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Historical Trauma in Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Pradip Wagle has completed his thesis entitled “Historical Trauma in Norman Mailer’s *Why Are We in Vietnam?*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 22nd November, 2008 A.D to 28th April, 2009. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voice.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled, “Historical Trauma in Norman Mailer’s, *Why Are We in Vietnam?*” submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U. by Pradip Wagle has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* examines America's 'delivery' of civilization where Mailer draws a dread parallel between the Vietnam war and the Alaskan safari. America went to Vietnam to 'deliver' civilization to the 'uncivilized' Vietnamese but ended up in the 'killings' of innocent people. America's discourse of civilization thus, became a tool of violence and exercising power up on the innocent Vietnamese citizens.

The characters of this novel go to Vietnam from America in order to civilize the innocent Vietnamese to forget their terrible and dreadful past and search for a spiritual solace, but their suffering does not get over, cannot get relief from suffering and then they are beset with their traumatic experiences.

This present research on *Why Are We in Vietnam?* by Norman Mailer attempts to show a vivid portrayal of traumatic experience of modern American life triggered by the violent act of American's in the Alaskan Brooks Range through the means of characters deteriorated traumatic condition. This novel identifies war and its destruction and frustrated American life where spirituality is defeated in surge of the materialism leading toward the traumatic dread. Here, Mailer portrays and explores the doomed way of human psyche and the dark side of human life which is reflected in the form of flash backs, nightmares and other repeated phenomena.

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I. Introduction

Traumatic vision in Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*

Why Are We in Vietnam? by Norman Mailer is a war literary work where the writer portrays the war and its destruction, characters rootless ridge where spirituality is defeated or vanished and leading towards the traumatic dread. Mailer in this very work picturizes out the traumatic vision through the actual depiction of the chaotic society. Almost all the characters of the novel are either haunted by the traumatic ghost or bitterly suffered by disillusioned scenario, devastated and frustrated world view. In other words, the novel's setting, characters activities, their involvement in fighting lead the novels direction towards traumatic vision. Not only the major characters of the novel are fallen in traumatic circle but also others are also in the whirlpool of trauma. Mailer also picturizes the traumatic situation through the portrayal of disintegrated and alienated characters.

Why Are We in Vietnam? is about a violent and vulgar narrative of a bear-hunt trip in Alaska. The hunting and killing of animals in Alaska Brooks Range are mentioned through out the story. Disc Jockey, (D.J) the central character, or hero, or a narrator in the story novel. The basic symptoms of trauma recur in the novel in the form of nightmares, flash backs, distorted memory and other repetitive phenomena. Because of these repetitive phenomena, traumatic figure increases irritability, failure of trusting people and aimlessness and the destructiveness. The novel is filled with these characteristics in this sense and it is it is not far from traumatic vision. Mailers literary world is world of war which brings destruction, horror, violence death and disorder. Regarding this fact into consideration, the present researcher carries out research from traumatic approach.

The novel especially concerns America's involvement in Vietnam from 1973 to 1973 in the name of soothing the conflict between north and South Vietnam. The novel therefore should be read along with reference to the Vietnam War. Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* show the Americas dream of hope, agreement, and success turned into violence, corrupt, evil, chaos, brutality and vulgarity.

Disc jockey, the narrator and hero of the novel is haunted by nightmares, and flashbacks to scenes of unimaginable horror which is the essence of trauma. This sort of thing also applies in the case of other characters activities. Their life is triggered by the war. Throughout the novel the characters suffering donot get any kind of solution rather deteriorated because of the traumatic experiences of the war. Traumatic shocks block their attempt to get release from suffering. The novel clearly shows the activities of traumatic figure.

Disc Jockey shows the bitter war in the novel in which the sort of problem is undoubtedly the traumatic problem. The wounds, bitter war experiences and situation makes the characters painful. The traumatic event shocks him.

The novel is a dramatization of miserable and frustrated character. Disc Jockey, the hero of the novel and other characters are wondering and losing their values in Vietnam. The hope of beautiful life of the character is deemed or it is limited only in the imaginative world, in real world it is dying out . Every where they find not more than misery, pain, frustration, hopelessness, anxiety and disillusionment and everytime they want to forget it but the traumatic memory of the past strike them bitterly and make their effort worthless.

Disc Jockey, a wounded hero, haunted by the traumatic experiences. His wound isnot only physical but also psychological, which is more painful than physical and

remains long lasting, sometimes at night he cannot tolerate it and internal pain suddenly comes out. The torture of the war has made him mentally disordered. He finds pain, sorrow, frustration, depression every where which make him as an anxious and fearful person. The lines presented in the book make clear that trauma strikes the person's attitude towards progress achievement and better life. Disc Jockey's life is triggered by traumatic experiences and instable contemporary situation. He has a very doomed perception of life which haunts a lot to make his life better and prosperous. Trauma studies explore the relationship with wounds.

Mailer, in this novel presents the language as if it were a traumatic. The language in the novel talks about the domain of war, past, their experience and other repetitive activities. At the very initial stage of the novel, the characters attitude to wards war is revealed. The war is dirty, it is the cause of human death and it ruins the civilization. Through, almost all the characters hate the war, they are at the same time, closely attached with it because either physically or psychologically they are affected by the war. All of them have the distorted memory of the war since most of them directly or indirectly involved in to its presentation of wars devastaitive and destructive nature and its effect in people's psychology. Most of the characters face the war directly and they are not free from the traumatic shock.

The very ideas of traumatic clarify the pain, anxiety, sorrow and problematic situation. The characters are trapped in the circle of trauma and there is not a possibility to release from it. D.J.s traumatic condition is the prime factor where Americans itself is traumatic. The characters in the novel are directly or indirectly involved in war and have a traumatic memory. They are expatriated from America and go to vietnam to fulfill the passion of spirituality which was doomed in America. But the very memory of ruptured

war, traumatic experiences block their way. The Americans lose the values, their identity, and spectrum of life has become the lost generation. To overcome from torture, pain, depression, frustration and trauma itself, for the sake of decorated life they came in America. But they have their physical as well as psychological wounds, bitter feeling and traumatic memory.

Rusty Jethroe, another victim of war does not want to remember the calamity of the war but the more he tries to forget it, the more he recalls it. In each and every chapter of the novel, there is a lot of smell of war and its destruction. The psychological and physical wound compels Disc Jockey and Rusty Jethroe to think about war. Though they try to search the remedy from the war torture and traumatic experiences, they indulge in their traumatic memory but it does not overcome rather it is strengthened in the form of distorted memory. They try to forget the past event war and want to make it as a tool for remedy but it cannot work properly but they are haunted by traumatic shock and their traumas are not over. But what is a fact is that they find nowhere to go and nothing to work and they involve in little bit traumatic shocking for a short time. So, the Americans find themselves more anxious, more frustrated and more depressed fellow upon the Vietnamese.

Because of war's violent and disgusting nature, people become doomed, their sympathy and feelings are harassed. The death of human beings in the war, and great depression created by war made Mailer more tortured, depressed and, traumatic. His characters are also haunted by the bitter war experience and other disgusted phenomena.

In the novel, Mailer presents various characteristics which could not escape from traumatic dread. Mailer compares the characters' life with a bad play where Americans have a very negative attitude towards Vietnamese's life and progress because of the

traumatic experiences. The violent and brutal deed of the war in the Vietnam lead the characters towards traumatic dread where, Mailer narrates the pathetic condition so as they come without any hope and enthusiasm.

Sudden crying and shaking are the fundamental characteristics of trauma and in the novel there find a lot of recurrence of these sort of activities of the characters. Mailer expresses his over whelming traumatic experiences in a form of distorted memory due to the physical and psychological wounds. Trauma and trouble are respectively occurs in the life of traumatic characters so, the bitter and shady past haunts and tortures the Americans at the present.

Actually, this novel is a dramatization of characters traumatic experiences. Their present life has not moved smoothly because of the war anguish, destruction, devastation bloody sense, anguish, sorrow and pain. They are continuously beset with traumatic memory. Traumatic shock blocks the better progressive life of Americans. The Americans want to forget the bitter past war life and want to create a new, happy, beautiful, decorated life. Americans came in Vietnam to get meaning of life and to make a life new but their traumas continuously follow them and they are unable to create new happy life. The characters are in pain, sorrow, anguish and at last, the Americans are in traumatic whirlpool which makes their life frustrated, depressed and anxious. Major characters in *Why Are We in Vietnam?* are not far from traumatic situation and living without any glory and hope. They are American and being expatriate, they are living in Vietnam and becomes more disgusted, alienated and traumatic. Traumatic figure cannot think properly when ever they do something and later laments about their previous activities. Mailer presents the traumatic mood and harassed manner. The Americans find their life emptiness and vacuum in the war activities.

The war and its destruction became the cause of anguish in the novel. The characters want to forget their bitter memory but it does not work for their healing. The barren state of country, rocky mountain and at last its sterile condition not only explore their pain but also it increases their hopelessness. This condition made them restless, distorted and anxious. Disc jockey is presenting his life anti-optimistic, wasteful and traumatic, his life is surrounded by pity. This pragmatic, optimistic ideology has failed in his own life, where as he cannot create his own optimistic world of successful and progressive life and be doomed as a traumatic creature.

D.J. with his expatriate friends come in Vietnam to fulfill the vacuum of spirituality but their efforts are blocked by traumatic shock. Every time they are haunted by ghost of past which is unavoidable and incurable. They are not free from pity sorrow and anxiety. His traumatic shock does not overcome till the end of the novel. At the end of the novel, the Americans returned from Vietnam without any hope of success. Because of the war and its destruction the world is suffering from anguish and man is the victim of anguish. Characters feel that there is nothing more certain than the grievous suffering.

