

Tribhuvan University

Gender Trauma in Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in English

By

Sujata Sharma

University Campus

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

March 2014

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Central Department of English
Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Letter of Recommendation

Sujata Sharma has completed her thesis entitled “Gender Trauma in Erica Jong’s *Fear of Flying*” under my supervision. She carried out her research from 2069/12/15 B. S. to 2070/12/03 B. S. I hereby recommend her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Shankar Subedi

Supervisor

Date: 2070/12/03

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Gender Trauma in Erica Jong’s *Fear of Flying*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sujata Sharma has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of people for their help with this project. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Shankar Subedi, my guide and the Lecturer at the Central Department of English, whose contribution in stimulating suggestions and encouragement, helped me to coordinate and complete my project. He inspired me greatly to complete this project. His willingness to motivate me contributed tremendously in this research. So, I would like to extend my sincere and hearty gratitude to him.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of the Central Department of English, for the appreciation of this research work in its present shape. I would like to expand my sincere thanks to respected teachers Mr Badri Acharya, Raj Kumar Baral, Dr. Shiva Rijal and Saroj Ghimire who inspired me to materialize my dream of Master of Arts in English Literature.

At last, I would like to remember my parents for their support, love and blessing to complete my M. A. in English. I would also like to express my gratefulness to my friends and relatives, who directly or indirectly helped me to bring this thesis in its current form.

With all this said, it should be noted that the mistakes, shortcomings, and oversights are all my own.

Sujata Sharma

March 2014

Abstract

This research examines how a woman with a different cast of mind comes in a conflicting relation with society. In Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*, a woman with dreadful and different taste undertakes a journey to Europe. The American society restricts her inner longing for freedom. So she takes a tour to Europe with her husband Bennett. She is, at first, thrilled with the free cultural zones of European cities. Dodging the eyes of Bennett, she sleeps with a man who is sexually virile and vigorous. She goes to the extent of being faithless to her loyal husband for getting different sexual taste from a strange man. Her husband abandons her as he knows her disloyalty. With the guilt of disloyalty, at her heart, she settles in London with her sex partner, Adrian. A few months after her living together with Adrian, she is awake to a new reality. Adrian leaves her because he is already a married man with two children and wife. Beset with disloyalty, guilt, dilemma, alienation and ignominy, Isadora cannot handle her life. She is traumatized beyond recovery.

Table of Contents

	Page No
Letter of Recommendation	
Letter of Approval	
Acknowledgement	
Abstract	
Chapter I. Representation of the Female Protagonist in Erica Jong's <i>The Fear of Flying</i>	1-13
Chapter II. Gender Trauma in Erica Jong's <i>The Fear of Flying</i>	14-39
Chapter III. Non-Conformity and Trauma	40-42
Works Cited	

I. Representation of the Female Protagonist in Erica Jong's *The Fear of Flying*

This research entitled "Gender Trauma in Erica Jong's Fear of Flying" examines how a woman named Isadora Wing's preference for the unconventional things brings her in conflicting relation with the patriarchal society of her time. Isadora is a woman, whose marriage crashes disastrously, compelling her to seek alternative relation which can be a substitute of marriage. She derives intense pleasure from writing poems and fictions. The idea of reproducing children after marriage is anathema to her. Thinking on the responsibility of breeding children to her husband brings detestation to her. She says funnily that her poems and short stories are the real children she tends to care for.

Even in her sexual pursuit, she seems to be crazy for zipless fuck. The most ignominious and startling truth about Isadora is that wants to be fucked violently by another man other than her husband. Though her marriage brings comfort, security, love and affection for her, she is inwardly driven by the sexual fantasy of discovering the body of strange man. Such type of unconventional and socially forbidden hunger has become the driving force of Isadora's life. Her hankering after zipless fuck not her protest against her marriage because she has no complaints against her second marriage. Nor is it her move towards individual freedom since marriage has not curbed her freedom.

Isadora knows that it is ignominious and detrimental to breach the marital tie and social norm for the sake of zipless fuck. Yet she does hang after it. She herself says she does not know what she is doing and where she is heading. Her irrational inclination, her sporadic decision to break her marriage with Bennett and her inability to curb her socially forbidden desires push her life to the traumatic corner from which she hardly recovers.

In parallel to this, the lingering patriarchal biases are also helpful in the inception of her traumatic condition. Her first husband stoops fucking her like machine for a long time.

After some months he forcibly inserted his penis to her mouth. All these aggressive and insane activities of Brian paralyze Isadora. The moment she knows Brian is psychotic; she breaks her marriage with him. She abandons him. It is natural for Isadora to discontinue her marital relation with Brian since he is aggressive and puzzlingly psychotic. But the society in which she lives, denounces her as a callous and insensitive bitch who quits her husband when he is hospitalized and in an urgent need of her help and care. This sort of limited and one-sided social perspective inflicts traumatic agony in her.

The patriarchal society is intolerant of Isadora's inclination of Isadora's inclination towards the different. Isadora is not so committed and assertive as she appears to be. As a result, she is afflicted with traumatic jolts and lacerations Once Isadora is caught red hand by her married sister Randy when Isadora is including incidents from Randy's private life. To give a different touch to her literary writing, Isadora often dabbles in autobiographical revelry. BUT Randy dislikes it vehemently. In a moment of fury and ire, Randy calls Isadora's writing as masturbatory and exhibitionistic.

Randy admonishes her to quit producing literary rubbishes and reproduce children. For living an abstract, dry and tasteless literary life, Randy blames Isadora. Isadora is accused of sleeping with bald and bleary-eyed professors and writers. Going to the extent of calling Isadora a woman with whorish proclivity, Randy tells her to reproduce baby and enjoy clinging to the secure anchorage of life. Insulted and assaulted by Randy, Isadora is alerted. She instantly feels repentant for being a writer. To write is to equal to her passion. To compel her to stop writing is to kill her vibrant spirit and enthusiasm.

After Randy's insult and invective, Isadora plunges into repentance, lamentation and feelings of futility. All these hurdles and hindrances, which patriarchal society sets for women, paralyze her traumatically. She does not know clearly in concrete terms whether she

is on the right track or wrong. The more she tries to reflect on her present plight, the more depressed and traumatized her.

After quitting Brain, Isadora marries Bennett. He is liberal enough to handle Isadora and her exotic propensity. Though her marital life with Bennett was harmonious and undisturbed, Isadora quitted Bennett because she found a sexually virile and vigorous man named Adrian. While rejecting Bennett and accepting Adrian, Isadora says she herself does not know what she is doing. She lives with Adrian for some months in London. When Adrian leaves her permanently, she has no option other than getting drowned into the traumatic misery. Her own reckless and headstrong temperament inflicts further traumatic wound in Isadora.

Eric Jongs' *Fear of Flying* represents an American lady's inner conflict and traumatic agony. She is an American woman whose first marriage crashed and then she marries second times. Her marital life with her second life is not satisfactory. She is immensely oppressed and affected by the oppressive married life and traditional gender role. Her journey to Europe for vacationing brings profound change in her inner self. She freely enjoys her extramarital affair with a man who was already a married man with family and children. The idea of being loyal to her husband disappears as her extramarital affair with Adrian intensifies. Later she is devastated by callousness and arrogance of her lover.

The new taste of romantic life and extramarital adventure poison her American notion of femininity and domesticity. Finally she is haunted by her choices and rash decisions taken on the romantic spur of moment. Traveling throughout Europe with a man who is not her husband, she discovers her true self through her complete loss of security. Therein lays the principal irony of *Fear of Flying*. The journey that the main character takes in order to gain the traits that she sees in her heroines only leads her to find that they were hidden within her.

In Erica's *Fear of Flying*, Isadora's quest for self-realization is problematical. She makes a journey to Europe in the hope of achieving transcendence from the mundane and oppressive life in American society. But she encounters those things which put her on the wrong track. Betraying her husband, she embarks on extramarital affair. After some time her extramarital partner seduces her and abandons her mercilessly. In Eric Jong's *Fears of Flying*, Isadora, the major character, is afflicted with inner conflict and traumatic injury. One the one hand, she wants to be loyal to her second husband. On the other, she surrenders to the sexual thirst of her extramarital partner. Her stable feminist psychology is traumatically wounded by sterility, monotonous married life, tragic shock of betrayal in extramarital affair, unconscious fear of flying, and legacy of feminist arrogance.

