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**THE DOUBLING THEORY AND THE SECOND SELF:
TRAUMA IN PAULA VOGEL'S HOW I LEARNED TO
DRIVE AND MARGARET EDSON'S WIT**

by

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THE DOUBLING THEORY AND THE SECOND SELF: TRAUMA IN PAULA VOGEL'S HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE AND MARGARET EDSON'S WIT

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Abstract

The present study aims to discuss Sigmund Freud's Seduction Theory as a basic trend in the field of psychological trauma in both Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive* (1997) and Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1999). Robert Jay Lifton's Doubling Theory and the Second Self are discussed as a tool for interpreting and uncovering the inexplicable behaviour of the patients suffering from trauma. Moreover, this study attempts to define trauma, its nature, types and symptoms in the two selected texts. This study investigates two contemporary plays tackling the dilemma of trauma, stating how far writers are successful in portraying the traumatized character, the nature of the trauma and its impact on him/her through the victim/perpetrator paradigm.

Keywords: Trauma, Freud, Robert Jay Lifton, Vogel, Margaret Edson

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى مناقشة نظرية الإغراء لسيجموند فرويد باعتبارها أساسياً في مجال الصدمة النفسية في المسرحيتين "كيف تعلمت القيادة؟" (1997) لبيولا فوجل، و"الفطنة" (1999) لمارغريت إدسون. كما تتم مناقشة نظرية الانقسام والذات الثانية لروبرت جي ليفتون كأداة لكشف السلوك الغير مبرر وتفسيره عند المرضى الذين يعانون الصدمة النفسية. فضلاً عن ذلك، تتناول هذه الدراسة تعريف الصدمة النفسية وطبيعتها وأنواعها وأعراضها في النصين المختارين. تأخذ هذه الدراسة في الاعتبار مسرحيتين معاصرتين تعالجان معضلة "الصدمة" وتوضح إلى أى مدى نجح الكاتبان في تصوير الشخصية التي تعاني من الصدمة، وطبيعة الصدمة وتأثيرها على الشخصية من خلال نموذج الضحية/الجاني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصدمة- فرويد- روبرت جي ليفتون- بيولا فوجل-مارغريت إدسون

Psychological trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or of enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate his or her emotional experience is overwhelmed (i.e. his or her ability to stay present, understand what is happening, integrate the feelings, and make sense of the experience), or the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity. (Pearlman & Saakvitne)

Over the last century, we came to be more familiar with the term "Trauma" and to hear that someone is no longer stable or became traumatized due to a certain event. This paper aims to define what is meant by 'trauma', ' what are the causes of the trauma and in what ways the normal person might change in order to overcome or cope with the trauma he/she had been subjected to.

This study will also discuss the very first contribution by Sigmund Freud in the field of psychology to explain the trauma with its nature and how it affects the mental and physical states of the traumatized person causing one of the most critical illnesses at that time, which was hysteria. In addition, the paper attempts to illustrate the chemical

and psychological processes that occur during the traumatic event and how the traumatized person tries to cope or overcome the traumatic event through presenting and discussing the Doubling Theory and the Second Self by Robert Jay Lifton.

Finally, this paper is going to discuss the adaptation of literature to trauma and the important role of literature in presenting such a serious subject, that many of us are exposed to nowadays. The paper will examine how far the writer is able to present the character as a traumatized person, revealing the symptoms that appear on him/her, the traumatic event and its impact on the character and how the character responds to it from a scientific view including the Doubling Theory and the Second Self. This study focuses on *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel and *Wit* by Margaret Edson, comparing between the impact of the traumatic event on the heroines of the plays and the decisions taken by them to respond or cope with the trauma through the victim/perpetrator paradigm.