Mailer's presentation of severe suffering of the characters in this novel, lead the novel's outline towards traumatic vision. Rusty Jethroe, another victim of war expresses his disgustful outlook during the period of war. In order to forget their severe suffering and bitter traumatic past, Mailer simplifies the very concept of traumatic vision through the portrayal of war wounded, pain being, depression anxiety and disillusionment. These characters are running their life as depressed.

The characters in the novel are behaving badly from the Americans to Vietnamese. The Americans happiness is fragmented and the Americans become the victim of traumatic dread. The Americans depression and anxiety takes place in

Vietnam's war fighting. The war increases the tragic sensation of the Americans upon the Vietnamese.

So, Mailer picture out the traumatic vision in the novel through the vivid portrayal of the war wounded hero Disc Jockey and Rusty Jethroe, disillusioned war society. Not only this Mailer presents the traumatic world view with the behaviours of characters and their living in severe suffering. Characters rootless frustrated, depressed and anxious condition vividly picturize the traumatic vision in novel. Mailer expresses traumatic condition of characters directly in the novel by traumatic vision.

To analyze the novel from perspective of trauma, it is important to note the motive of the novel. Their motifs directly or indirectly provide the clue to claim that the novel is not far from the traumatic vision. Traumatic figure faces the problem of trusting people that lead the characters dishonest behaviours. The characters are haunted by the war experiences. In this regard, the novel's motif's are not beyond from traumatic symptoms and visualize the traumatic vision throughout the novel.

Mailer reveals a tragic vision of the American's in the novel Mailer presents a vulgar naked picture of the so called civilized race, the American's. American's do not act as civilized in Vietnam but they are driven by the idea of go and kill and fulfill the will and desire. The American's civilization was nothing more than controlling and preserving power relations, Mailer feels that the civilization in the hand of American's has moved to a dead end.

The novel entitled *Why Are We in Vietnam?* by Norman Mailer analyzes disaster of Vietnam and the Vietnam war was wholly destructive and brutalizing exercise of American violence. This novel shows how America misguidedly and wastefully act up on the innocent Vietnamese people America involved itself on the ideological ground of

civilization, just for preserving power relations. The more civilized America tries to become the more barbaric. Americans involvement in Vietnam with the intention to civilize the Vietnamese people.

But finally, America could not counter guerrilla warfare and tried to make a peace agreement. Vietnamese were fighting for their nation while Americans were trying to snatch the joy of Vietnamese people. Americans moral defeat and humiliation have been loosen in the fight. All the hopes and glory of Americans turned into shame and their desires were shattered and at last, Americans returned with humiliated face.

Chapter II

II. Reading Trauma Theory: An Introduction

The term “trauma” is derived from a medical term of Greek denoting a severe wound or injury and resulting after effects. Trauma becomes problematic when it is reflected in the repetitive action. Trauma theory as a privileged critical category which includes diverse fields, with its specific focus on psychological, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events. The term “trauma” refers to the action shown by the abnormal mind to the body which provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress, and destruction. These concerns of trauma theory “range from the public and historical to the private and memorial” (Luck thrust 497). Its thrust lies on its fruitful enigmatic survival of problems and destruction as a metaphor of unpredictability. It exposes not only a phase of destruction but a enigma of survivals a metaphor of existence. Trauma theory synthesizes resources from a number of critical schools.

According to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* the definition of trauma can be given as a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time, or an unpleasant experience that makes us fell upset and an injury. Trauma is defined as an extremely unpleasant and causing us to feel upset an anxious, which shock and upset somebody very much, often making them unable to think or work normally.(1634) or “a serious injury or shock to the body, as from violence or an accident and an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial lasting damage to the psychological development of a person”.

The word “Historical” usually describes something that is connected with the past or with the study of history or something that really happened in the past and is

likely to be remembered. The word “Historicism” means ‘the theory that cultural and social events and situation can be explained by history’.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* has defined the world trauma as:

- i a deeply distressing experience,
- ii physical injury,
- iii emotional shock following a stressful event.

Etymologically speaking, trauma refers to the physical laceration and wound. As the implication of this word became wide spread it began to be used to denote mental wound and become wounded and deeply infected by problematic of complicated kind. Such a troubled psyche is said to be traumatic psyche. With the passage of time when the psychic troubles of people became deeply complicated such a trauma was considered to be psychic trauma. In the chosen text, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* by Norman Mailer, most of the significant characters are afflicted not with physical trauma but with psychic trauma, which was occasioned by tense and troubled instability. Trauma has now crossed the boundaries of psychiatry and mediclinical and has shown an increasing insistence on the direct effects of external violence in psychic disorder.

The critics such as ShoShana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman turn from work on the undecidability of interpretation on literature to publish work on Holocaust memory and witness in the early 1990s. Cathy Caruth’s definition of trauma as the limit of knowledge was a continuation of the Yale project. Trauma may create many problems such as multiple personalities, anger, and paranoia and sleep problems; tendencies towards suicidability, irritability, mood swings and odd rituals; difficulty trusting people and difficult relationships; and general despair, aimlessness and hopelessness. Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder happens when one's mind and the body are found in numbed state due to traumatic experiences.

The effect of an event may be seen in many forms not obviously associated with the events. It approves for an interpretation of cultural symptoms of growths, wounds scars on a social body and its compulsive repeated actions. In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of "sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the responses to the event occurs in the after delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena"(caruth181).

Physical trauma is taken as the response to the physical injury which depends on the degree and the suddenness of the injury and the previous physical condition of the victim. Physical trauma is related more too physical hurt and damages which affect vital organs leading to the serious condition of the patients. The physical trauma is medic that is serious injury or shock to the body as from violence or an accident.

From the icon of Sigmund Freud, the dynamic of trauma repression and symptom formation as the matter of hysteria. Freud held that an overpowering event, unacceptable to consciousness, can be forgotten and is revealed in the form of somatic symptoms of compulsive and repetitive behaviors. Studying the trauma theory related with Freud, James Berger comments on the relating matter of neurotic symptom with the repressed drives:

[...] initial theory of trauma and symptom became problematic for Freud when he concluded the neurotic symptoms were more often the result of repressed drives and desires than of traumatic events. Freud returned to the theory of trauma in '*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,' work which originated in his treatment of world war I combat Veterans who suffer

from repeated night-mares and other symptoms of their war time experiences (570).

Here, the central idea for psychoanalysis is the traumatic event and its aftermath at the same time. But again Freud changes his focus from biological urge toward equilibrium which he then theorized as the ‘death drive’. Freud’s elaboration of the concept of ‘latency’ of how memory of a traumatic event can be lost over a time is a challenging task of symptomatic event. Berger defines the term ‘latency’ as “memory of traumatic events which can be lost over time but then regained in a symptomatic form when triggered by some similar events”(3). If repression, in trauma, is repeated by latency, this is significant in so far as its blankness-the space of unconsciousness – is paradoxically what precisely preserves the event in its literality.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud uses the term to describe a painful event not inflicted to the body but to the mind: the psychical breaking of defenses becomes thus a psychic one. All Freud’s thinking on trauma manifests the ambivalence regarding the significance of the historical events. Freud talks about ‘sexual trauma’ in *Studies in Hysteria* mentioning sexuality and sexual abuse as the causes of trauma. He also talks about ‘War trauma’ relating it with world war I. Freud’s early theory that historical woman suffered from memories of sexual abuse did match the traumatic phenomenon of soldiers who too suffered from memories of an overwhelming event that they had been unable to cognitively register at the time it happened.

By the same token of why trauma theory has become popular and inevitable makes us look at the preoccupation with family dysfunctions, child abuse, incest, spousal abuse in the media, the most strikingly on the talk show circuit. There appears to be the sense both that family is the only hope for curing all social ills and that the family is

“damaged beyond hope”(571). The survivor is a kind of “black box”, a source of final knowledge of authority those is the interest in family breakdown and violence comes the interest of enigmatic figure of survivor, the one who has faced the catastrophe and can tell us what it is like. Over the past fifteen years there has been an enormous growth in the interest in eyewitness accounts and testimonies of all kinds: by victims of child abuse, holocaust survivors, survivor of near death experiences.

The word “trauma” cannot be an analogous word for another word disaster. The idea of catastrophe as trauma “Provides a method of interpretation, for it posits that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event” (570).

Trauma theory is a discourse of the unrepresentable, of the event or object that “destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before”(571).In troubling ways, these discourses after blur into each other, creating a traumatic- scared sublime alterity in which “historical complexity and historical pain are effaced or “redeemed”. The traumatic symptoms are not only somatic nonlinguistic phenomena, they occur also in language. In fact, theories of trauma help to “demystify all sorts of “narrative fetishes” and ideologies (375).

The researchers have put forward some relevant definitions and critical remarks on trauma theory from different theorists and critics. Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Caruth and Kali Tal all confront the Freudian ambivalence toward the event and in different ways regard events their aftermath and their representations as crucial to interpreting personal and social histories.

One of the popular critic Dominick LaCapra in *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, and Trauma* talks about two related goals: to intervene in and clarify

some of the recent public controversies regarding holocaust representation to the trauma theory and it's cultural transmission is extraordinarily lucid and insightful. In his theory of trauma focuses the three psychoanalytic topics:-

- i acting out verses working through,
- ii the return of the repressed,
- iii the semantic of transference.