The major thrust of this research is to examine how a woman's stable psyche is adversely affected by the oppressive and monotonous married life. At the same time this research tries to find out how the inability to resist temptation of extramarital affair and the compulsion to be loyal to husband put Isadora in the state of inner mental conflict. The subsequent effects of all these factors would be no less than the traumatic effects. This study is strictly confined in the analysis of how socio-patriarchal factors contribute to the gender trauma. The imposition of patriarchal ideals on the freedom-conscious life of a married woman is likely to generate traumatic shock and painful silence. This fact is tested in Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*. The protagonist and her journey to Europe are the pivotal point f this research.

Erica Jong is the most controversial American novelist. The forbidden subject matters are immensely available in her novels and short stories. As a writer she wants to prove that even the so-called ideals social institutions have restricted women's longing for freedom and fulfillment. The way she writes and the tone in which she depicts the sufferings of women show that she is an iconoclastic writer who wants to demolish all the norms of

society. Some of her novels contain impractical ideals which can hardly be accomplished in the society. The most amazing fact about Erica Jong is that she advocates for negotiated adultery. She holds the opinion that marriage has restricted and repressed some of the most innermost longing and impulses of women. So they should be encouraged to practice adultery by negotiating with their husband. This is the most highly controversial and icon-shattering view of Erica. Most of her novels like *How to Save Your Own Life* and *Parachutes and Kisses* recommend negotiated adultery. Such demand, if legitimized, weakens the foundation of society. That is why it is necessary to probe critically what she recommends as an author.

In her memorable work *Fanny Hackabout Jones*, Erica Jong describes how the funny approach of man enables him to harmonize and befriend who is no less than a shrew. All the men who take domineering approach and attitude to this shrewish woman fail to soften her. Only the farcical and jocular approach of Jone succeeds in effecting true transformation in woman. In *Any Woman's Blues*, Erica Jong explores how important personal liberty is for woman who are tempted at first by the wealth of her husband but later on repent later for counting personal liberty as secondary things.

Her novels spark plenty of controversies in the circle of the readers of American readers. Her style of dealing with gender issue has provoked controversies. Amidst controversies also her literary writings carry currency. Assuming arrant and assertive tone, Jong struggles to project her deep-seated anger and bitterness against the oppressive social codes and cultural conviction. Monica Dickens puts forward the following views regarding *Fear of Flying*:

Compulsive daydreamer Isadora Wing does not want much- just to be free and to find the perfect, guiltless, zipless sexual encounter. Pursuing this ideal across two continents, she discovers just how hard it can be to make one's

dreams come true. Though Isadora fears flying, she forces herself to keep travelling, risking her marriage and even her life for her own special brand of liberation. This intensely witty and exuberant novel is about how Isadora gains her freedom and loses her fear. (40)

Monica Dickens is of the opinion that Erica Joong wants to fly in the open and unbounded sky of individual freedom. But she is not confident inwardly in her individual quest. She is already involved in the bond of marriage. She is expected to obey some codes and conducts. Of course she is embittered by the persistent sense of compulsion. She tends to live a spontaneous life. Yet she trembles at the fantastic idea of flying in the world of absolute freedom.

Henry Miller is the leading American novelist and literary critic. He has criticized *Fear of Flying* in terms of its subversive ethos. He goes so far as to say that *Fear of Flying* is the extension of the theme of his novel *The Tropic of Cancer*. Miller makes the following observation:

The major protagonist's journey to Europe is a symbolic journey. It is a journey of self realization. Haunted by the danger of self-erasure, she makes a continental journey. She learns about the value and importance of caring one's own self for the sake of living a life of dignity and independent cast of mind. By the time she is about return to America, she had achieved a considerable degree of awakening. Her journey implants in her mind a firm sense of epiphanic consciousness. (17)

Miller assumes that the protagonist's journey to Europe brings profound transformation in her life. But Miller does not talk about how lower she had to fall in order to achieve the higher

level of awareness as to the shifting notion of gender relation and identity. For the sake of cultivating dynamic sense of life, she had to become the cheater and betrayer.

Andrew Sander is one of the noted critics of Erica Jong. He judges Erica's novel on the basis of her power to coin new terms and neologisms to hint at her original idea. Andrew puts forward the following opinions:

This novel of Jong helps the emergence of new notion of sexual freedom and sexual revolution. Jong comes across a new kind of sexual relationship. To describe this new kind of sexual intercourse with a lover a married woman prefers, Jong coins a new term 'zipless fuck'. Zipless fuck denotes that kind of sexual intercourse which is devoid of affection, understanding and familiarity. Such a relation can occur between a married woman and her unprecedented lover. This novel is full of new literary coinage and allusions. (27)

To match with the new notion of radical feminism, Jong coins new terms like zipless fuck and other new phrasal expressions. These terms and phrasal expressions exemplify the fact that Jong is dissatisfied with the languages of dominant discourses. Perhaps, Jong wants to maintain the radical sense of decorum.

Robert Bernard reveals the hidden theme of the double consciousness of those women who are conscious of the growing affects of feminism. Due to the excessive exposure of Isadora to the doctrine of feminism, he has lost the grace and benefit of coherent consciousness. She is prone to double consciousness. Bernard opines the following views:

Isadora is torn between the dull security of her marriage to Bennett and the unstable excitement of an affair with Adrian. Having both passion and security, it seems, is too much to ask. Isadora is also a writer who has

struggled for years to find the confidence and discipline to turn her craft into a profession. She may be intelligent and educated, but she can also be terribly immature and irrational. She's not a heroine I'd aspire to be but I admire the fact that she articulates and struggles with her conflicts, and this is where the novel has its greatest strengths - it's sincere and insightful in depicting dilemmas some women struggle with. (37)

Robert Bernard sees no difference between the life of Erica Jong and the protagonist, Isadora. He traces the similarity proximity between authorial life and the individual life of protagonist. Extreme feminist consciousness harms her conscience. *Fear of Flying* is obviously semi-autobiographical, and Jong seems determined to show off Isadora's intellectual prowess.

Hazra Sudeshna is rather interested in exposing the loophole of this novel. But she does not decline to hail this novel as the remarkable piece of post-feminism. Sudeshna laments that the author has not made effort to distinguish between the voice of nymphomaniac woman and a woman with fragile confidence. Sudeshna contends in the following way:

The novel is much less cheerful than the cover would indicate and far less about the differences conformism and non-conformism. But once readers adjust their expectations accordingly, there is still much enjoyment to be found between these pages, especially for those who enjoy reading about the immigrant experience. There is some difficulty in separating the voices of Randy and Isadora, especially in the beginning of the novel but that becomes easier as the novel progresses. Overall, this had a few problems structurally. It belongs to the category of woman's writing at the time in which feminism has reached the stage of decadence. (38)

Without having solid knowledge about the decadence of feminism, it would be challenging to make sense out of Isadora's journey and struggle to maximize extreme sexual ecstasy. But the striking aspect of his novel is the boldness and superior rational audacity of female characters who love to handle the suffering of their lives singlehandedly. In this regard, Sudeshna's viewpoint sounds highly contextual and identifiable. But the post-feminist quality of this text carries weight.

In the literary life of Isadora, her personal life and private experiences have left profound impact. The loving and affectionate nature of Bennett has found reflection in her style of caring the sexually virile and virulent man. This kind of conception is developed about Isadora is developed by Kristian Herron. Herron contends that:

The ongoing character development of Isadora continues to entertain the reader in this novel. Much of her personal life has come to light over the last few novels and this one adds another layer to the story. Isadora, and those around whom she is surrounded, continue to grow and develop, entertaining the reader throughout. With some great plot and excellent storylines, Jong does not disappoint or leave the reader bored. (22)

To expose prominently the values, ideals and spirit of a character in the center of the novel is to prioritize the art of character portrayal. Apart from dramatizing events in this novel, Jong has given considerable degree of attention to the technique of character portrayal. The real strength of this novel arises solely from the perspective of character portrayal. Herron comes to conclude that Erica lacks substantial power to dramatize the decisive events of this novel. Rather she is well-versed in the art of portrayal character that is dramatically convincing.