The word *trauma* has been originated, in the seventeenth century, from the Latin

word 'Trauma' which means a serious wound to the body. Afterwards, trauma is referred to as any emotional wound that causes a kind of psychological injury or an event that causes great distress. According to American Psychological Association, trauma is referred to as an emotional response to a terrible event. For Dejonghe, a psychologist and sociologist at the California University, the concept of trauma refers to "experiencing or witnessing an event involving threat or fear or physical integrity that results in feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror" (294).

In fact, trauma has more psychological effects than physical ones. These effects are very dangerous because it may lead to a mental and even physical breakdown. Sandra Bloom, a psychiatrist specialized in the treatment of psychological trauma, reveals that "Psychic trauma occurs when a sudden unexpected overwhelming intense emotional blow or series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind" (2).

In modern literature, trauma theory is first used by Cathy Caruth in her work *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). The theory stems from her insightful interpretation and elaboration of Freud's remarks on traumatic experiences. Accordingly, Elissa Marder in her essay *Trauma and Literary Studies: Some "Enabling Questions"* explains:

In the late 20th century, Cathy Caruth, a distinguished research professor of comparative literature and English is considered as one of the leading pioneers of trauma theory; she theorized the concept of trauma in the light of literature, that, literary texts are means through which the nature of trauma is revealed by its witnesses. She argues that literature enables us to bear witness to events that can't be absolutely known and introduces us to experiences that might have otherwise stayed unspoken and unheard. Caruth powerfully and convincingly shows

that despite the fact that certain kinds of events can't be completely understood, these events consequently become significant in diverse ways by being expressed to others and perceived by them. (3)

Thus, trauma theory represents a link between psychological studies and humanities. In literature, the theory circles around the study of the trauma and its dimensions on the psyche of the individuals and how this is reflected in the literary work. Some narratives are rich in traumatic themes, moods and tones. Such trauma narratives, wonderfully, succeed in analyzing the pains of a traumatic experience on certain characters.

The trauma novel demonstrates how a traumatic event disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. The primacy of place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger cultural context, and, in fact, organizes the memory and meaning of trauma (Balaev 1).

Equally significant, in his "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma", the sociologist Jeffrey Alexander claims that trauma is something constructed by society. For him, trauma originates as a result of the power of a powerful traumatic event and the individual is painfully haunted by that event. He argues that trauma "is not the result of a group experiencing pain"; rather, it is the result of the group's core members deciding collectively to react to that pain, thus creating the group's own identity (Alexander 10).

The concept of trauma has been developed over time by several scholars. Among those scholars is the sociologist Ron Eyerman. In his essay, "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity", Eyerman explains the different stages of cultural trauma and how African Americans have developed their collective identity from "the end of the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement"(60). Eyerman examines how African Americans have restored memories of the past and have created an "ongoing process" of "public commemoration" through historical writings, narratives, music and dramatizations (65).

Moreover, the idea of traumatic experiences is tackled by Lisa Woolfork in her research on how the African Americans are seeking new ways to forget the traumatic experiences of the past and to reshape a new positive memory. In her *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture*, Woolfork discusses different characters in African American literary works and films. She examines "the black spectatorship of slavery representation in ritual and historical reenactments" (99). These spectators' reactions open up the dialogue on new ways to "re-remember" the collective experience.

Some theorists mainly focus on the violence of the event on the individual who becomes wounded by that event. Caruth defines trauma as being constructed "solely in the structure of the experience or reception...where the event is not fully assimilated at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (*Trauma* 4-5). Hence, the weight of the event on the subject's experiences constructs the trauma.

Similarly, E. Ann Kaplan's approach focuses on trauma victims. Kaplan calls for the consideration of two important elements; first the individual victim and, second, the nature of the traumatic event on him. She argues that these two elements are urgently needed to analyze the traumatic situation. Kaplan recognizes three possible responses

to trauma, allowing for traumatic situations where the victim has no conscious memory of the event; situations where the victim can hold the event in conscious memory, and situations where the event triggers both "earlier memories and unconscious fantasies" (38).