A traumatic historical event as LaCapra argues, “tends to be repressed and then to return in forms of compulsive repressed”(Berger 571). LaCapra is concerned primarily with the return of the repressed as discourse, rather than with physical returns such as the genocidal repetitions in Cambodia and Bosnia.

Lacapra is a trauma theorist, who has proposed some of the essential constituents of trauma. According to him, in the structure of traumatic experience the repressed is said to have returned in an uncontrollably wild way. The victim of trauma while undergoing traumatic experience works as if he or she is a puppet of his hidden urges and impulses. He or she hardly becomes the agent of his or her own experience instead of pursuing for certain creative and fresh venture, the victim of trauma repeats the similar things as though he or she is too compulsive to do it.

LaCapra focuses more in trauma's nature which denies compulsively fixated but accept the role of paradox and 'aporia'. In this regard, Berger writes:

“LaCapra wants to create a position that avoids both redemptive narrative and sublime acting out. He sets out to describe a way to work through trauma that does not deny the “irreducibility” of loss or the role of “paradox” and “aporia” but avoids becoming “compulsively fixated” (Berger 575)”.

The main concern of LaCapra is transference. Transference in psychoanalysis is itself a return of the repressed, a rather a more conscious summoning of the repressed, transference repeats or acts out a past event or relationship in a new therapeutic setting that allows for critical evaluation and change transference is the occasion for working through the traumatic symptom. It is imperative therefore to recognize the symptoms and the trauma as one's own, to acknowledge that the trauma still is active and that one is implicated in its destructive effects.

Here LaCapra describes two important implications of his view regarding the historical trauma. First trauma provides a method of rethinking post - modern and post-structuralist theories with the historical context. As LaCapra says, "the Post modern and Post - Holocaust become mutually interwined issues that are best addressed in relation to each other. This relation would include a new traumatic understanding of what he calls "the near fixation can the sublime or the almost obsessive preoccupation with loss, aporia, dispassion and deferred meaning"(xi)(Berger574).

Secondly LaCapra provides over the literary canon, suggesting that a canonical text should not help permanently install an ideological order but should rather, "help one to foreground ideological problems and work through them critically" (qtd. in *Theory and Trauma* 576). Each text would be, in effect a site of trauma with which the reader would have to engage. But LaCapra does not examine the relations between historical trauma and any literary text although literature can be the site of acting out or working through. In the same line of the discussion LaCapra focuses on distinguishing between acting out and working through, undercut the binary term and treating them as two additional interacting processes. What he seems to posit is that acting out means that trauma can

be only managed through a constant playing out the traumatic event, where as working through is aimed at achieving to a closure of the trauma.

At the same time by taking into consideration the memory-work, especially the socially engaged memory-work involved in working-through one is able to “distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one back than that is related to but not identical with, here and now”(713). It is only through mourning, one attempts to assist in restoring to victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers.

In acting out one had a mimetic relation to the past which is represented or relieved as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription. In psychoanalytic terms:

The acted-out past is incorporated rather than interjected, and it returns as the repressed. Mourning involves interjection through a relation to the past that recognizes its difference from the present and enacts a specific performative relation to it that simultaneously members and takes leave of it, there by allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, notably social life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others (81-82).

Truly speaking, the mitigation of trauma is nonetheless recognized so acted out is a requirement or precondition of working-through problems. Generally, acting out and working-through is intimately linked by analytically distinguishable processes.

Similarly, Cathy Caruth's book named *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, where Caruth sketches the theory of trauma as instigator of historical

narrative through an analysis of *Moses and Monotheism* which describes the intersections of traumatic narrative.

This book is principally concerned with questions of reference and representation: how trauma becomes text or how wound becomes voice. She outlines a theory of reference as the imprint of catastrophic face in a discussion of de Man and ends with a reading of Lacan's gloss of Freud's interpretation of the dreams of the burning child (a sequence of interpretation that itself highlights issues of traumatic transmission). In which she proposes testimony as providing an ethical relation to trauma. Caruth's focus of trauma lies in the incomprehensibility of trauma as it first occurs – as “the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refused to be simply located” (Berger 575). Then the narrative of trauma is strongly referential, but not in any simple or direct way. Caruth presents her arguments on pain and language, the relation between its narrative, historical and ethical dimension. She becomes the critique of Paul De Man as well as defense of de Man's methods of interpretations.

In this discussion, Caruth points out the author oriented trauma reflected a text. Hence, Caruth makes a comment on De Manian interpretation that blurs at the end into an implied apology for De Man who is unable to describe the implications of war time writings. Caruth's elegant analysis of trauma further brings the lessons of deconstruction to bear on reflection about the conceptual status of trauma in Freudian psychoanalysis. Rather than arbitrarily separating history and theory. Caruth employs in order to read their conjunctions as the outcome of the shock of experience and the belatedness of its realization in discourse and understanding.

In the field of literary studies, trauma theory has come not as a surprise. As Cathy Caruth point out in her introduction, *Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals*, in it the

traumatic survivals, relating the issue of trauma with the recent years psychiatry she said that the direct effect of external violence seen in the psychic disorder. It is the study of “Post-Traumatic Stress of Disorder,” which describes the uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations, flashback, overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the effects of events has seen in the form of delayed.

According to Cathy Caruth, trauma is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality that is not otherwise available. Trauma is an event, which breaks through the protecting shield and overwhelms existing defenses against anxiety in a form, which also provides conformation of those deepest anxieties. The experience of trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his will. The experience that Freud calls “traumatic neurosis” is the repetition and reenactment of an event that cannot simply be left behind. Cathy Caruth points out the repetitions of the traumatic event which remains unavailable to consciousness, suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain in the heart of this repetitive seeing.

At the same time, Cathy Caruth’s point out that general understanding of the traumatic disorders reflect the direct imposition on the mind of unavoidable reality of horrific event, “the taking over- psychically and neurobiological of the mind by an event that it can control”(24).

Cathy Caruth has also offered her opinion regarding the traumatic experience. According to Caruth, trauma is incomprehensible by nature. Although it is incomprehensible it is referential as well. The subtlest fact concerning trauma is that it is referential. Caruth claims that victim of trauma, however reluctant to express his or her

hidden traumatic truth, unknowingly reveals certain personal truth. Trauma is, according to Cathy Caruth, referential although it is generally believed to be incomprehensible by nature focusing on the referential nature of trauma Cathy Caruth says:

[...] a notion of traumatic experience a neurotic distortion, the author of these essays brings us back continually to the surprising fact that trauma is not experienced as a mere repression of defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first movement. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event but it is also a continual leaving of its site. The traumatic re-experiencing of the event thus collapses of witnessing, the impossibility of knowing the first constituted it. And by carrying that impossibility of knowing out of the empirical event itself, trauma opens up and challenges us to a new kind of listening (10).

Caruth maintains that the personal truth revealed by traumatic victim can be extended to the cultural and historical level.

Caruth presents Freudian reference on trauma which is related to the psychic and argues and raises the question for consciousness to survive if the traumatic effect is not directly available to the experience.

Dominick LaCapra in his *Trauma, Absence, Loss* talks about historical trauma and structural trauma in relation to the conflation of absence and loss. In terms of absence, one may recognize that one cannot lose what one never had. The terms can be used with the term, lack too. Structural trauma is related to trans-historical absence (absence of / at the origin) and appears in different ways in all societies and all lives. Everyone is subject to structural trauma and historical trauma is related to particular events that do in deed involve losses, such as, the dropping of the atom bomb on

Japanese cities. The Holocaust, slavery or apartheid-even suffering the effect of the atom bomb in Hiroshima or Nagasaki can become a founding trauma. Historical trauma is specific and not everyone is subject to it. LaCapra in relation to it, opines:

The belated temporality of trauma and the elusive nature of the shattering experience related to it render the distinction between the structural and historical trauma problematic but do not make it irrelevant. The traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined while structural trauma like absence is not an event but an anxiety producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization (725).

The terms: acting out and working through are interrelated modes of responding to loss or historical trauma. Mourning might be seen as a form of working through and melancholia as a form of acting out. With respect to traumatic losses, acting out may well be a necessary condition of working through, at least for victims.

Giving emphasis on the part of historical trauma, Caruth says that it is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting but that is “only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains in the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience”(10). Her point is that since we cannot experience traumatic event at the moment of its occurrence, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time. Caruth further opines that if latency replaces repression, that is important in its blankness – the space of unconsciousness- is paradoxically presence the event in its literality. For history to be a history of trauma it is referential to the extent that is fully perceived as it occurs. She says history can be understood in the inaccessibility of its occurrence.

Reminding us of the fact of the inaccessibility of trauma, of its resistance to full theoretical analysis and understanding, she shows the way in which trauma can make possible survival through the different modes of therapeutic, literary and pedagogical encounter. By turning away from a notion of traumatic experience as a neurotic distortion, she brings us back to the ever surprising fact that “trauma is not experienced as a mere repression or defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment”(10). Stressing on the potentiality of trauma, she says trauma carries the potentiality of enabling the traumatized subject to get over the shock of the traumatic moment, for it is not only “a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual living of its site”(10). A sharing of traumatic experience through the mutual acts of speaking and listening helps the victims and survivors confront it and work through it. The construction of a history develops from this delayed response to trauma, which permits, “history to arise where immediate understanding may not”(11).