Peggy Antrobus takes *Fear of the Flying* as the dark psychological tale. Opposite experiences are juxtaposed side by side to intensify the psychological effects of incidents and

events that occur in the daily professional life of several characters like Briar, Randy and others. Antrobus's view regarding the psychological effect of character is mentioned below:

Writing one of her best, Erica Jong has given us a dark psychological tale, wound tightly with familiar friends and foes. Followers of Isadora will revel in this undertaking. Her relationships with family, friends, and writers --- as well as the truth and the imagined --- all collide in this intriguing story. Beautiful women are tempted towards fascists, according Isadora's opinion. (68)

Though characters are manipulated to act realistically; setting and other narrative atmosphere remain mysterious. Mystery is the most desirable component of crime thriller fiction. Without it, crime fiction loses its identity. But to introduce elements of realism within the framework of mystery is to show a great stroke of action too. Building suspense is another way to create aura of mystery.

Stefanie Castillo is one of the leading critics of Erica Jong. She goes so far as to seek elements of realism even in the crime fictions. She studies Jong's novels in proximity with the realistic novels of Charles Dickens. Castillo gives the following view in this regard:

Erica Jong retains that finer Dickensian indignation with the ways of the world that had been neglected by the small landscapes of much so-called serious writing. Her *Fear of the Flying* is her most engrossing effort in years. The world of despair and elation, love and loyalty as created by Erica Jong is fascinating, richly drawn and truly memorable. She is adept in capturing the passion of psycho-feminist techniques. (55)

Within the world of love, betrayal and deception, commitment and insanity, Erica has succeeded in dealing with the issues of love and loyalty, trust and the transaction of faith. Castillo assumes that Erica Jong is far more ahead in diversifying scope of psychological

fiction by adding variety of issues and themes. It is this skill which has immortalized Erica Jong. Most of Erica's fictions seem to be the hotchpotch of variegated items which are equally thrilling.

According to Jessie Daniel, Isadora is a multidimensional character with twisted and blurred ambition. Yet she is endowed with all the typical qualities of a normal woman. Her power to remain cool and calm in the disastrous moment is highly praiseworthy. Another important fact about her is that she has an insatiable hunger for sex. Under the pressures which can push characters to schizophrenic suffering, Isadora continues to work heedless of the consequences of her activities. Concerning unique personality of Isadora Daniel discloses the following view:

Isadora is a multidimensional character, is believable with strengths and weaknesses. Her joys, sorrows, triumphs, and defeats become the reader's own. Facing a very difficult personal loss fuels her desire to explore the unhampered and unknown territory of life. She encounters difficulties as she races headlong toward the thrilling conclusion which moves at James Bond pace (21)

Daniel claims that Isadora is the realistic character. Her own realistic disposition reflects superb ideals with which everybody is tempted to identify. She has both strength and weakness. This is what makes her a normal being. But her dedication to her normal side of existence is her distinctive merit. No one can deny the fact that it is her composure and perseverance that have demystified the puzzling case of love and betrayal.

The researcher makes use of the notion of gender trauma. From the common concept of trauma to the specific notion of gender trauma would be used extensively in this research. The text, *Bearing Witness: Literature of Trauma*, furnishes the essential ideas of gender

trauma. The researcher quotes most of popular gender trauma theorists and their ideas. The theory of gender trauma would constitute the theoretical framework of this research. The trauma of women is studied in the context of patriarchy, restriction imposed by tradition and the constraints of marital life. Helene Moglen offers a revisionary feminist argument about the origins, cultural function, and formal structure of the English novel.

Moglen contends that the novel principally came into being in order to manage the social and psychological strains of the modern sex-gender system. She shows that the English novel has contained both realistic and fantastic narratives. Tal's exploration of arenas of trauma she has chosen would constitute a strikingly original and valuable contribution to our understanding of trauma. Tal's brilliant idea is that survivors of trauma create a literature of hurt that contributes to the dominant culture's self-understanding. Kali Tal makes us aware that personal narratives about traumatic experiences threaten the larger society because they reveal power relationships and social contradictions. Her work, *Worlds of Hurt*, makes important contributions to our understanding of cultural politics.

Tal's argument about the existence of a separate literature of trauma that crosses generic boundaries is convincing, provocative, and timely. The social experience of being a female in western society is different from that of being a male. The social structure and shifting gender role are also determinants in measuring out who is traumatized to what extent. From these differences, socially defined gender roles, family roles, and other socially constructed stressors are major causes of traumatic injury. In fact it is entirely possible that social issues are confounding factors in all aspects of trauma related research. However, social differences are a reality in the lives of all women.

Although all these critics and reviewers examined this novel from different points of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusions, none of them notice the issue of

gender trauma in *Fear of Flying*. Since, the topic of gender trauma is untouched and unexplored; the researcher claims that it is the fresh, new and original topic. The gender trauma faced by Isadora needs to be examined within the broader analytical framework. By using the theory of gender trauma, the researcher probes into this topic. The inner traumatic conflict of Isadora and the underlying parameters are the chief domain of this research.

This thesis will have three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding to the text. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure also. In the second chapter the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the text by applying the tool of women centered feminism. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

II. Gender Trauma in Erica Jong's *The Fear of Flying*

This research deals with the traumatic onslaught encountered by a woman named Isadora Wing. Isadora Wing is an American woman who is a writer by profession. She is gifted with the innate talent for writing on various subjects ranging from the trivial issues to the serious issues of literary significance. She feels circumscribed in American society. The traditional gender role fixed for woman in the patriarchal society of America stunted her passion for exploring the unknown arena of joys and freedom. She no longer likes to be circumscribed and confined by social restrictions and conducts which an American woman is likely to face. By nature Isadora is a woman having uncompromising ideals.

Freedom is what she naturally sighs for. Of course all the norms and practices available in patriarchal society of America are not conducive to the struggle of women for freedom and identity. The dominant patriarchal ideology of the then American society favors those women who are willing to conform to the patriarchal status quo and ready to internalize traditional gender role. But Isadora does not seem to be fit into the mould of patriarchal society of America. Because she is a writer by profession, she has to take the risk of exploring the unexpected territory of human experiences. By nature she is audacious and inquisitive.

The dominant social ideology and practices do not encourage her to cross the boundary of normative values. Isadora is, right now, living with her second husband named Bennett Wing. He is by occupation a psychoanalyst. Isadora's first marriage with Brian crashed without the utter dismay of Isadora herself. Then she chose Bennett as her second husband. Although her marital relation with her second husband Bennett is running smoothly and harmoniously, Isadora begins to feel deeply deprived and desperate at the core of her heart. She holds the opinion that marriage facilitates the fulfillment of one type of urges and

interest. But it substantially, it restricts other urges and impulses. The following lines describe how marriage restricts the other side of Isadora's impulses:

What about all those other longings which after a while marriage did nothing much to appease? The restlessness, the hunger, the thump in the gut, the thump in the cunt, the longing to be filled up, to be fucked through every hole, the yearning for dry champagne and wet kisses, for the smell of peonies in a penthouse on a June night, for the light at the end of the pier in Gatsby. (9)

The social institution, marriage is called into question by Isadora. It is good to seek freedom. Within the restriction, it is good to widen the horizon of freedom. But in the name of ensuring freedom, it is totally stupid to challenge a sacred social institution like marriage. That is why Isadora passes through those phases in her life over which she finally loses control and command. Her uncompromising ideals and the corrupted feminist insanity are largely responsible for her traumatic existence.

The miserable and directionless life of Isadora enables the researcher to make use of the theory of gender trauma. When women are compelled to assume traditional gender role and forced to make retreat from new modernist role, conflict and crisis arise. In their search for new experiences and freedom, women have to encounter several factors which drag their progressive pace and push them ahead on the way to transformation. As a result, they are disturbed and disappointed by the conflicting attitude. Judith Herman is the leading theorist of gender trauma. She makes the following revelation about the core theoretical notion of gender trauma:

The adaptations and responses women typically develop throughout their lives as a result of chronic abuse are shaped and determined by multiple factors. These factors include gender socialization into traditional notions of

femininity, sexism, racism, poverty and other social conditions of their lives.