One of the most important aspects that we come to is the different contributions of psychoanalysts in the field of psychological and psychosexual traumas through different psychoanalytic theories. Through the framework of these theories, we come to understand the nature of the traumatic event and how it affects the person subjected to it changing the chemistry of his brain, which accordingly changes his behaviour and reactions to his normal or everyday life. Also, these theories provide data to understand the different responses of the traumatized people when subjected to traumas and how the trauma develops. This helps psychologists to deal with the traumatized people knowing the occurring processes inside their brains, what they think and how they feel and accordingly, they would have the ability to present the most appropriate plan of treatment to them and help them integrate the traumatic event in their overall life experience.

Psychoanalytic theories of trauma begin with Sigmund Freud's early examination and experiences on people suffering from hysteria. In the late nineteenth century, Freud presented a paper to the Viennese Society for Psychiatry and Neurology entitled "The Aetiology of Hysteria" wherein he introduced his "Seduction Theory". Freud states in his theory that all hysterical neuroses are the result of some form of early childhood sexual experience. Anat Gur states in his book *Foreign Bodies* that Freud wrote, "I therefore put forward the thesis that at the bottom of every case of hysteria, there are one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience, occurrences which belong to the earliest years of childhood" (56).

Freud's Seduction Theory paved the way for other psychologists and psychoanalysts to experiment in the field of trauma taking the Seduction Theory as a basis in certain elements like that the traumatic event, including the childhood sexual abuse, and how it can develop to some critical illness, i.e. hysteria. A book with the name *The Seduction Theory in the Twenty-First Century: Trauma, Fantasy and Reality* was published in May 30, 2006, not only to address Freud's Seduction Theory, but also to bring psychoanalysts of different orientations together in conversation ("*The Seduction Theory in the Twenty-First Century: Trauma, Fantasy and Reality* (Book Review)". Among the most known contributions and one of the theories that proved its validity on the scientific and the experimental levels is the Doubling Theory and the Second Self by Robert Jay Lifton.

Robert Jay Lifton, the distinguished Professor of Psychology at John Jay College, is credited with serving to ascertain a replacement field in drugs known as psychohistory, the field of inquiry that explores the psychological motives of people and teams of historical actors, as well as the psychological impact of historical events. His work includes analysis and writing concerning Nazi doctors (their killing within the name of healing) and genocide; members of terrorist cults; nuclear weapons and their impact on death symbolism; Hiroshima survivors; the Vietnam War experience and atrocity-producing situations; Chinese thought reform and the Chinese Cultural Revolution; and psychological trends in contemporary men and women. He has developed a general psychological perspective round the paradigm of death and also the continuity of life, with emphasis on symbolization and the "formative process", and on the plasticity of the modern or "protean" self.

In Lifton's theory of "doubling", the traumatized individual undergoes a division of the self as a means of adapting to traumatic events. Lifton explains that

"extreme trauma creates a second-self". This "second-self" refers to a psychological shifting that occurs within the victim throughout the traumatic encounter (i.e., the death of another person or the potential of one's own death) during which the sense of self undergoes radical changes. And as a result of this shifting, a new identity emerges— an identity which Lifton refers to as the "traumatized self" (Petit 46).

Lifton explains and applies his theory of "doubling" in his analysis of the role of the German doctors within Nazi Germany. He defines "doubling" as the "division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self acts as an entire self" (Campbell). More likely to "take place in extremity, in relation to death", the doubling process "involves both an unconscious dimension— taking place largely outside of awareness— and a significant change in moral consciousness" (Petit 46). To Lifton, "the adaptive potential for doubling is integral to the human psyche and can at times be life-saving: for a soldier in combat, for instance; or for a victim of brutality such as an Auschwitz inmate, who must undergo a form of doubling in order to survive" (46).