Kali Tal, another critic in her book named *Words of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma* of raises the voice of cognitive psychology and of feminist politics that identifies strongly with the testimonies of rape and incest survivors. In this contest Tal is hostile to psychoanalysis and bases her view different from LaCapra and Caruth. Tal argues that the literature of trauma consists only of the writing of victims and survivors of trauma which is quite differing emphatically from psychologically oriented writers like Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra. Tal’s main discussions deal with recent critical approaches to the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, literature produced by American Veterans of the Vietnam War and testimonies of women survivors of incest and child abuse. Her study is based on the systematic violence of women and a sense of how traumatic literature might social change.

Kali Tal draws our attention to the discursivity of the literature of trauma which according to her, “literature of trauma is defined by the identity of its author, the work of the critic of the literature of trauma is both to identify of its author and explicate literature by members of survivor groups, and to deconstruct the process by which the dominant culture codifies their traumatic experience”(Berger 576).

Kali Tal defines trauma as known as threat to life or bodily integrity or personally encounter with death and violence. Trauma as a life treating event that displaces one’s preconceived notion about the world.

Traumatic narrative, then, is strongly referential, but not in any simple or direct way and the construction of a history develops from this delayed response to trauma, which “history to arise where immediate understanding may not”(Berger 578). Trauma theory, which focuses on acting out or working through trauma has its own issue and it cannot be explained within its limited territory for it is interconnected “with specific ethical and socio- cultural tension”(Hartman 257). This arises from “an awareness of persistence of violence in a culture that no longer condones the martial virtues of war. After Nazism, and totalitarianism generally, yearning for the arts of peace has never been greater. But continuous ethnic conflict, genocidal episodes, and irrational and bloody event, reported as the main staple of the news, set up an intolerable contrast between that yearning and intractable. As a matter of fact, the Trans historical awareness of the incidence of trauma personal or collective should make it realize the extent of human suffering.

This above mentioned brief survey indicates some of the range of concerns that can be conceptualized under the category of trauma. It stretches from psychic life to public history, reading materials that can include romantic poetry, psychiatric histories,

accounts of sexual abuse, memoirs, testimonies, documentaries, the symptoms, silences, omissions and so many others in national histories. Trauma theory can be understood as a place where different critical approaches converge. In a way, it is a product of another of those periodic crises about the function of criticism in society.

When we talk about the trauma and its approach, the ideas of Cathy Caruth, one of the leading figures of trauma theory appears to be worth-mentioning. Cathy Caruth, who is very much famous for her ideas of latency argues that trauma as it first takes place in uncertain, but that “the survivors uncertainty is not a simple amnesia, for the event returns, as Freud points out insistently and against their will”(6). Her ideas reinforce the fact that trauma can not be forgotten. The primary focus of the trauma theory is with the temporary delay as the discourse of history which raises the question of the crisis of truth: a question that asks how we can have access to our historical experience, to a history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple access”. Paradoxical though it may sound, a history of trauma becomes “graspable only in the accessibility of its occurrence”- the burden that it places on comprehension not only unsettles but also forces us to rethink our accepted wisdom of the historical experience (8).

Trauma can also be divided in to mimetic trauma and anti mimetic trauma. Traumatized subject is like the hypnotized subject and to an extent subjugated by the aggressor or event in mimetic trauma. But, conversely the trauma is also seen as anti mimetic too. The anti mimetic theory also tends to make limitation basic to the traumatic experience, but it understands imitation differently. The anti mimetic theory facilitates to the idea that trauma is a purely external event that befalls fully cultivated subject. In contrast to the mimetic theory’s assumption of identification with the aggressors, the anti mimetic theory depicts violence as purely and simply an assault. In contrast to the labile

subject of mimetic trauma, the subject, in anti mimetic trauma remains intact and removed from the scene, a spectator. These two models of trauma correspond to the traditional way of reading story.

Trauma is not only the repetition of the missed encounter with death but the missed encounter, with one's own survival. It is the incomprehensible act of surviving of waking into life that repeats and bears witness to what remains ungrasped within the encounter with death the repetition of trauma is not only an attempt to know what can not be grasped that is repeated unconsciously in the survivor's life.

Freud in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* talks about the psychic disorder that appears to reflect the unavoidable and overwhelming imposition of violent events on the psyche faced with the striking acuteness of what were called the war neuroses in the wake of World War I. With the theory of trauma Freud had replaced the notion of the child and its central place in the psychoanalytic theory the child's repetitions of its mother's departure could be explained as the unknowing reliving of its mother's death, and the child's life as the unconscious reliving of what is not yet grasped with the mother's departure.

Freud's analysis suggests that the encounter with traumatic repetition requires a rethinking of psychoanalysis itself, which had previously focused its model of the mind on the notion of childhood as the site of the pleasure principle. Caruth focuses on the Freud shifting of psychoanalytic thinking from the individual struggle with internal oedipal conflicts of childhood to the collective activities of history, and to make of childhood itself a reflection of a more obscure painful encounter. Caruth links the Freud's own theory in which he does not simply describe the death drive and its enigmatic move

to the dative for life as the very language of the child that encounters, and attempts to grasp, the catastrophes of a traumatic history.

In this regard Cathy Caruth posits that the very notions of the trauma and of the death drive as a creative act of parting: a parting from the real child, and a parting from the psychoanalytic child or from the mere psychoanalysis of childhood toward an analysis of the collective catastrophes of death encountered in war and towards the pressing cultural imperative for a new kind of survival. The theory of trauma does not limit itself to a theoretical formulation of the centrality of death in culture but constitutes the Freud's and our own, historical experience of modernity an act of parting that itself creates and passes on a different history of survival.

Jenny Edkins in "*Introduction: Trauma, Violence and the Political Community*" of his book *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* talks about the reckoning that comes in the aftermath of a war of catastrophe to clarify the same fact of LaCapra. He, explaining about what happens after a catastrophe is over, says that the dead and the missing are listed, families grieve and comfort each other and memorials are erected. Victory pervades remembrance and war museums "tell of glory, courage and sacrifice"(1). Private grief is overlaid by national mourning and duty. When there is a mismatch between expectation as a betrayal or in other word, as traumatic.

The book of Edkins explores the connections between violence, effects of trauma that it produces and forms of political community. The state possesses power and can use violence because the people legitimize its authority. Giving focus on the practices of trauma and memory, Edkins argues that "trauma can be very much influenced by dominant views that are by the state" (11). In his discussion of the practices of trauma, Edkins says that after traumatic events, there is a struggle over memory. Some forms of

remembering can be seen “as ways of forgetting; ways of recovering from trauma by putting its lesson to one side, refusing to acknowledge that anything has changed restoring the pretence”(16). He examines in the book, the connection between *Trauma, Violence and Political community* by looking at how traumas such as wars or persecutions are inscribed and re inscribed into everyday narratives.

The critic named, Geoffrey H. Hartman argues in *On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies* that trauma theory introduces a psychoanalytic skepticism which does not give upon knowledge but suggests the existence if a traumatic kind. The theory held that the knowledge of trauma is compared of two contradictory elements: one is the traumatic event and another is a memory of the event. Trauma theory throws a light on figurative or poetic language and perhaps symbolic process in general. Trauma studies provide a more natural transition to a real world, often falsely split off that of the university.

Traumatic and artistic kinds of knowledge conspire to produce their own mode of recognition. The shift of knowledge from epistemological baffles to an under consciousness leads to an unsentimental acknowledgement of the human condition, and a view of art as at once testimony and representation. The force of that acknowledgement tempers our tendency to find a final explanation for trauma. Hartman further writes, with respect to traumatic knowledge and literary studies:

In literature especially shock and dreaminess collude. Where there is dream there is trauma. Winnicot’s observations that “the mother is always traumatizing” is fundamental here: he means that within the child’s framework of basic trust, or idealization of a nurturing presence, there are

infinite chances to be hurt and the greater the idealization, the greater the vulnerability (547).

Geoffrey Hartman in his book named, “*Trauma With in the Limits of Literature*” considers trauma with in the limits of language and literature. He argues, “Theory should not insist in particular, on the psychic wound being located in a single biographical event, a wound occulted by literary device that must be cleared away as if they were defensive structures”. He, here tries to show the multidisciplinary character of trauma. Trauma happens due to horror, terror, discrimination, hate and biasness which is preoccupied in the mind of the person. Politics may be the prominent factor to create trauma, the real trauma may not be accessible because the state which has power, legitimized by people and can use violence attempts to unveil the real traumas of people. According to Geoffrey Hartman his views on trauma:

The sense that trauma demarcates time, producing a breach in its homogeneous course, induces a myth of temporal location: the hunting idea that there was one irremediable event or one discovery, which turned- overturned the mind. A change in the self image of the collective may also be assigned to such an event, whether marked by despair or triumph (267).

Another critic named Roger Luckhurst in *Mixing Memory and Desire: Psychoanalysis, Psychology and Trauma Theory* cites different critics like Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Geoffrey Hartman, Sigmund Freud, and Shoshana Felman to talk about trauma in relation to psychoanalysis, psychology along with memory and desire. Cathy Caruth provides psychoanalytic studies of trauma through the Paul De Man’s literary theory. Shoshana Felman presents a story of the difficulties of testifying to the traumatic memories of the Holocaust. Sigmund Freud gives a key early theory about

psychical trauma, with the compelling case histories and reflections and the method of the talking cure. Trauma theory is explored principally in relation to Romantic theory in Hartman's essay. Dominick LaCapra's essay explored how to turn to trauma refashions cultural theory. Luckhurst, citing such views concludes that the exposition of trauma could have remained within the field of cultural theory, satisfied with regarding the emergence of trauma theory as a set of refinements internal to psychoanalytic or deconstructive approaches. In this regard, Luckhurst further says:

I began by suggesting that trauma theory can be understood as a place where many different critical approaches converge ... trauma theory tries to turn criticism back towards being and ethical, responsible, purpose discourse, listening to the wounds of the other. But if it is truly to do this, this point of convergence also needs to be the start of the divergence of an opening out of theory to wider contexts (507).