The ways in which women are socialized to internalize these experiences and women's greater social powerlessness resulting from gender inequality lead to significant gender differences in women's mental health issues and needs. (78)

The way women are brought up in society makes them fundamentally different from other men. No matter how much she struggles to be equal to men, they remain substantially different because they grow up by assimilating different sort of norms and values. The internalized codes and conducts compel woman to act and behave in a different way. The demonstration of difference brings them in conflicting relation with society. The society is too dogmatic and rigid to make dominant practices flexible. That is why it creates traumatic agony. These differences affect the way in which women's problems are most typically diagnosed within the mental health system.

The restrictive measures put by society in women generate harsh and traumatic effect in women. This theoretical complication is endorsed and exemplified in by the challenges faced by Isadora in her society. Whatever stability and security marriage brings Isadora accepts. She is satisfied with this bright aspect and prospect of marriage. Yet she comes to know that the fresh joy soon sinks below the marriage boredom. Despite the love and affection from her husband, Isadora feels an incalculable hunger for the body of other males. She is inwardly tempted to establish extramarital affair. Slowly and gradually she asks for greater degree of freedom from her husband. The entire American society seems to be restrictive and boring to her. To avoid the pressures of the mundane and monotonous American life, she persuades her husband to make a tour to Europe. To participate in grand conferences on psychoanalysis which is scheduled to take place in Vienna, both husband and wife travel to Europe on plane.

Within a few days of their staying in Vienne, Isadora comes to befriend Adrian who soon appears to be sex dynamo to Isadora. The sex appears, robust body and frank behavior of Adrian bring Isadora closer to him. Within a flash of moment she happens to know that Adrian has the intense and formidable passion for sexual intercourse with her. The more Isadora's relation with Adrian develops, the more frankly she talks about where lie the discomforts and dissatisfactions of her married life with Bennett. She is not fully able to point out that Bennett is not the good husband who has robbed her freedom and kept her dissatisfied. But Isadora becomes increasingly aware of her new and fresh desires. She is violently turned towards the bliss and joy of extramarital affair. By dodging the eyes of her husband, she goes on to sleep with Adrian. Her extramarital affair with Adrian deepens. She is told by her extramarital partner to abandon her husband. But she does not have any strong reason to abandon Bennett. As a result she is most of the time lost in the turmoil and tension. She is divided between Bennett and Adrian.

At times she is haunted by the traitorous idea of betrayal in her marital relation with Bennett. Though guilty for breaking the tie of matrimony, she is equally excited and frenzied for getting depthless sexual satisfaction from Adrian. As a result, she could not handle her own life. She says she does not know what she is doing and where she is drifting. While befriending Adrian as a sex partner, she could not help comparing him with her husband Bennett. She compares the qualities of her husband with the qualities of her extramarital partner, and finds her husband lagging far behind. Her liking and embarrassing confession of her hunger for extreme satisfaction seclude her from her own reasonable understanding. The following lines show how she compares Adrian and Bennett and flatly challenges the idea of loyalty:

Adrian sensed my explosive feelings and kept looking at Bennett to see what he knew. They only represented the struggle within me. Bennett's careful,

compulsive, and boring steadfastness was my own panic about change, my fear of being alone, and my need for security. I had never been able to make peace between the two halves of myself. All I had managed to do was suppress one hold at the expense of the other. I had never been happy with the bourgeois virtues of marriage, stability and work above pleasure. I was too curious and adventurous not to chafe under those restrictions. But I also suffered from night terrors and attacks of panic at being alone. (80)

What brings intense and extreme contentment to Isadora is sleeping with another man except her husband. She feels bore and monotonous to sleep with her husband. She has the irresistible urge to sleep with strange man who is completely different from her husband. The reasons behind her fervent hunger for the strange male body are numerous. The restrictive measures of marriage are also responsible for it. Apart from this reason, there are several other reasons too. The irrational and illogical understanding of feminism is another reason. Her own insane and immoral hunger for violent variations in sexual intercourse is another credible reason for her dreadful and dangerous reasons.

It is the punitive practices of society that puts an individual in a state of insanity. The patriarchal society is oppressive towards women. Women with delicate sensibility like Isadora cannot endure the jolt and lacerations which the rigid structures of society generate. This sort of analytical insight is expressed by Judith Herman. To quote Herman once again the following excerpt is used:

Despite these differences, there is often little recognition or understanding in the literature on trauma treatment and theory of the actual conditions of many women's lives or of the effects of gender inequality, sexism, female socialization, class and race that influence women's psychological development. In other words, most trauma theory ignores the role of gender.

Yet a failure to take these factors into account leads to a failure not only in understanding the mental health issues women face, but in providing effective therapeutic interventions. (141)

So long as the society is harsh and exclusionary, individuals should identify the hostile factors which are detrimental to them. In such a structure of society those who want to walk on the path of autonomy must be cautious. It is really difficult to guess at what time hostile forces of society erupt and ruin the delicate society. That is why it is necessary to be cautious about the time in which unprecedeted hazards and pitfalls occur in life.

Being within the marital tie, she seems to be attached to her husband on the one hand, and on the other she sleeps with another man named Adrian. She does not think about abandoning her husband and being in relation with another sex partner like Adrian. She candidly and ashamedly says “my hunger probably had no connection with Bennett. Why did it have to be either or like that? I simply wanted them both. It was the choosing that was impossible. Adrian drove us to back to our hotel”(82). Isadora’s blatant and embarrassing polygamous hunt for extramarital adventure puts her on the dreadful predicament.

Empty reasoning, hallucinatory experiences, pointless pleading with her husband and increasing fear are some of the characteristics that Isadora develops the moment she begins to make those activities which give violent jolt to the integrity of marriage. When Adrian tells her to abandon her husband and leave in England with him, she is not able to decide what to do and what not to do. She is hoodwinked by the miracle of Adrian’s fucking power. Yet she is charmed by the liberal and tolerant outlook of her husband. Deep down in her mind she has the awareness that it is not right to take part in the extramarital spree while her husband loves her affectionately. But the surface of her mind is brimming with sexual fantasies and sporadic hunger. At times Isadora thinks about quitting Vienne and going back to New York. But she cannot do so because she wishes for the complete escape from New York because New York

suggests bondage to her. Dilemma and extremely torturous confusion linger in her mind for ever. Outwardly she produces the impression that she is a writer and she has to accept and explore any kind of strange experiences and areas. But the reality is that she is utterly unable to handle the inner misery of her own life. The following lines illustrate how much traumatized and pathetic she is in the face of her confused and ignominious acts:

I do not even have the guts to stay with him. If you are in love with him-why do not you commit yourself to it and meet his kids and go to London. But you cannot even do that. You do not know what you want. He paused. Have I ever done it before? Have I? Even when you were horrible to me, even that time in Paris when you would not speak to me even those years in Germany when I was so unhappy, when I needed someone to turn to, when I felt so lonely and shut out by you and your constant depression- I never got involved with anyone else. You certainly provoked me then. You used to say you did not know if you wanted to be married to me. (142)

Bennett rightly says that Isadora does not know what she really wants. Isadora too has the same line of perception. She asks questions to herself-why she longs for violent sexual contact with a strange man other than her husband. Marriage looms as the restrictive force to her. She thinks about breaking her marriage with Bennett for no reason at all. Her desire for extramarital affair and her anxiety of being faithless to her husband create the incurable confusion in her. She remains confused and confounded when the question of choosing the track of marital loyalty or the adventure of extramarital spree. Her extramarital hunt at the cost of marital loyalty appears to be an indicator of how bold and assertive Isadora is. But the reality is drastically different. Such a choice makes her worried, anxious and inwardly shaken by the torture of marital disloyalty. Her challenge to the stability and security which marriage is supposed to bring produces ruinous effect in her. Bold individual qualities

which seem to be the manifest trait of Isadora shatter soon the moment she begins to falter repentantly. Gradually she falls into depression and traumatic jolt.