In regard of the central principles of psychoformative theory and post-traumatic stress reactions: for the Auschwitz self, psychic numbing was a key to survival. It was only through a diminished capacity to feel that the Auschwitz self, the second self, avoided being overwhelmed by survival guilt. Consequently, tremendous psychic energy was exerted to maintain that state of perpetual numbness. In order to guarantee the complete negation of death related images, the second self "made a pledge to stay numbed, which meant to live within the restricted feelings of the Auschwitz self" (Lifton 443). By surrendering emotionally and morally to the environment of atrocity, the second-self (the Auschwitz self) "could then become an absolute creature of context" (450) and take part in the "performance" of its role in the "Auschwitz game" (461).

Literature intertwines with other fields like psychology in order to create a medium of expression to interpret man, existence, culture, personality and individual differences and these are some of the main interests of psychology. Both branches deal with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, desires, wishes, fears, miseries, conflicts and reconciliations; individual and social concerns, by means of varied concepts, methods, and approaches (Goksen Arasa). Accordingly, one can say that literature can be an expression of psychology as it can be a means of expressing our contemporary materialistic and psychological problems, like trauma," we will always learn more about human life and personality from novels than from scientific psychology" (Lodge). Writers of literature not only express their characters from a personal point of view, sometimes they work on reflecting the contemporary mental and psychological dilemmas, comforting the reader and giving him the solution for his suffering. Accordingly, literature can sometimes offer the society solutions for its problems and dilemmas based on scientific approaches.

This paper will discuss two major contemporary works of drama that address trauma: *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel, addressing psychosexual trauma and *Wit* by Margaret Edson, addressing psychological trauma. This study attempts to compare between the two dramatic works by means of analysis of the events of the plays, revealing the traumatic event, the reactions of the characters and their development, stating the development of the trauma through the previously stated principles of psychoformative theory. In the end, the paper is going to discuss and analyze the trauma, the two heroines of the plays experienced according to the "doubling theory" by Robert Jay Lifton.

How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel tells the story of a young fatherless girl nicknamed Li'l Bit and her destructive relationship with her doting Uncle Peck.

The play is structured around the metaphor of driving lessons, which portrays the theme of childhood incest in which a young girl is presented to adulthood by a loving and a trusted paedophile in a subversive manner. The play moves in a non-linear way, using monologues and flashbacks to show how Li'l Bit relates to her memory and trauma. *How I Learned to Drive* is about the effects of the traumatic event on one's present and future, how the traumatized individuals are flawed and their souls ambiguous, and how one can grow from trauma or surrender to it, "I wanted to be respectful and responsible, I talked to a number of women who have been through it [trauma] and showed them the play early on, and they embraced it. There are much more severe cases than this play dramatizes, of course. And it seems to me that one thing that gets left out when we're talking about trauma is the victim's responsibility to look the experience squarely in the eye and then to move on. That's the journey I wanted to craft here" (Vogel). For this reason, *How I Learned to Drive* is a great example for the trauma many individuals experience and it works to offer one way of dealing with trauma.

How I Learned to Drive was firstly produced in February, 1997 by the Vineyard Theatre in New York City, then it was moved to the Century Theatre in April of that year where it received the 1997 Lortel, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, New York Drama Critics and OBIE awards for best play. Additionally, *How I Learned to Drive* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1998.

Playwright, screenwriter and professor, Paula Vogel has headed the Brown University Playwriting Department since 1985. Her plays, including the Pulitzer-prize winning *How I Learned to Drive*, address the contemporary culture, staging critical issues like pornography, domestic violence, and AIDS. Not writing "about" these issues, instead examines how they have become framed as "issues," focusing on the histories and discourses that

have defined them and the bodies that bear their meanings. Other plays by Vogel include *The Baltimore Waltz*, *The Mineola Twins*, *Hot 'N' Throbbing*, *Desdemona*, *And Baby Makes Seven* and *The Oldest Profession*.

