. 223)

This quotation explains that Rami felt something that made his anger stop completely. He thought that he could finally feel open to people when they were shocking him because they did some things that he never thought they would do to him such as shaking his hand, hugging him, and even crying with him. People with various backgrounds came to the same meeting to meet the others that have the same mission. The mission is to fight for peace and strengthen each other in the same grief. It has made him feel touched. At this time, Rami began to think that he was not alone. They talked and shared their sorrow to feel the same feelings. They found the

connection of traumatized people and started using it as a weapon to strengthen each other. It is possible to have the connection in people who experienced traumatic events by listening to each other because of the definition of trauma that said it is never simply an individual's own. The meeting felt shocking and magical at the same time to Rami because it took him to understand that there are people who felt the feelings he had been feeling. His perspective completely changed. He began to think that it was okay for him to have feelings of grief and sorrow because at the end, he felt that he was not alone.

The meeting of Parents Circle that Rami attended led him to feel the feeling of acceptance. He was finally open to his terrible experience. He did not feel that he was alone anymore because he had met and found the connection of people who had the same grief as his. The feeling of acceptance teaches people another way to respond the trauma by accepting the painful events they experience to help to pursue a meaning full outcome. Rami felt the acceptance and started to think the opposite way. It is shown as the following narrations below.

The next part is the analysis about Bassam, one of the main characters. It shows the way he tried to deal with the trauma that he have experienced. It starts from the first time he experienced the terrible event, until he found the way he could do to reduce and accept the pain he suffered from.

I needed to do something. People needed to know what was going on. So I joined the Parents Circle just days after Abir passed away. My life became my message. I flung myself into it. It made perfect sense to me. I began traveling with Rami, all over, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Beit Jala, talking, talking, talking. We had a mission. The force of our grief. We would not use our memories to take revenge. (McCann, 2020, p. 239)

This quotation explains that Bassam finally joined the Parents Circle. It shows that he tried to channel the trauma he felt to other things. He tried to put the energy on the useful things not to the trauma he has. The community helped him to face the feeling he had. It also helped him to think that he will never be alone because he and the other members told and shared their stories to each other so they can have the same feeling. They strengthened each other and make Bassam begin to think that his life has a purpose. He showed that after he joined the community, he knew what he has to do. He decided to do something instead of being always in his pain.

D. Conclusion

This study is an analysis of trauma experienced by the two main characters and how they deal with the trauma from the novel entitle *Apeirogon* by Colum McCann. The story is about Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, the two main characters, who have experienced trauma from the loss of their daughter. It explains he trauma that haunts them over and over again through their daily life. The traumatic experiences are narrated from the narration and dialogues in the novel. They are narrated from various points of view. The traumatic experiences of the two main characters can be classified based on the Cathy Caruth approach from her book entitled *Trauma*:

Explorations in Memory and Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. The theory is used to define the trauma and its characteristics. This study analyzed the trauma from Rami and Bassam. The way the two main characters struggle with the repeated responses of trauma which came to them unpredictably has been discussed in this study. The trauma is classified by its characteristic in which its repeated response often comes delayed. The analysis explains how difficult it is for both Rami and Bassam to live their life with the response of trauma that comes to them in various times.

The portrayals of trauma responses that are found from the analysis are disruption, avoidance and hyper-arousal. The responses include having flashback and hallucination, re-experiencing the traumatic events, avoiding things, people and places, having trouble of sleeping, and having negative feelings and moods. The responses affect the two main characters differently. Both Rami and Bassam experienced the three responses of trauma. Rami has shown the responses of trauma in the forms of disruption and hyper-arousal more than Bassam. Bassam has shown the response of avoidance more than Rami. Both Rami and Bassam have shown the responses of trauma differently because of their ability to handle the pain they received from their traumatic experiences.

The analysis has also shown how the two main characters deal with the trauma by using the characteristic of trauma in which it connects to one another. It can be seen from the way Rami and Bassam face the reality that they could not change and try to accept it by the help of people around them who have the same grief as theirs. The result has shown that the two main characters have grown with their communities to help them to accept everything and start to build the connection of feeling in people. The Parent Circle and Combatant for Peace have taken a huge part of the development the self of the two main characters that grow their ability to deal with the trauma. The connection of their feeling also makes them to see force of their grief in different perspectives.

E. References

- Caruth, C. (1995). *Explorations in memory*. Baltimore/London.
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns.
- Martz, E. (2010). *Trauma and Rehabilitation after War and Conflict* (pp. 2245-2252). New York, NY: Springer
- McCann, Colum. (2020). *Apeirogon*, New York: Random House.
- Merriam, S. B., & Grenier, R. S. (Eds.). (2019). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Minderop, A. (2005). *Metode karakterisasi telaah fiksi*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- StudySmarter. (n.d). Fictional Devices. <https://www.studysmarter.co.uk/school/english-literature/literary->

[devices/fictional-devices/](#)

Taylor, S. (2017). *Clinician's guide to PTSD: A cognitive-behavioral approach*. Guilford Publications.

World Health Organization. (2022, July 11). WHO Coronavirus (Covid-19) Dashboard. <https://covid19.who.int/>