Kali Tal has enumerated some of the chronic factors that make an assault on the delicate psychology of women. The patriarchal society always acts as threat to the integrity of woman's psyche. In brief, Kali Tal makes the following view with respect to the harmful factors that ruin the delicate fabric of an individual psyche:

Experiences of sexual violence and abuse in women's lives instill lessons in, and reinforce, what it means to be female in this society - that is, being relatively disempowered and with compromised or non-existent rights to autonomy and bodily integrity. The pervasive problem of men's violence in our society, combined with experiences of gender inequality, often reinforce the earlier incidents of threat and danger inherent in the experiences of childhood abuse. (55)

According to Kali Tal, early experiences of sexual violation teach female abuse survivors lessons about betrayal, physical and emotional danger and what it is to be dominated. The gender framework and women's compulsion to enter into it are ascribable factors which hastens the birth of traumatic agony. Even women who have not been sexually abused share the reality of living in a society where there is gender inequality and potential for male sexual and physical violence. Indeed, this is an element of gender inequality itself. In other words it can be said that in a society where there is gender equality lies, there is less chance of the inception of gender trauma.

Isadora finally leaves her husband for Adrian because Adrian can fuck her formidably and in a more satisfying. She has chosen to leave with Adrian without getting tied in the bond of marriage. She herself says that she wants to live with Adrian like Simon de Beauvoir

lived with Sartre. But soon she comes to know that in such a life also there are the restrictive measures. Such life put punitive measures on her wildly insouciant life. Wherever she lives and whomsoever she interacts with, patriarchal ideology aggressively holds sway over her. Her ignominious and iconoclastic search for freedom from the restrictive measures of marriage leaves her in the lurch. Her search for happiness and freedom is doomed to fail. As a result she gradually falls into the matrix of depression, nymphomaniac passion and anxiety attack.

Isadora had expected that her new life in London with her extramarital partner, Adrian, would be brimful of limitless joy. She had the anticipation that Adrian alone would be the first man to satisfy her nymphomaniac desire. She hoped that he would fuck her like a machine and give her utmost joy and freedom as well. She had chosen such sort of life with Adrian by kicking her husband because she wanted to taste the new experience of living together yet feeling apart and unhindered by each other. But in this sort of unrestrained and unconfined life, begin to reveal its contradictions and limitations. The revelation of the drawbacks and limitations of living together compel her to cast aside naïve and untested assumptions regarding to extramarital adventure and living together. Except repentance for breaking a harmonious marital relation with Bennett she has no option. The following lines describe how Isadora comes to term with the harsh reality of life, no matter how adventurous it might be:

Adrian made the rules, but he also had a tendency to change them frequently to suit how himself. In this respect, he reminded me of my older sister Randy when she and I were kids. She taught me to shoot craps when I was seven but she used to change the rules around from minute to minute depending on what she rolled. After a ten minute session with her, I would be divested of the entire contents of my carefully hoarded piggy bank, while she wound up as

flush as Sky Masterson. No matter how Lady Luck had smiled on me, I always ended up a loser. (194)

Betrayal is supposed to bring profound sense of happiness and freedom in her life. That is why she takes ignominious steps like dumping her husband down and immersing in the extramarital adventure. It is difficult to tell pointedly if marriage as social institution robbed her sense of individual freedom or her unguided feminist tendency landed her in the embarrassing and traumatic plight. Her move towards autonomy and nymphomaniac search put her in doldrums and traumatic depression. Her gender identity and her inner most foibles are to be held accountable for troublesome and tormenting situation.

According to Kali Tal, “Even after an abuse experience ends, experiences of violation and fear are often present for women throughout their lives, by virtue of living in a society in which violence against women and children is pervasive”(175). The phenomenon of re-victimization – “multiple experiences of sexual violence, as well as the increased vulnerability to further sexual violence, resulting from an early experience of child sexual abuse – is a far greater problem in women’s lives than is acknowledged in the literature” (Haskell, 1997). In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman describes “coercive control as a major cause of complex post-traumatic stress. She asserts that prolonged, repeated trauma typically occurs in families and in other relationships in which the woman is unable to flee because she is under the control of the perpetrator”(176). Total escape from the traumatizing experiences is a Herculean task for women.

When Adrian begins to act in the same way in which every chauvinistic man acts, and when her anticipation from living together falls flat, she becomes restless and repentant. So long as Adrian fucks her ceaselessly and her desires are fulfilled, she feels elated. But thoughts on her husband whom she left without any fault of his cripple and suffocate her traumatically. Isadora alternates between elation and despair:

There was another reason for our heavy drinking: namely my depressions. I would alternate between elation and despair(self hatred for what I had done, dismal despair over being alone with a man who did not love me, anguish about the future I was not supposed to minion), So we got drunk, and in our giggling drunken antics, the despair would get blurred. It would never quite vanish, of course, but it would become easier to bear. Like getting drunk on a plane to ease your fear of flying, you still believe you are going to die whenever the sound of the engines changes, but you do not care anymore. You almost like the idea. (196)

Not only Isadora's marriage crashes but her extramarital relation also crashes. Neither living together nor marriage brings profound sense of inner contentment and depthless sexual satisfaction. Her search for extreme sexual satisfaction is doomed to fail. No matter how adventurous and intense her romantic pursuit might be, it rather puts her in a state of more dissatisfaction. The increasing realization of this reality puts her on the wrong track. She turns to alcoholism. Both Adrian and Isadora drink heavily and fuck each other terribly. When misery and despair well up in her heart, she is assaulted constantly by sporadic outburst of despair and elation. Her entire life is rendered futile, fruitless. Increasingly she comes to know that her life is like a container without content.

According to Robertson Hansen, "many women and children who are abused may be trapped and rendered powerless in physical, economic and psychological ways. The responses to coercive control are numerous, including accepting the perpetrator's world view"(89). Such a world view legitimates "the abuse, feeling dissociated; losing faith or hope; withdrawing socially or becoming isolated; and feeling self-hatred"(59). On the strength of Robertson's view on gender trauma, the researcher proceeds ahead in her analytical task.

During the time in which she contemplated abandoning her second husband Bennett; Bennett had said that freedom in an illusion. But she had not accepted this view of Bennett. She madly sought for freedom. But now she comes to the painful realization about how hazardous the search for freedom really is. When an individual does not know what he or she really seeks, only confusion and chaos erupts in life. But in Isadora's life, the irresistible lust for sexual contact with the body of a strange man is the real problem. So long as she is trapped in the hook of marriage, she would be deprived of a chance to fulfill her irresistible hunger.

The victims of trauma demonstrate classic symptoms. They are miserably haunted by depressive inclination, identity problem, guilt and shame. Their existences are insecure and exposed to unpredictable forces. Kathleen Miriam argues about the traumatic disaster:

A traumatic event is an event which threatens injury, death, or the physical body of a child or adolescent while also causing shock, terror or helplessness. Trauma refers to both the experience of being harmed by an external agent as well as the response to that experience. Youth who experience trauma may also experience emotional harm or psychic trauma which, if left untreated, can have a significant impact .Trauma typically exists along a spectrum which ranges from global, when an event may affect many individuals, to individual, when the trauma impacts only that individual. (13)

The depthless trauma is characterized by repeated traumatic events occurring over a period of time. Simple trauma usually refers to a single event, such as a rape or a shooting. But gender trauma is caused by other forces which are quite noticeable in society. Simple trauma is more likely to lead to posttraumatic stress disorder. Post traumatic stress disorder refers to the sporadic outburst of hidden traumatic trace. Complex trauma leads to a deeper and more pervasive set of changes. Those changes involve emotional deregulation, distorted thinking,

and behavioral dysfunction. It also consists of patterns of dysfunctional interpersonal relationships.

Peculiar sexual hunger for a man other than her husband, unidentified voice within, baffling thump in her gut are some of the inner throbbing of her life. Instead of finding out if these desires and urges are genuine or not, she blindly yields to such desires. That is why she is bound to live depressed, disillusioned and desperate. Like a boat that has lost its direction, Isadora's life is also heading towards self-destruction. The following lines capture how traumatically degraded Isadora is:

Everything, I am very dependent. I fall apart regularly. I go into horrible depressions and hardly come up for air. Besides, no man wants to be stuck with a lady writer. They are liabilities. They daydream when they are supposed to be cooking. They worry about books instead of babies. They forget to clean the house. Jesus Christ! You are some fine feminist. Oh I talk a good game, and I even think I believe it, secretly, I am like the girl in story of O. Every woman adores a fascist, as Sylvia Plath says. I feel guilty of writing poems when I should be cooking. I feel guilty for everything. Women are their own worst enemies. (144)

Isadora composes poems; she writes short stories and novels. She takes subjective approach in choosing and expressing her view. Her creative pursuit has killed her desire for child. She abhors the idea of reproducing children. Her sisters had already given birth to several kids. Isadora has not yet thought about giving birth to children. She maintains that the idea of giving birth to children ruins and stunts her creative power. Rather than choosing children, she chooses the creative pursuit in her life. Her immersion in the creative pursuit at the cost of normal biological duty has alienated her from the normal reality of married life. The idea

of being a mother is an onerous burden and a stumbling block on her way to the accomplishment of freedom. The idea of mother is anathema to her. She knows how to get fucked not only by her husband but by unknown stranger whom she meets while travelling to the different places of Europe. Her mad creative pursuit forces her to tread on the forbidden territory. Such a choice produces traumatic outcome in her life.