The theme of *How I Learned to Drive* is that of childhood incest; therefore the textual ambiguities will relate specifically to trauma of sexual origin (psychosexual trauma). The most notable ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma in *How I Learned to Drive*, stem from the incomprehensible nature of Li'l Bit's motivations and psychological subtext. She often appears willing and eager to position herself alone with her abuser, Uncle Peck, and as a result, is repeatedly subjected to his sexual advances. Also ambiguous are her motives, as she sometimes appears surrendering to some of his sexual requests, while at other times she refuses. This raises the question of what Li'l Bit thinks and feels that drive her to react to her abuser's requests.

Li'l Bit's complicity in the incest is problematic as she appears to be an active participant through her aggressive need to delimit the nature of their sexual interaction, or by her passivity towards Peck's persistence. Although Peck's advances are never violent, yet Li'l Bit succumbs each and every time. The question of who is responsible, and who is to blame, becomes a major source of textual ambiguity. Lastly, the precise nature of the relationship, in other words the traumatic event, between Uncle Peck and Li'l Bit remains ambiguous for the majority of the play, giving rise to ambiguities concerning the frequency, severity, and duration of the sexual abuse. Structurally, Vogel moves back and forth in time as the play is based on memory and narration. This use of jumbled chronology intensifies the ambiguities surrounding the incestuous affair.

The play begins with a young "well-endowed" woman named Li'l Bit, stands alone onstage and announces that

"Sometimes to tell a secret, you first have to teach a lesson" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*). She starts to narrate her experience when she was seventeen, an age in which she was "very old, very cynical of the world". It is the summer of 1969, two lovers negotiating tenderly how to go far sexually and suddenly it becomes apparent that the man who has just unhooked the woman's brassiere is in fact her uncle by marriage, and twenty-years older. Then we meet the soft-spoken Uncle Peck who begs her for one brief moment of sexual intimacy.

The audience observes through this scene that Uncle Peck is not aggressive or violent, but rather passive and loving, showing that Li'l Bit has the upper hand. For example, while asking her if he is to get a "reward" for not drinking all week, he assures her that he is "not gonna do anything you don't want me to do". To which Li'l Bit responds, "That's right." When he asks if he can "undo" her brasserie, she responds, "All right. But be quick about it". And when he asks her to "kiss them. Please", Li'l Bit consents. However, it is observable that she could have refused his requests. Only in the end we see her interrupting Peck while he "kisses her nipples" by informing him: "I've got graduation rehearsal at school tomorrow morning. And you should get on home to Aunt Mary". The scene ends with Peck's words: "I live all week long for these minutes with you— you know that?" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

Only from the first scene, numerous disturbing ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma emerge. For example, the nature of their sexual relationship is a major source of ambiguity for its inappropriateness. The Stereotype of a pedophile is to be forceful and threatening; however, Peck is obviously passive and does not force Li'l Bit in any means. He always asks for her permissions and stops when she asks and that raises the question, why does Li'l Bit accept his requests and gives a way to his sexual advances. The

severity and frequency of the sexual abuse are not yet specified.

The play continues to 1969, when Li'l Bit is seventeen sitting at a "typical family dinner". The focus of the conversation is her developing breasts, we see her grandfather saying "What does she need a college degree for? She's got all the credentials she'll need on her chest... How is Shakespeare going to help her lie on her back in the dark?" In the end, Li'l Bit cannot stand their humiliating conversation; she speaks her mind and leaves the dinner. Then, we see Peck offering her consolation and answers her, when she says "I hate this family", saying "Your grandfather's ignorant...But he's family. Family is...family." She then asks him for his car and when he requests to accompany her, she refuses, so he asks when he could meet her and she answers "Tonight" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*).

Ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma engage in this scene from Li'l Bit's arrangement to meet with Peck and this assures her complicity in the relationship. Specifically, after she announced her understanding of "pedophile" at the age of sixteen. Also, another source of ambiguity is her family's role in her life and their explicit conversation about her breasts, depreciating her thoughts and desire to attend college.