He takes reference of different approaches, picturizes trauma theory as the new output after the convergence of those critical approaches. Trauma affects a range of disciplines and cultural expressions.

Roger Luckhurst, approach to trauma is somewhat different from that of Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra. Luckhurst is of the opinion that traumatic event can be represented; He further adds that "Traumatic event is subject to literary representation. Experience of trauma is subject to narrativization"(125). To Luckhurst, trauma is a site of condensation. Many in comprehensible and in expressible things are compressed to the point of confusion. Although trauma is a site of condensation, it is contemporary as well. Luckhurst claims that trauma does not easily get related to experience or language. It, according to him, can be registered but can never be fully assimilated to the obvious

mode of communication. Language alone is not capable of conveying traumatic truth, symptomatic silence, the unexpressed and silent implication, the language between the expressed and unexpressed- these are some of the subtle form of narrativizing trauma and experiences associate with it”(502).

From Cathy Caruth “*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*”

Roger Luckhurst says:

Traumatic experience suggests a certain paradox that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it, that immediacy, paradoxically may take the form of belatedness. This paradoxical structure put trauma at the heart of important questions about truth and history because trauma is registered but never quite assimilated to experience or language, this means that the truth [...] can not be linked only to what is known but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language (501).

Focusing on the fact that memories are very much fruitful as they serve to history and work for therapeutic need, memory becomes important not only for the therapeutic need that it serves but also because it is “part of the truth in any particular version of history”(11). People try to cope by blocking all memory of their shattered past. It is painful for them to think what has happened to their family. The presence of trauma in these fragments of memory sheds sufficient light “On the transformation of politics in to bio- politics (7). Memory, however, is never pure and unimmediated as it is conceptualized as a force in conflict with the counter force of repression.

Beerendra Pandey, a shining star of Trauma Theory in his article, “*Pedagogy of India Partition literature on light of Trauma Theory*” quite interestingly brings the ideas

where the trauma of partition has been consigned to oblivion in the interest of the sectarian health of the nation for remembering it is suspected to be “greatly misplaced and dangerous of in India”(qtd. in pandey 2). Traumatic temporality means that ethical authenticity –“the endeavor to manipulate the ways in which, for example the Indian nationalistic historiography produces the narrative on partition must always be contaminated by in- authenticity” (Birendra pandey 3).

Beerendra Pandey puts forward his idea about the need of healing or curing the national or racial trauma for the retrieval of the past. Literature is one of the mechanisms for effecting this ethical relation with the past. His exploration of the discourse of traumatic memory of the partition of India shows the literature of does not necessarily offer a means of overcoming instability contaminated as it is with ideological contours of the dominant culture to which the trauma belongs. He further highlights that “Indian- English Partition literatures framing of 1947 interms of its traumatic encounter with the cataclysmic violence of the watershed year turns out to be a mediated and authentic deployment of trauma to political ends”(13).Focusing on the pedagogy of Indian partition literature, he says, it must concentrate on exploring the relationship between the already traumatized subject and the state.

So far the researcher has introduced some critic’s different view on trauma. Although there are certain differences of trauma, there is basic similarity as well. All these trauma theorists tacitly assume that inseparable organs of trauma theory. Before the larger discussion of trauma from cultural approach which has a magnificent importance, psychoanalytical approach to trauma also needs to be discussed which also has a great importance in the definition of trauma? Actually, the more we satisfactorily locate and classify the systems of PTSD, the more we seem to have dislocated the

boundaries of our modes of understanding – so that the psychoanalysis and medically oriented psychiatry, sociology, history and even literature all seem to be called upon to explain, to cure or to show why it is that we can no longer simply explain or simply cure.

Trauma can be defined from two approaches:

- i Psycho analytic-formalistic approach.
- ii Cultural approach.

According to the first approach, a victimized subject does not disclose the real traumatic experience; s/he rather exposes and expresses the testimony, in a very distorted and deceptive manner due to the fear of social death. Regarding psychoanalytical approach, Freud's ideas are very much significant. In "*Studies on Hysteria*" Freud is committed to the view that the "reminiscences that cause hysterical suffering are historical in the sense that they are linked to actual traumas in the patients life (186). The affect associated with the past trauma can't be acknowledged and the amnesia that results means that the force of the affect becomes damned up. The injured person's reaction to the trauma "only exercises a completely cathartic effect if it is an adequate reaction", they wrote the past that continues to wound is the "past originally found no out let"(187).

Freud was committed to the idea that the traumatic memory referred to a real passive experience that was later sexualized. He believed that the memory that remained charged with affect contained indications of reality. His fundamental interest in the ways the past can cause pain in the present was a stable component of his psychoanalysis. Regarding the traumatic experience occurred on the past, he says, 'We are not only the victims of our past nor we are simply their guilty survivors, we do not only undergo the trauma, we are capable of making meaning and direction out of our post' (193). For him, however, the work of mourning consisted in the progressive detachment from the past.

On the other hand, cultural approach examines the undercurrents of the distorted testimonies by contextualizing it in the net work cultural- politics. In that sense trauma brings home the limitations of our understanding and at the same time it dislocates the so-called traditional disciplinary boundaries leading us “to rethink our notions of experiences and of communication”(334).

The trauma theory has aroused a vivid interest among the cultural and literary theorists. The reason behind why trauma theory has begun to drag the attention of theorist pushes us to look at a popular culture and mass media obsessed by repetitions of violent disasters

To sum up, since traumatic memory is politically contaminated, the real traumatic experience of traumatized people is never explored in their stark realism. When trauma occurs, it is unknown to the traumatized subject and when it is known and revealed, the traumatic experiences are either added or subtracted because of the net work of cultural politics. This happens because of discrimination and biasness which is preoccupied in the mind of the person who presents the traumatic experiences of the victimized once. The prominent factor behind the distortion and exaggeration of testimony is because of nationalist bias which itself is the politics that intervenes the real traumas to be unveiled. So, the authentic traumas are never accessible. Because of the same nature of trauma, it seems paradoxical and peculiar kind of experience. And trauma survives in paradox. The oppressors do their best to normalize the catastrophic tragedies of people during the violent years and the traumatic experiences do not get an outlet. Moreover, when chance comes even the oppressed or traumatized group do not reveal the authentic traumatic experiences because of cultural politics. Trauma theory tries to turn criticism backwards being an ethical, responsible, purposive discourse, listening to the wounds of other. But if

it is truly to do this, this point of convergence also needs to be the start of divergence of an opening out of theory to wider contexts. Trauma is intrinsically multidisciplinary, to make its future wider and bright, it needs to displace older paradigms and attend to dynamic configuration of cultural knowledge.

Chapter III: Textual analysis

III. Trauma in Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*

Norman Mailer's novel entitled *Why Are We in Vietnam?* is purely in fictional form where the absurdity of events has been observed in American social and political life during the time period of 1960's. The occasion of the dinner party in the night before the Disc Jockey and his friends leave to Vietnam. Mailer examines the motives and action behind the policy of the American vision and dream. The novel makes a powerful statement about the central role of the ritual of the hunt in shaping the mind of the American character, and its destructive impact when rises to the level of experience. Michael K. Glenday argued:

When most of Mailer's American writing peers were all but voiceless, unable or unwilling to assess the effects of war upon American culture.

Why Are We in Vietnam? Provided what Philip Beidler has recently referred to as a work of mythic resourcefulness which creates and 'experience' of Vietnam as true as any that ever existed in face (42).

Why Are We in Vietnam? is concerned with modern life in America. The hunting trip is the surface that hides the latent violence. It is hunt for power, sex, and destruction. This violence is against the idea of the American dream. What Mailer sees in Vietnam is a vision of evil and corrupt human as well as oppressive attitude of American rulers. Everywhere there is mention of weapons, bombs, and shootings which shows that American culture is now becoming very much vulgar and destructive. But the result brings quite a humiliating face for the Americans due to their defeat in the war. As a result, the cultural influence, economical power and self-centered attitude of America has proved a failure. There is no new form of creation

but only the vision and optimistic of the destruction. The hunters in the novel have fun on wounding the animals. In such a condition Gautman says:

“While the individual must try to live authentically, he is doomed to failure by the nature of American society. The bulk of Mailer’s novel presents the world in light, plague, sickness, decay and injustice” (148).

American society is shaped by large corporate institutions and agencies. There is no place for sharing human feelings. This novel is also a shattering of the American dream because they violate the moral values. Stanley Gautman argues on this topic:

“Disc Jockey’s hate for his father was to a large extent his rejection of the success oriented American dream which embodies a lust for money and power and denotes sex as necessary perversion”(149).

Different critics have interpreted “Vietnam” novel from different perspectives. Mailer’s novel is an allegorical depiction of fact, which is set in Vietnam but the other contemporary novelists, are not found speaking about the failure of American rulers about their hegemonic and imperial spirit.

This novel named, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Mailer’s thoughts are constantly focused on the disillusionment of American hopes. According to Mailer, American civilization is created out of some kind of violence. When Americans intervened Vietnam’s internal matter and went against it, they began to be killers and destroyers. The American’s who suppose themselves as the civilized manner became the most barbaric. This novel deals with this issue where Rusty begins killing the animals in Alaska Brooks Range. Rusty is the representative of the American soldiers who enters Vietnam to kill the North Vietnamese. At first America enters in Vietnam to calm the conflict, but at last it destroys everything.