Factors that play certain role in making women powerless can undoubtedly be called the factors that contribute to trauma. The powerlessness of women is the root cause of their vulnerability. Capturing this notion of causality, Hansen makes the following suggestions:

Gender inequality, racism and poverty render many women less powerful, less valued and with fewer resources available to them – as well as at the mercy of others – throughout their lives. These broader structures of social disempowerment typically shape and intensify a woman's reaction to being abused, exacerbating feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability. One of the often-unrecognized long-term effects of sexual abuse and violence in women's lives is the harmful effect on their sexuality. (217)

Hansen is of the opinion that one of the long-term effects of sexual abuse in childhood is that their adult sexuality was developed in a distorted way. When abused as children, many little girls are given special attention, privileges and even affection from their abusers. This is obviously confusing – being sexually abused while also being treated as special, being favored, and being rewarded for being sex objects that exist for the gratification of adult male sexual perpetrators. This dynamic sends deeply distorted messages about sexuality and leads to what is often a life-long and conflicted relationship to a woman's own sense of her sexuality. Some women who were sexually abused as girls have learned that sexual behavior is an extremely effective way to receive male attention.

Isadora expected that writing poems, short stories and novels would enable her to overcome the fundamental drawbacks of her life. She seeks to cope with the disadvantages of not reproducing a child by turning to writing. Right from the age of ten Isadora had initiated her literary pursuit. For her giving birth to a child is almost tantamount to creating a fine piece of poetry. In the name of giving continuity to her creative passion and pursuit, she should not have gone to the extreme. But at last, she discovers the fact that writing has rather brought forth terrible problem like loneliness. More than pride and self-assertiveness, it is loneliness that has appeared as the smart outcome of her singular and undivided involvement in literary creations. The following lines describe how terribly and traumatically Isadora is haunted by the shortcoming and limitation of literary writing:

The loneliness of writing terrified me. I looked for every excuse to escape. I had no sense of myself as a writer and no faith in my ability to write. I could not see then that I had been writing all my life. I had begun composing and illustrating little stories when I was with. I had kept a journal from the age of ten. I was an avid and ironic letter writer from age thirteen and I conspicuously aped the letters of Keats and G. B. S. throughout my adolescence. At seventeen, when I went to Japan with my parents and sisters, I dragged along my Olivetti portable and spent every evening recapitulating the day's observations into a loose leaf notebook. (63)

Isadora seems to be far more assertive and iconoclastic in her personal liking and individual choices. But the outcomes of her choices turn out to be the sources of constant torture, guilt, feeling of emptiness and enervation. She leaves her first husband and marries Bennett. In the course of time she leaves Bennett and turns to Adrian. Her sister Randy had told her to reproduce a child and enjoy the bliss and contentment of motherhood. But Isadora challenges her sister's suggestions. Thereafter she follows literary pursuit as the substitute to kids. But

none of such choices and activities brings comfort, bliss and harmony in her life. For each act she performs she has to repent. For each decision she takes she has to feel guilty for it. For each radical move she makes, she has to pay the price of being tortured and traumatized. In each so-called progressive movement she feels cheated and hoodwinked not by others but by her own thwarted and twisted passions and pride.

Joseph Pearlman recommends for the modified and upgraded version of all the traditional means to handle the traumatic injuries of women. He points out those new challenges towards women have cropped up dramatically in the contemporary society. Although old troubles ad setbacks have disappeared; new challenges have equally appeared threatening women to relinquish their hard-earned freedom and privilege. Pearlman maintains that even the derogatory remarks and the fear of sexual abuse inflict injury which can take the form of trauma. Pearlman makes the following view:

Sensitivity to ant-woman issue is a necessary part of the landscape for providing effective therapeutic support to women abuse survivors with post-traumatic stress. Many traditional psychiatric and psychological categories and approaches are not gender sensitive and do not account for or address the ways in which abuse and trauma factor into women's lives and shape women's mental health issues. Many trauma survivors who have sought mental health services have been given multiple diagnoses such as bipolar disorder; schizophrenia, paranoid type; and borderline personality disorder. (61)

Pearlman does not directly hold the rigid social structure and harsh social practices as the responsible factors for the beginning of traumatic injury. He is in favor of taking proper cautionary measures to check the outbreak of dreadful symptoms of gender trauma. In addition he asserts that any psychic torture and trauma undergone by women reveals its harmful effects in their bodies. By nature women are not inclined to share their innermost

agony. Except repression they do not have other means to cope with such traumatic jolt. That is why it is necessary to heal their traumatic laceration in the early phase.

Most of the writings of Isadora are full of autobiographical elements. Her own personal experiences and incidents are mentioned in her literary writings. Once, in one of her writings Isadora included some personal incidents from the lives of her sister and brother in law. When Isadora's sister Randy comes to know that her own life is described in Isadora's writing, she bursts with anger and blames Isadora's writing as masturbatory and exhibitionistic. Such a blame and invective weaken Isadora mortally. She feels so shocked and estranged that she felt repentant for choosing the literary path. The following lines represent how her sister's fury and ire exploded to the utter traumatic dismay of Isadora:

Randy called my poetry masturbatory and exhibitionistic and reproached me with my sterility. You act as if writing is the most important thing in the world, she screamed. I was trying to be rational and calm and well-analyzed about my family that weeks so I was painfully withholding the explosion I felt coming. Randy, I pleaded. I have to think writing is the most important thing in the world in order to go on doing it, but nothing says that you have to share my obsession, so why should I have to share yours? Well, I won't have you putting me and my husband and my children in your filthy writing-do you hear me? I kill you if you mention me in any way at all. And if I do not kill you myself, then Pierre will kill you. Do you understand? (48)

To dream about carving a literary career and be the advocate of woman's freedom is one thing. Everyone has the right to follow this line of thinking and activities. If a writer succeeds in creating a fine piece of writing out of one's autobiographical details and private life, it should be considered as the mark of genius. But no author is allowed to tamper into the life of her relatives. Isadora includes incidents from her sister's life. Her sister Randy

becomes terribly infuriated. She scolds Isadora harshly calling her masturbatory and exhibitionistic bitch. The harsh condemnation and bitter accusation make Isadora broken hearted. She is haunted by her wrong literary choices.

Arthur Briar contends that strong identity is essential to face and then handle antagonistic forces. In the society dictated and driven by patriarchal ideology, women seldom get a chance to shape strong identity. They are affected by plenty of forces which alienate them from thinking about hostile forces and prejudice. Their identities remain vulnerable and fragile. In the face of harsh antagonistic forces, it is really difficult for them to encounter confidently. Except falling prey to such antagonistic and averse situations they rarely have options. As a result, they are compelled to pass through traumatic agony. The following lines illustrate Briar's view:

Identity refers to a stable sense of self and a consistent internal locus of conscious awareness (an ongoing conscious awareness of self). A strong sense of identity allows an individual to face adversity from a secure internal sense of self. People with a less stable identity may fragment when they most need to have an awareness of their own needs, perspective and entitlement.

Domesticity as an ideology is historically and culturally constructed and is closely linked to patriarchy, gender/power relations and the artificial private/public distinction.

The way patriarchy defines women is problematical. Such a process of definition creates troubles. Women are portrayed as though their full and wholesome existence depends on getting married, producing children and caring for their family. While patriarchy defines women in terms of domesticity, it simultaneously draws an artificial line to separate the domestic (private) arena from the public one. Consequently, they will have to endure jolt of trauma.