Now, it is 1970. Li'l Bit stands in front of the audience, admitting that she was expelled from college, describing how she slept on the floors of friend's apartment while holding a string of "dead-end day jobs". And she describes her nights, saying "as long as I had gasoline for my car and whisky for me, the nights would pass... He taught me well" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*).

Ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma involve Li'l Bit's self-destructive behaviour and her failure to achieve the kind of education she aspired and fought for in her conversation with her family in the previous scene. Also, identifying Peck as a good teacher is ambiguous, as it makes us

wonder if she is referring to driving or for their sexual relationship that ruined her life. Besides, ambiguous is the symbolism of driving.

It is now 1968 and Li'l Bit is sixteen. The scene takes place in a restaurant, where Li'l Bit is sitting with Peck celebrating her newly acquired driver's license. Over the course of their dinner, Peck treats Li'l Bit like an adult, referring to her as a "woman" and a "lady" and encouraging her to drink in celebration. She then explains her fear that Peck would drink with her, to which he responds, "I told you, as long as you're with me, I'll never drink".

Peck then helps drunken Li'l Bit to his car to take her home. Li'l Bit then teases him, "You're not taking me—upstairs? There's no room at the inn?" so Peck asks if that what she really wants. To which she responds "this isn't right, Uncle Peck...Someone will get hurt". However, Peck squelches her anxiety, saying:

What are we doing? We're just going out to dinner... it's just that I thought you...understood me, Li'l Bit. I think you're the only one who does....Have I forced you to do anything?... We are just enjoying each other's company. I've told you, nothing is going to happen between us until you want it to...Do you want something to happen?

They kiss. She then pulls away, and responds, "I don't know—Peck smiles; this has been good news for him—it hasn't been a 'no'. (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

Ambiguities related to sexual trauma in this scene stem from Uncle Peck's highly suspicious motives and his attempt to comfort Li'l Bit by explaining their mutual innocence. In addition, we wonder why he places himself in the submissive role and that anything that occurs is according to Li'l Bit's desire and permission. Also, ambiguous is Li'l Bit's attitude and willingness to place herself with her abuser together with her contradictory words and

actions impose questioning her state of mind and her psychological state.

The next scene to analyze takes place in 1979 and Li'l Bit is twenty seven year old. She is on a bus heading to New York when a young man, who obviously is a senior at high school, sits beside her and initiates a conversation. She reveals to the audience how she understood what he is thinking of and how she predicted everything that occurred; however, she acted normally as if she is going on with the incident:

[I] slowed down, waited, pretended surprise, acted at listening, all the while knowing we would get off the bus, he would just then seem to think to ask me to dinner, he would chivalrously insist on walking me home, he would continue to converse in the street until I would casually invite him up to my room....and I could see the whole evening before me. (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

Admitting that at this point she understands what Uncle Peck did and how the thrill of holding the strings of the puppets felt like: "I lay on my back in the dark and I thought about you, Uncle Peck. Oh. Oh—this is the allure. Being older. Being the first. Being the translator, the teacher, the epicure, the already jaded. This is how the giver gets taken" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*). This scene exemplifies how, in time, the abused becomes the abuser. It is now clear how Li'l Bit has coped with her trauma and how it affected her deeply. She has matured to be the abuser as she applies what she had learnt from sexual perpetrator. She is now practicing the power of constructing the seducing plots to manipulate her innocent young prey.

The next memory takes us to thirteen year old Li'l Bit alone with Peck in his basement. She expresses her concern about Aunt Mary's arrival; however, Peck, with a camera in his hand, comforts her reassuring

her that Aunt Mary will not be home for hours as she is at the theatre. Peck then situates Li'l Bit on a stool, 'unbuttons her blouse to the midpoint, and runs his hands over the flesh of her exposed sternum... deliberately, calmly.'" Li'l Bit "sits perfectly still, and closes her eyes" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*).