In McConnel's argument the novel is particularly about Vietnam. He supports Mailer's idea and criticizes America's misguided foreign policy. He further says:

If any other American writer could have imagined the real dimensions of that obscene adventure as fully as Mailer, one is led to wonder. Following immediately upon the national shame of the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam war was ...the bloody in human, divisible incarnation of that Great War of the soft that Mailer's heroes ...had been prophesying about and preparing us for nearly two decades (45).

The American rulers who were known as white men, thought themselves as the deliverers of civilization. The white race named as Americans were not really virtuous. If they had been virtuous, there would not have conflict with the Vietnamese. The conflict irritated by Vietnamese was completely a different one. As a result, the conflict had brought a violent murdering of Vietnamese.

Ralph Ellison has criticized white race for exploiting blacks and Norman Mailer has written on the failure of white race to maintain their virtue. The hunters are unnecessarily destructive in the novel as much as the American soldiers were destructive in Vietnam to kill the natives. Mailer has set the novel in the Alaskan Brooks Range, where the setting is disturbed by Texas huntsman with their helicopters and high-tech weapons. According to Laura Adams, Mailer uses "hunted animals as the metaphor for the Vietnamese" (48) while for Joseph Wenke, "the use of the helicopter turns the hunt into the moral equivalent of an unjust war" (49).

The American participates in the war were worse because they went against the will and visions of the Vietnams. America's progressive technology was used to destroy the human beings in Vietnam by the way

with the hunting and injuring the wild animals in Alaskan Brooks Range. Mailer presents Rusty as a violator of nature who enjoys wounding animals and creates the threatening and burning atmosphere. That is why Norman Mailer has presented in his novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* It presents the unspoken scandal of American life, and .30-06 well in M.A. Bill's opinion they were the worst offenders. (87).

The unspeakable horror in Vietnam was created by Americans, so, the Americans are not the deliverers of civilizations but creator of horror.

The American soldier who killed Vietnamese during the early and late 1960's can be a parallel with Rusty's shooting of animals in the Alaska Brooks Range as depicted in the novel:

And Rusty-wetting his pants, doubtless from the excessive tension chose that moment to shoot, and griz went up to death in one last paroxysm, legs thrashing, brain exploding from new galvanizing and over heading of massive damage ... forgiveness gone. And coughed blood out of his throat as he died... (47).

The narrative gives an impression how horrifying it is to kill an animal. The Rusty's shot kills the animal but the animal is an image of Vietnamese person whom American whites think no less than animals. Alaska is rehearsal field for the killing and it tells about the failure of the American ideal and hopes.

D.J. introduces himself as having not only "done animal murder of the Soldiers sort," a remark linking him with the unjust slaughtering in Vietnam (7). D. J. is also "the philosopher and common engineer... grand synthesizer of the modern void"(151-52).

D. J., looking into his fathers eyes, sees there a remainder of “his favorite theory which is that America is run by a mysterious hidden master mind” (36). America’s destructive modern technology has brought devastative consequences. “They must be in a position to bomb and super blast any grigger who attracts” (116). Everywhere there is mentioning of weapons, bombs, and shooting.

It is not only the killings and high-tech weapons that caused the failure of the American vision but even the friendship is in confused flux with lust, murder, and homosexual bloody Vitalism:

Tex was ready to fight him to death yeah, now it was there, murder between them under all friendship, for God was a beast, not a man, and God said” Go out and kill-fulfill my will, go and kill” and they hung there each other on the knife of the divide in all conflict of lust to own the other yet in fear of being killed by the other and as the hour went by and the light ...and owned their fear ...they are twins, never to be near as lovers but killer brothers(203-4).

American white men think themselves as the beacons of civilization because the white race thinks its self god on earth but it doesn’t bring equality and success for all. The success of American Dream has been interpreted in terms of cultural hegemony. No doubt American Culture has influenced people everywhere. From a materialistic point of view America is still at the height of economic power. The changing in time and situation has made America a powerful nation. American culture is a white race oriented, and the black people are forced by the Americans to sing the glory of America. Due to such type of dominating habit, America tried to suppress and repressed the Vietnamese.

The result brought quite humiliating face for Americans because they were defeated in guerrilla warfare which has proved American's failure. America has been taken as a supreme power. The remarkable point about *Why Are We in Vietnam?* is its relation with American past which is narrated in "chap". Unlike many other war novelists, Mailer broke away from the American myth that America is fundamentally a classless society.

In the Novel, Mailer has successfully presented how much the Vietnamese have been exploited by the so called white race Americans. The characters are attributed with certain qualities of power, sex, dread and exploration of the spirituality. Mailer has presented machine, rifles and helicopter together with natural wild life and turning civilization into wilderness. Alaska, the place of hunting trip is a new state of America, where the hunters use helicopters in the case of destroying the life of innocent Vietnamese as well as the life of wild animals. Metaphorically, this destruction gives the symbolic meaning of killing the innocent Vietnamese where Frederick Karl argues: For Rusty, to "search and destroy" a bear something in nature that exceeds him is a compulsion (13).

Rusty's appearance is always like a brutal man who only copes with killing and making every thing lifeless. In Alaskan jungle, the hunters kill the wild animals like bear. Rusty is representative of American rulers where on the second hand D.J. is not interested in violent killing of animals. D.J. is forced to enlist his name to fight in Vietnam of the Army. Tex Hyde, is the another character who is involved in the violation of family taboo. According to the narrator's presentation, Tex is involved in Oedipus complex relation with his mother. In this case, he is a living terror to social and cultural norms.

The novel is a continuous expression of American life. America is known as the state of ideal nation. The writer, Mailer does not hesitate to protest up on the bullish nature of the Americans. Mailer saw America's misguided entry up on Vietnam as a fault policy, he present himself as the rebel of Vietnam War.

Civilization has left behind when Mailer presents a situation where both Rusty and D. J. shoot a bear in the Alaska Brook Range. When the bear experiences two shoots from both Rusty and D.J., Mailer narrates it as "its last paroxysm, legs thrashing and brain exploding" and Rusty is happy enough to claim it as his own (147).

Mailer presents a picture where a deer, wounded by hunters, is in such a pathetic condition which condemns the hunter like Rusty. D.J. says:

Listen; know the worst thing I ever saw. It was a poor deer being killed by an eagle. Some hunter had wounded the deer, the eagle finished the job or was about to finish ...plucking one eye of the deer (133).

Americans have suppressed the innocent Vietnamese like that the eagles have suppressed the small birds and insects. In the novel, the writer has presented a scene of a wounded deer which is further tortured by an eagle, Mailer intends to project the eagle as America. Eagle is the symbol of power upon the small birds where as America is the symbol of power upon the innocent Vietnamese people. Rusty, Eagle and America can be placed at the same powerful level. This power is somehow harmful for human beings in general as much as eagle is killing the injured deer.

The reference shows how pathetic and torture the deer faces where "Alaskan files are murdering the deer. The bear stands, suffers, then makes a dash for two hundred yards to escape the flies" (147). The hunter like the Rusty never thinks of others pain and

troubles. The so called civilized America represent as a powerful nation up on the innocent Vietnamese people.

Stanley Gutman observes that the characters are doomed to fail by the nature of American society. In “Mankind in Barbary” he argues:

The bulk of Mailer’s nonfiction presents the world in light of plague, sickness and decay which are operative principles ...If only the phenomena of contemporary society are observed, America ... is “fearful, half mind” and modern men have little hope of freeing themselves to achieve authentic existence (139).

Rusty carrying five rifles to shoot animals in Alaskan Brooks Range, is the depiction of Americas policy on Vietnam. Rusty has a war motive and his sole purpose is to destroy everything either by forcing young boys to do that or also by using high-tech weapons. What Rusty says on this matter is worth mentioning:

Big I like the feeling that if I miss a vital area I still can count on the big impact knocking them down, killing them by the total impact, shock! Its like aerial bombardment in the ... do not pinpoint vital areas in city, you blot it all out, you bury deep in fire, shit and fury (85).

Rusty does not seem to be afraid of fighting in war because he has a destructive war spirit. Rusty wants to destroy everything using bombs and air force. His motive is clearly known in Alaskan hunting trip when he carries many rifles to destroy everything.

American whites were trying to prove their race as essentially powerful. Rusty exemplifies about the corporate life. Rusty have a dishonest and the unpleasant motives and actions.

Tex Hyde is involved in incest relation with his mother. Tex Hyde and D.J. are homosexual partners. The embrace and sexuality have ill effects. The repressed needs eventually reemerge in perverse sexual desire and violent action. Mailer has used certain symbolic and figurative narrative to tell about the perverse act of the characters in the lines:

Not to mention all the wet pussy in America. Think of that in color T.V.- all the purple Majesty, hey, says Rusty, if they do America will really be looking for a white hope (110).

The narrative is vulgar. There is the exploration of the exploited barbaric nature of so-called civilized white Americans. There is no mutual relationships among the characters and has presented erotic sex-violence.

Here, the writer has exposed the naked reality of American characters where Mailer does not hesitate to present pornography on his writing. The central action of the novel is hunt in Alaska but it becomes a hunt for perverse sexuality where Stanley Gutman argues on this issue:

D.J.'s hate for his father is to a large extent his rejection of the success-oriented American Dream which embodies a lust for money and power and demotes sex to necessary perversion (149).