Insensitivity on the part of her family members like mother, sister and brother in law for her unusual and quirky passions is also accountable for Isadora's traumatic life. Scolded bitterly by her sister and brother in law for madly choosing writing rather than a child, Isadora thinks about reshuffling her choices. She thinks about renouncing her passion for writing and reproduces a child for Bennett. She is assertive and non-assertive; she is committed and non-committed at the same time. She is utterly unaware of why she is choosing and why she is abandoning. Her entire life is governed by forces over which she has no control. The following lines reflect one glimpse of Isadora's trauma:

Really, I thought, sometimes I would like to have a child. A very wise and witty little girl who would grow up to be the woman I could never be. A very independent little girl with no scars on the brain or the psyche prefers no toadying servility and no ingratiating seductiveness. A little girl who said what she meant and meant what she said. A little girl who was neither bitchy nor mealy-mouthed because she did not hate her mother or herself, Isadora is keen and avid for strange joy. Why did they have to keep rushing me and trying to cram me into the same molds that had made them so unhappy? Was a child any guarantee against loneliness or pain? (51)

Having seen the miserable barren life of Isadora, her relatives like Sister Randy advises her to reproduce a child and make her marital life productive. In the face of the futility of her literary life, she is on the verge of thinking about changing the direction of her life. But she is trapped in such a condition which does not allow her to take decision freely and spontaneously. She is hassled by questions. She is so engrossed in her past pattern of behaviors and thoughts that it takes her sufficient time to decide. She is slow to follow a new advice since her head is brimful of questions and curiosities.

Henry Covington traces gender differences in the projections of serious mental illness of women. He traces the proximity and intersection between the psychic condition of women and their ways of using means to deal with such agony. The means that women use indicates what sort of suffering exists in their minds and what level of suffering they are prone. Without having foreknowledge of such intersection of the mental and the physiological, it would be tough to handle the actual reasons of woman's traumatic condition. Covington makes the following remarks:

Gender differences exist in the behavioral manifestations of mental illness, with men generally turning their anger outward, while women turn it inward. Men tend to be more physically and sexually threatening and assaultive, while women tend to be more depressed, self-abusive, and suicidal. Women engage more often in self-mutilating behaviors, such as cutting, as well as verbally abusive and disruptive behaviors. Female offenders are also more likely to have used serious drugs, to have used them intravenously, and to have used them more frequently prior to arrest. They are also more likely to have a coexisting psychiatric disorder and to have lower self-esteem. (74)

There is a chain of pain and agony in which women are enmeshed. When they are unable to deal with one traumatic jolt, they rather turn to another dreadful means to cope with the pain. They can even turn to drug addiction in order to get relief from the agony. One agony and their ignorance to cope with it lead to another problem which ultimately lands women in a difficult quandary. The level of freedom which they enjoy in society and their interpersonal relation are also key factors in guiding them rightly. Since such things are lacking in patriarchal society, they have no option other than lamenting languorously over their tragic and traumatic fate.

Mockery and denunciation of her noble literary pursuit is also an equally important factor that contributes to her traumatized psyche of Isadora. Isadora longs to go ahead on her own terms. When she has to face mockery and bitterness, she becomes tempted to reshuffle her life and habit as per advice of her well-wishers and relatives. The following lines describe how Isadora is traumatized by the jibing remarks and mockery:

Why did my sisters and my mother all seem to be in a conspiracy to mock my accomplishments and make me feel they were liabilities? I had published a book which even I could still stand to read. Six years of writing and discarding, writing and changing, trying to get deeper and deeper into myself I got nothing. And readers had sent me letter and called me in the middle of the night to tell me that the book mattered, that it was brave and honest, and that I was brave and honest. Brave! Here I was in a closet hugging my knees! But to my family I was a failure because I had no children. I was absurd. I knew I was absurd. (51)

For not reproducing children, Isadora is mocked. For immersing madly and fruitlessly in creative literary pursuit, she is discouraged. Her life is not judged in terms of how many literary creations she had accomplished but what she has lost. Actually a woman with the independent cast of mind should be judged on the basis of things she has achieved. But her own family members try to judge her solely in terms of those things which from which she is deprived and detached. Such a discouraging trend not from outside but from the inside atmosphere of her house destabilize her mentally and psychologically.

Covington contends that “the gendered male public space is the key to power, privilege, opportunities and wealth. And the ideological boundary between the private and the public spaces was designed to limit women’s access to the resources associated with the public space”(212). It is important to note that while women are generally restricted to the

marginal domestic private space, men not only have free and easy access, but they are also the bosses in this space. Covington throws light on the prospect of how women can gain entry into the public space and minimize the threat of traumatic onslaught. His view runs as follows:

Women's access to the public space, on the other hand, is extremely limited and is controlled by men. Patriarchy uses several tools including culture, the law and religion to safeguard the public sphere as a domain of male hegemony; it will resist any attempts by women who try to make the transition to the public sphere. Setting male values and interests as the norm in the public sphere easily achieves this purpose. Hence any woman who wishes to make this transition is forced to meet the male/masculine standards required in the public world. Masculine standards operate as a delicate glass ceiling that stops many women from entering the public world. (58)

According to Covington, the female becomes the other who is constantly confronted with obstacles that impede her access to and control of other resources. Because of the marginalized nature of the physical and metaphorical space that women occupy, their legal and social status is subordinated to that of men. Their mobility and erudition is significantly curtailed and their potential considerably limited. Covington strongly asserts that bringing women to the public sphere encourages them to handle their traumatic slings and arrows.

Isadora's impractical ideals and dreadful risk taking habit are contributive to the traumatic conditions in her life. Without thinking about the consequences, Isadora decides to explore new and unknown sphere of experiences. While sleeping with her husband, Bennett, she begins to question all the trends and regulations set by the normal course of social life. When she judges her life from the vantage point of her principle, she feels triumphant. But viewed from the perspective of other people, she seems to be utterly vanquished and

nullified. It is at this time that Isadora does not have any framework to deal with these challenges. She raises questions to herself- am I natural or unnatural? The more she ponders upon the troubled side of her life, the more traumatically baffled she becomes. The following excerpt dramatizes Isadora's hunger for zipless fuck and sinister premonitions which arise in her mind persistently:

I was wide awake now and could hear birds making a racket in the garden behind the hotel. At first they comforted me. Then I remembered that they were German birds and I got depressed. Secretly, I hate travelling. I am restless at home, but the minute I get away I feel the threat of doom hanging over my most trivial actions. Why had I come back to Europe anyway? My whole life was in pieces. For two years I had debated whether to get pregnant or strike out on my own and see some more of the world before settling down to anything permanent. To undertake responsibility for a new life when you had no way of knowing what it really meant, they would surely be overwhelmed with doubt. What was wrong with me? Was I unnatural? (43)

The search for newness, freshness, and difference is special to Isadora. She has distaste towards seeking fresh experiences within the boundary of marriage. Normal and repetitive practices suffocate and stifle her passions. She can hardly survive without cultivating new experience. What to call such taste of Isadora? Is it deviation and degraded passion or unique ideals of a woman with a feminist bent of mind?

Throughout this novel, plenty of evidences can be found to claim that Isadora has a less developed personality. If she had mature and reliable personality, she would not have taken self-destructive decisions. But even if her personality is held as the most accountable factor for her traumatic condition, it becomes necessary to ask explore the factors that

hindered the growth of her personality. Barbara Smith views woman's trauma from the angle of feminist concern. Her view is listed below:

In recent years, feminist theorists have proposed a new model of personality development based upon the construct of relational self. This self-in-relation model proposes that personality development for girls and woman can be described, not as a process of increasing separation and individuation, but rather as a growing capacity for empathy and connectedness. This process of development of relational self has been posited to lead to an enhanced capacity of empathy in girls and women as well as to more permeable ego-boundaries in women. (149)

According to Barbara Smith, the process of individuation leads a girl taking on her mother's experiences towards the process of projective identification. What this model suggests is that daughters of trauma survivors may be more vulnerable to the trans-generational transmission of parental or familial trauma. The female children have their greater emotional openness and the capacity for identification with parental feelings and experiences. This sort of emotional vulnerability may unconsciously become the carrier of traumatic experiences that parents wish to disown or suppress. The real problem lies in the process of personality cultivation and social individuation. Thus Smith concludes that proper attention should be directed towards this situation if productive agenda for the management of trauma comes.