The structure of the language and narrative both creates the structure of violent action. The characters speaking manner also shows obscenity. Mailer has expressed the belief that the most succinct expression of existential thought is the soldier's ubiquitous use of "shit" and "ass". These words are found through out the novel. Vietnamese had checked American wilderness through guerilla war. Mailer mostly tells about bizarre,

violent story of evil, death and strange hopes. The repressed violence in Alaskan hunting trip does not give the success to American will and power.

Vietnam became a site for contest between American military troop and Vietnamese people. But finally America could not counter guerrilla warfare and tried to make a peace agreement. Vietnamese were fighting for their nation while Americans were trying to snatch the joy of Vietnamese people. The world saw America's moral defeat and humiliation in this fight. At the same time, America needed to win a war after the defeat in Vietnam.

On the other hand, America has known how to murder and also have known how to create? This kind of hope was with Ralph Ellison during the time period of forties. So, the hope, freedom and optimism have turned to be as a death land when it began to aspire for super power. Kenney E., a character of *Why Are We in Vietnam?* feel that American people are best people in the world. He puts his reasons in this form:

They count every last pelt, they shall twist the tape measuring a Dall's horn to get an extra quarter of an inch on the length ... They hunt from four in the morning to midnight before they get back to camp, up at four again, they bring out every last piece of meat they can tote, they just take the head and ... they maim game all over the damn place and then let them suffer. We aren't like that .We have the finest people...(64).

Though Mailer was not allowed to go to Vietnam as a reporter and he collected data from different sources. Norman Mailer has become very influential novelist as well as a critic. His novel named *Why Are We in Vietnam?* is a reflection of America's social, cultural and economic expression.

The writer, Mailer sees the white Americans at the center of every action. Mailer as a writer and a public figure has presented that blacks and ethnic minorities are being alienated because they are thought to be uncivilized and immoral. This racial conflict has been taken place in America. American's who are not successful to avoid racial conflict, yet have begun to teach the lesson of morality, civilization and glory of foreign countries.

This novel shows how white men wanted to exile the black Americans from that place. Mailer saw that conflict as a part of American culture and present the real situation of American white culture. Richard Pierre, in his "*The Minority Within*" focuses on the quest for identity of American Dream. For him "the minority is not God or the Devil, Black or white, woman or man" (1). But in *Why Are We in Vietnam?* it is not only the colored or economically challenged group that is in the state of disillusionment Vietnam War might be the outcome of color conflict or racial ground where Mailer has depicted the failure of American vision due to the so-called American's glory.

Mailer is also prepared for the unique mixtures of the world of daily news, the world Americans taken for granted, with the world of night mare and bitter reality. All the characters in the novel try to prove their success only in shooting, killing and indulging in perverse act, which produce the failure and wild result. Alaska hunting trip is a metaphorical presentation of the savagery where the hunters urge to kill the animals.

Americans are not conscious of their desire and the out come of their practice. They hope to make American vision successful but never success. The protagonist of the novel is D.J., Richard Poirier views the protagonist as a character "some of the time a wild, brilliant, witty, savage, eager and not unappealing boy" (94). During the time of hunting D.J. and Tex leave their weapons behind and head North into the icy peaks of the Brooks Range. The icy peaks resemble the death and decay. The act of leaving weapons

can be taken as a good point but soon they are about to go to fight in Vietnam. This final determination has challenges the dream of peace D.J. suggests to the readers:

What they see is a range of mountains a head with real peaks, and they are going to go on up into them ... there you all posed y' all ready for the next adventure in the heart land of the north well hold your ... Tex Hyde who is, insist up on it, a most peculiar blendaroon of humanity and evil, technological know-how, pure savagery...(161).

The sex violence is corrupting American culture and the Americans are no more cultured and civilized. An American character named Gusty Hyde is quite perverse in his habit. He is depicted in the novel as an intestinal slime:

He is bull fuck faggot fucker ...bull fuck, sheep fucker, bull fuck waitress fucker, he 'd even fuck a keyhole if it was the sized appropriate to a castle door (162).

Mailer has used direct language to depict the real nature of characters. It also proves what kind of habit an American youth may possess. This is the exposure of naked picturization of a so-called civilized race. This is particularly significant in the sense that Americans blame other cultures as essentially vulgar and the people as uncivilized. Mailer shows that no race or culture can guarantee the individual's manner as essentially bad or good. The characters presented in this novel are more violent though Americans claim themselves the most civilized people. D.J. and Tex are agents of some horrid proliferating power that propels America into Vietnam.

According to the theory of evolution of Darwin America's struggle to dominate Vietnam is natural and vital. America is pushed some step back due to the failure from Vietnam guerrilla warfare. This failure breaks a society into the nightmare world of

horror. The glory of America has been deprived due to this failure with Vietnam. The cultural influence of America in the world cannot be termed as a fulfillment of American Dream and vision. Rusty, who is representative of Americans, wants to destroy others and so did they in Vietnam, though American culture cannot be celebrated as superior to any other culture. When the American Dream was about to get partial initial fulfillment, paradoxically the first time the limits and contradictions of that dream became apparent.

The aspirations, beliefs, values, taken for granted assumptions and so on make Americans celebrate the success of American vision and Dream. On the contrary, the racial segregation, domineering policy and interventionist policy of America on foreign nation's affairs are in constant flux and paradox. Mailer has observed all such facts in this novel, and has presented the failure of America in Vietnam on moral ground and shattering of American Dream because of violence. The novel is concerned with modern life in America. Mailer, observing the nature of Americans, has put the characters with in the scenario of American society.

The three kinds of violence are mentioned in the story of the novel. They are:

- i) Violence of nature.
- ii) American corporate life and modern institutions.
- iii) The implicit American mores and repression of sex desire.

These three kinds of violence are inter-related to each other. The hunting trip is surface and it hides the latent violence. It is a hunt for sex, for power and destruction. These violence's are against the ideals of American vision and Dream. The life is sterile in Alaska wild-life area.

D.J.'s initial life is guided by hopes and discovery. His hope was to become an artist and observer of nature. Gradually, he becomes part of the violence. Believing in

the concept of optimistic approach to life, D.J. tells the readers that there is “no such thing as a totally false perception” (Mailer 8). The fact is that the hunting party comes from Texas is significant. Mailer portrays the state as American qualities of vulgarity and barren commercialism. D.J. is becoming a part of America. D.J. the main character of the novel, is a young man like many other Americans, aspires to ascend the snowy mountains but this mountain peak is beyond the access of culture and civilization and consequently risky. D.J. leaves the civilization behind to perceive insights and experiences but he falls and becomes a lonely figure which Americans do not accept as their level. So, he reunites to his father and becomes ready to fight in Vietnam. Mailer had great hopes from Americas before Vietnam conflict and America is growing hostility toward other nations. In the war, there is the vision of evil, human frailty and oppressive attitude of American rulers.

When D.J. and Tex shoot a wolf both drink its blood and “the wolf’s blood begins to rise inside them.”(119). This act was habitual for primitive people. Later on, D.J. kills a bear and becomes the part of the wilderness: Two waves of murder, human and animal, meet across the snow in a charge as fantastic and beautiful (181).

The animal murdering is a destructive act. This killing animal is symbolically presented as killing the innocent Vietnamese people. At this time Mailer says “Human Murder”. This murder on Alaskan Brooks Range can be associated to Vietnam War. There is no such action in the novel, which can be praised as a spark for the fulfillment of American Dream.

All the characters in the novel are white Americans and they are all barbaric in their habits regardless what ever they may claim as civilized. The activities of D.J., Tex and Rusty all are extremely horrific. In this matter Stanley T. Gutman says:

While the individual must try to live authentically, he is doomed to failure by the nature of American society. The bulk of Mailer's novel presents the world in light: plague, sickness, decay and injustice (148).

The society itself is corrupt, and the characters are parts of American society. Mailer presents a hopeless society where institutional violence, sex violence and nature violence are dominant. This violence brings plague and degeneration of American values. Modern Americans, like Rusty, who belong to more than a dozen of institutions, have become the parts of the sick society. Rusty's progression in his business does not prevent him from being inhuman and hostile.

Pete, another character in the story, buys the biggest gun and carries it, though unsuitable for hunt. It is only a source to threaten the animals. At the same time, Rusty enters with five rifles where as only one can work. In fact, Mailer is making an analogy to Vietnam War presenting how Americans expose their weapons to kill any one who comes on their way. Rusty's motive is clear when he says:

I still can count on the big impact knocking them down, killing them by total impact...Its like aerial bombardment ...donot pinpoint vital areas in a city, you blot it all out, it bury deep in fire...(85).

Rusty is corporate American executive. He kills animals in Alaska hunting trip. He hopes to set fire on the jungle so that all animals would be killed. This is reference to Vietnam bombardment whereas American soldiers tried to devastate the Vietnamese life dropping bombs through helicopters. This also somehow depicts how Americans carelessly burnt cities in Vietnam. The bombardment created by Americans to harass Vietnamese unveils the mask of America's motive behind its involvement in Vietnamese politics. These all evidences has proved American culture essentially corrupt and people

have wicked soul which the writer Mailer has used to point out. At the same time, the individual activities of American characters are lustful.

D.J.'s frustration is the cause of lack of sexual release. Mailer presents D.J.'s perverse activities in "Chapter Nine", whereas D.J. expresses his dissatisfaction and he says "get in fast, get out fast cause they greedy...All these ...converting their schizophrenia into cancer juice"(155-58).