Isadora's first marriage with Brian ends in disaster. She marries Brian because he is jocular, funny and extroverted. In practical matters he is far well-versed than she is. To her, Brian seems to be a source of energy. Later on she tells that she was in illusion about his vast sexual stamina and strength. Though Brian fucks her like machine and satisfies her sexually to the utmost, there is something really lacking in him. From her distant friend, Isadora comes to know that there is something odd in Brian. But Isadora is not convinced because Brian has

been fucking her to the depthless joy. She gets what she expects from Brian. So she is cool and calm so far as the behavioral sanity of Brian is concerned. But the real problem arises when Brian stops fucking her. Brian not only stopped fucking her but also behaved strangely towards her. In this situation, a girl like Isadora, who needs high dose of sexual satisfaction regularly, is afflicted with fuck-mania. But she waits hopefully so that Brain could improve and begins to act normally and reasonably. The following lines describe how Isadora is afflicted with sex mania and how deepening fuck-mania pushes her to the traumatic condition:

Our marriage went from bad to worse. Brian stopped fucking me. I would beg and plead and ask what was wrong with me? I began to hate myself, to feel ugly, unloved, bodily odiferous- all the classic symptoms of the unfucked wife; I began to have fantasies of zipless fucks with doormen, derelicts, countermen at the West End Bar, graduate students- even professors. But what was the use of these pathetic fantasies? My husband had stopped fucking me. He thought he was working hard enough as it was. I cried myself to sleep every night, or else went into the bath room to masturbate after he fell asleep. Why did not I have an affair or leave him or insist on some sort of sexual freedom arrangement? (213)

The above-cited paragraph makes a heart-rending description of a woman who is facing humiliating condition. Her first husband Brian is a psychotic man. While marrying him, she does not know if he is psychotic or not. At the time of courtship he had demonstrated normal behavior. But truth revealed only later on when she finds him sexually impotent. Affected by the bout of psychosis, he became unable to fuck her in a satisfying manner. When Brain becomes sexually dysfunctional, she weeps and passes her nights on bed with him. She passes several nights by masturbating on the toilet. For a girl like her who needs to be

fucked ceaselessly, it is really painful. She finds herself in dilemma as to whether to leave Brian in his psychotic condition or cling to him in this mood of extreme sexual dissatisfaction. Finally she decides to quit him and breaks her marital tie with Brian. For her selfish and inhuman choice she is mocked by her friends and relatives.

At the time in which her husband is suffering a lot from psychosis, she should have cared him. Even if she does not like to live with him, she should have lived with him till his recovery. But she did not fulfill her duty as a human being also. In Isadora's decision, rashness, recklessness, short-sightedness and selfishness abound. The society harshly excoriates these negative traits of Isadora. The antagonistic social prejudice and Isadora's one track mind come into conflict. The outcome would be traumatic and torturous to her.

III. Non-Conformity and Trauma

The core finding of this research is that an individual's inner foibles and social biases against individuals can be traumatizing and torturous. In Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*, the female protagonist named Isadora is traumatized severely because the social surrounding in which she lived mocks her literary pursuits and her sexual fantasy. Patriarchal society is always intolerant of everywoman who does not conform to the patriarchal status quo. Isadora wants to be different. She takes literature as her pursuit. When her poems and fictions became popular, she is discouraged and denounced in a callous manner.

Although she married twice, her marriage crashed disastrously. Fed up with the restrictive measures of marriage, she chooses to live in a different way and with different purpose. Without marrying third time, she lives with Adrian in London. But that man too betrays her. From every corner of traditional patriarchal society she has to face hurdles and setbacks. People with a narrow perspective and rigid mentality produce hostile and harsh remarks.

The society laughs at the chronic failure of her marriage and interpersonal relation. The society prides not on her success but on her self-destructive and humiliating failure. For how long could she stand up to such social treatment? All these responses begin to inflict traumatic injury in her mind. Isadora does not produce a child. She is married; yet remains barren. She takes as wastage of time and energy the task of reproducing children. Barren life is good for her. Or her, her own poems and short stories are the real children for her.

Dissatisfied with the traditional gender role, she chooses to live this sort of life. But her sister Randy calls her a total failure in real life. In a mood of fury and ire, Randy calls her writing masturbatory and exhibitionistic. This kind of harsh denunciation and lacerating remarks depress and traumatize her. Isadora takes marriage as a restrictive institution. She

feels that marriage restricted her inner longings and unidentifiable urges. Once, she acknowledges the restrictive influences of marriage, she leaves her second husband and goes to London to live with her lover.

Depthless fulfillment of sexual hunger is the sole and whole concern of Isadora. She is tempted to break and breach the marital tie, rather than keeping it intact and unharmed. Her desire for zipless fuck is dreadful and ironically ennobling. Due to her sporadic and iconoclastic moves, Isadora is abandoned, rejected, and estranged from society. In this moment she could not affirm the role and relevance of her decisions. She is too weak to suffer, repent and lament. Haunted by alienation, emptiness and enervation, she is unable to revitalize her life. At last she turns out to be a traumatic figure groping her space in the hostile platform of society driven solely by the interest and power of patriarchy.

Isadora's traumatic agony results from her own weakness to handle her inner foibles. It also results from the restrictive measures imposed by society on her. Only the search for freedom is not going to solve the problems. One has to be tactful and prudent as well to manage all the challenges that come on the way to freedom. While seeking freedom, it is necessary to abide by certain normative principle. It is not totally bad if desire for extramarital affair comes in one's mind. But the sacred tie of marriage should not be broken without any specific reason. Bennett loves Isadora. He goes to extent of being a loyal husband who does not decline to give plenty of freedom to his wife.

Despite the fact that Bennett loves her too much in an honest way, Isadora leaves him and goes on to leave with Adrian. Marital loyalty is nothing for her. She just wants to be fucked by a virile man other than her husband. Such an insane desire and wrong track of passion implant a traumatic blow on her. The hunger for zipless fuck and her inability to subdue this hunger are equally liable to her traumatic agony and torture. In the face of any kind of trouble and mishap she cannot endure it. Except lamentation she has no option. One should be bold enough to remain unwavering in the wake of disaster and mishap. But Isadora is not able in this direction. As a result, she suffers a lot from traumatic jolt and laceration.

Works Cited

Antrobus, Peggy. *Bathos and Bickering: Critique of Erica Jong's Fiction*. New York

Norton, 2001.

Bernard, Robert. *Fickleness and Fantasy*. New Delhi: Viva Publication, 1999.

Briar, Arthur. *Glimpse of Trauma in Social Context*. London: Macmillan, 2004.

Castillo, Stefanie. *Forbidden Voice and Vindication*. New York: Rutledge, 2002.

Cornwell, Patricia. *Point of Origin*. New York: Berkeley Book, 1999.

Daniel, Jessie. *Schizophrenia* California: California University Press, 2001

Dickesn, Monica. *Riddle in American Fiction*. New York: Rutledge, 2001.

Hansen, Robert. *Gender Difference and Trauma*. New York: Canon Gate, 2006.

Henry, Covington. *Torture and Trauma*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Herman, Judit. *Gender Trauma: A Survey*. London: HarperCollins, 2003.

Herron, Christina. *Power and Ideology in American Context*. New York: Rutledge, 2001.

Miller, Henry. *Subversion and Silence*. New York: Penguin, 2007.

Mirian, Kathleen. *Inception of Trauma and Gender Role*. New York: Rutledge, 2006.

Moglen, Helen. *Crosscurrents of Gender Trauma*. London: Harper Collins, 2007..

Pearlman, Joseph. *Gender Adversity and Outlet*. New Delhi: Vivian Publication, 2005.

Sanders, Andrew. *Reflection on Jong's Fictions*. New York: Penguin, 1992.

Smith, Barbara. *Traumatic Loss and Despair*. New Delhi: Rupa Publication, 2004.

Sudeshna, Hazra. *Reflection on Post-feminism*. London: Macmillan, 1998.

Tal, Kali. *Bearing Witness: Literature of Trauma*. California: California UP, 2001.