In this sense, the novel is a gallery of sexual freaks. It exposes the culture that is growing in American inner society. Therefore, Mailer examines the sickness at the heart of American society. Hence, Gautam's views introduce a logical remark regarding the shift from unfulfilled sex hunt to make a war. Gutman argues:

Mailer suggests that the American nation vents its frustrations and satisfies its repressed sexual needs by making war in Vietnam and by host of other actions. The guns and rifles Rusty, Pete, and their group bring to hunt in Alaska are metaphorical weapons (156).

American Dream demands a healthy and cooperative relationship among people within the nation and abroad. America's involvement in Vietnam only brought a humiliation and guilt feelings among Americans for their daring deed. In this way, Americans faced the shattering of their desires.

American militia was growing powerful by the time of post war era, so American presence in Vietnam. Many critics, who observed Vietnam war, remark that the united states major emphasis was to check terrorism. Many Americans are of the opinion that America could easily have defeated guerrilla warriors, but this hope and will cast a shadowy influence which bring depress and reject to the Americans, and bring failure in

American's rigid policy. Therefore they conclude that since it was a matter of interference, America made a flexible approach. Alexander Deconde asserts:

Prejudice against Asians permeated the entire top levels of administration. Exclamations of racial fear mistrust and disdain often intruded in to the discussions of the policy makers (150).

According to Decode, American policy was not entirely guided by justice. America was increasing the number of soldiers in Vietnam because it wanted to harass Vietnamese. About half of a million of American soldiers tried their best to exploit Vietnam but finally America lost the battle where the policy was rigid.

However, there are some other critics who interpret Vietnam War in some other perspectives. American power was growing wild to dominate Vietnam. Because of American's dominance through many corporations and agencies in Vietnam, the street signs in Vietnam's old capital city, which, show Vietnamese's reaction. It was not only in political terms, America entered in Vietnam. America furthered the Vietnam conflict on racial terms also. To prevent this conflict, United States intervened with large military forces where American white men tried to prove their superiority. They violated the Geneva Agreements of July 1954 and Wangdung conference of 1955, which says "no interference in other nation's internal affairs".

American whites must have observed Vietnamese as foes and gooks and even as dehumanized creatures, where Americans committed wicked physical violence. They supposed the entire Vietnam's population as enemy. The Americans think more civilized as a result white Americans began to kill and fight with Vietnamese.

Mailer presents in the novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* "Go out and kill-fulfill my will, go and kill" (Mailer 203). This order must have come from white American

commander who is presented as 'god' for American Soldiers. It is an order to crush the Vietnamese people.

Alexander Deconde asserts the factual date that "in march 1968" this kind of hatred of Vietnamese exploded when "American troops tortured, raped and murdered at least 347 unarmed civilian men, women and children in the village of my Lai"(152).

In order to prove their superiority American whites present a vague and loose logic in the matter of American aggression against Vietnam. The racial conflict was intensified by white Americans where many black critics have focused on race .Even after making many agreements and laws America was violating all sort of rules. They could not follow rules, and could not prove their primitive nature. They tried to extend white's colony every where.

Rusty, the character of this novel, who is a bombardier and destroyer, instigates a seed of hatred in the heart of the young boys instead of teaching them to live a cooperative life. Mailer tries to show that all violent actions are the product of this disbelief and distrust. The white American who present themselves as the leaders always tries to suppress the blacks and minorities groups as well as ethnic people. Mailer has depicted that kind of guilt feelings through the white characters. American white men are violators of mutual relationship. Americans were wanted to prove their superiority but at last, they only show a face of greater shame.

The American act proved that Americans who had dreamed for their emancipation from British colony in past, gradually forgot that moment and aspired to be the colonizer. American's wanted to suppress the yellow colored people in Vietnam. But their failure had produced guilt feeling in white Americans own involvement in the war. American's internal conflict was not clam because of racial hostility and skin-color

dichotomy. American's want to show the superiority feeling as the policy but they are violators of norms. Their culture is not essentially virtuous and they are not as much civilized as they claim. Mailer has exposed the naked reality in the novel so far we discussed. The Vietnamese people are suppressed by American white men. Vietnamese people got their liberty, freedom and pursuit of happiness from American domination through struggle.

America, the highly developed and blessed country had built so many technological weapons and bring in use such high power weapons but at last, technological progress of weapons can't be termed as a source of success to fight upon the Vietnamese, America the respected city, wants to live a life of dignity but turns out to be a killer, destroyer and murderer of the innocent Vietnamese people, Mailer tries to show that the new generation people of America can do nothing new and intellectual work but only do the betray and pollute one another. America, a beacon of civilization has become a complete failure. America had enslaved blacks and show cruel activities upon the blacks. Technological progress had done nothing new and creative up on the Vietnamese people. Technological progress cannot balance the failure of the American vision up on the Vietnamese.

The characters, who are superficially going to hunt in Alaska Brooks Rang, are real soldiers who went to Vietnam taking weapons to shoot Vietnamese whom Americans termed barbaric and wild like animals. But neither Vietnamese were defeated nor American's were culturally superior. American's returned with shameful faces. The dream of victory of Americans had turned into the nightmare of humiliation. Americans were in Vietnam in order to fulfill their dream and will but at last, they failed.

Mailer reveals the tragic vision of the American society where there is the depiction of lamentation and expression of killings as well as betrayal and murder. The little hope of Americans had submerged in the grid of nightmare. We discussed on various perspectives regarding the failure of American vision and motive up on the Vietnamese people in the novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* This novel show how blacks and minorities group people are being deprived from the facility and opportunities in America. This novel shows white men instigate a sense of hatred in the hearts of black people which forces blacks to counter white men's cruelties only through violent and criminal action. At the same time there is the grown-up of vulgarity in the white culture where in the initial phase, America claimed as a cultured and civilized race but at last, show their pale, pathetic and humiliated face.

Conclusion

Trauma is a complex form of memory, the traumatic incident may be an accurate one but it is beyond the conscious recall and control of the human beings. Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* is a novel based on counter-memories of historical trauma existing in Alaskan Brooks Range and this novel is afflicted with traumatic experience. The novel named, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* all the characters have been living a traumatized life. Most of the significant characters of the novel have faced traumatic life and giving out let to their repressed experiences of trauma. Hence, it is important to talk about the theory of Historical trauma and all the characters are lacerated and the researcher has felt that it is necessary to expound on the theory of historical trauma which is the basic methodological tool that will be applied in the text. This trauma theory is perfectly applicable in dealing with the representation of traumatic event. Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* has represented traumatic experience of some characters who were forced to stand on the edge of traumatic life because of the hazy and unstatic nature.

Trauma is a kind of wound. When we call an event traumatic, we are borrowing the word from the Greek where it refers to a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope. Trauma is a physical or emotional wound that causes stress and shock. Traumas do not occur only to individuals but also to whole communities and entire nations, whether occurring to an individual or a nation, a trauma usually leaves a trace, a mnemonic site. A traumatic narrative is a way through which younger generations often acquire war memories. Telling and listening to such stories are ways of managing collective traumas: no matter how painful they may be, survivor narratives are retold so that the horrors of a particular trauma will not have been experienced in vain. In many

survivor narratives about war, for example, the trauma is seen as the driving force behind individual's desires to survive and rebuild their lives after the war.

D.J., the main protagonist of the novel and most of his friends developed the sense of loss which rendered their psyche entirely traumatic. The failure of the Americans in the war made them alienated and to some extent they were homeless and helpless. By applying trauma theory the mental and psychic troubles of some leading characters can easily be dealt with. This research pictures out the traumatic vision through the means of war wounded hero and characters devastated and destructive activities as well as shady future. D.J., the narrator and hero of the novel and other characters are haunted by terrible war memories. Round the whole novel, the characters are motivated by the shady, bitter and horrible past memories which not only block their attempt to forget it but also hunt their present.

In Fact, here in this novel, physical and psychological sufferings of the characters are deteriorated so, in this regard, traumatic experiences are extended when they try to escape from suffering and haunting of the past to the present becomes traumatic. Trauma is defined as a severe emotional shock having a deep effect upon the personality, characters authentic, beautiful and decorated life ruined by this emotional shock and other war effects .D.J. , the narrator and hero of the novel is haunted by the some malignant power of past and the traumatic dread turns out in a hopeless situation. Most of the characters are young Americans living in traumatic war experiences.

The whole novel is furnished with the smell of war and its destructive nature. The smell of war haunts everyone in the novel, the characters want to avoid their shady and bitter past which is closely attached to them. The characters are haunted by physical and psychological wound because the traumas compel the characters to cope with past

memory and bitter experiences. Furthermore, D.J.'s war wound, loss of values, and his own traumatic condition tremendously visualize the traumatic vision in the novel. The haunting image of war experience leaves American in pain, sorrow, depression and anxiety which continuous traumatic haunting.

Why Are We in Vietnam? novel clearly shows the traumatic experience of the characters and also sketches a vivid portrayal of traumatic experience of the modern American life. Here, traumatic experiences are described as the response to an unexpected violent events. War which is described as a brutal work fills in the mind of every Americans a painful and chronic headache. War feels the sense of despair and grief at the heart of the American characters establishing the harsh conditions and constantly seeking solace from a world ravaged by war.

Disc Jockey, is that traumatic and pathetic hero who lives only in pain, disdain and frustration. Most of the characters get troubled and wounded on the battlefield. They want to get relief from suffering but their suffering is not over though they try to escape from suffering to peaceful environment and they become victimized by external and internal forces of war which make them failure to maintain psychological equilibrium. In fact, people in the modern world suffer with the anxiety, depression, frustration and alienation which create the chaotic and destruction. So through out the novel, the sufferings and traumatic experiences of the characters are inevitable.

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