Positioned behind the camera, Li'l Bit acts as a professional model during a photo shoot following Peck's directions. Peck refers to her as a "beautiful young woman" with a body that "a twenty-year old woman would die for". Then we find Li'l Bit responding angrily to Peck's words: "in five years we'll have a really professional portfolio... for Playboy," expressing her desire that no one else see the photos. To which Peck replies "I swear to you. No one will. I'll treasure this—that you're doing this only for me". The photo shoot resumes; however, Li'l Bit admits that she cannot look to Peck or the camera because "You're gonna know what I'm thinking. You'll see right through me". To what Peck replies: "Li'l Bit. I love you. Do you know that? I have loved you every day since the day you were bom" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*).The scene ends with Li'l Bit removing her blouse.

Ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma arises in this scene from Li'l Bit's and Uncle Peck's motivations for making the photo shoot. We wonder why Li'l Bit accepts Peck's request concerning the photo shoot, despite her obvious discomfort with the idea and although Peck is not forcing her to stay. Also ambiguous is her explanation of why she cannot look to Peck or the camera for fear of being exposed.

Considering Peck, clearly, behind the camera helps him to achieve the power and the control of the circumstances. However, the way he deals with Li'l Bit allows her to believe that she has the controlling hand. Peck's manipulative way is so obvious as he treats Li'l Bit in the type of sensitivity and intimacy that a girl might take comfort in.

The following scene reveals how Uncle Peck kept on sending Li'l Bit letters during her first semester away at college. For example:

September 3, 1969. Li'l Bit: You've only been away two days and it feels like months... Only ninety days to go! — Peck.

September 25. A box of chocolates... Don't worry about the weight gain. You still look great. Got a post office box—write to me there. Sixty-six days.

November 16. Sixteen days to go!—Having a hard time reaching you.... Won't you think about me getting you your own phone so we can talk?

November 18. Li'l Bit—got a package returned to the P.O. Box. Have you changed dorms?

November 23. Li'l Bit. So disappointed you couldn't come home for the turkey.

The scene ends with Li'l Bit reading aloud her response to Peck letters:

Dear Uncle Peck: I am sending this to you at work. Don't come up next weekend for my birthday. I will not be here— (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

Ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma involve Uncle Peck's desire to reunite with Li'l Bit. His letters reveal the decompensation of Uncle Peck's emotional state. What starts as innocent messages, takes on a desperate, needy and almost dangerous tone. Also ambiguous is Li'l Bit's reply and her boycott of the family's Thanksgiving.

It is now December 10, 1969. It is Li'l Bit's eighteenth birthday. Li'l Bit is at a hotel room in Philadelphia alone with Uncle Peck. Li'l Bit starts by blaming her uncle for "scar[ing] the holy crap" out of her with his gifts and letters. She reveals that she understands his plan by saying: "You were counting down to my eighteenth birthday... statutory rape is not in effect when a young

woman turns eighteen. And you and I both know it". To which Peck defends himself by replying that it was her idea to meet at a hotel and not in public. Li'l Bit begins drinking the champagne excessively and then she speaks her mind:

I've been thinking a lot about this—and I came here tonight to tell you that—I'm not doing very well. I'm getting very confused—I can't concentrate on my work—and now that I'm away—I've been going over and over it in my mind—and I don't want us to "see" each other any more. (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

At this point, Peck turns on his charm reassuring her:

You're scared. Your mother and your grandparents have filled your head with all kinds of nonsense about men... It won't hurt you—if the man you go to bed with really loves you. And I have loved you since the day I held you in my hand. (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

He proceeds:

I'm going to ask you this once. Of your own free will. Just lie down on the bed with me—our clothes on—just lie down with me, a man and a woman... and let's... hold one another. Nothing else. Before you say anything else. I want the chance to... hold you. Because sometimes the body knows things that the mind isn't listening to... and after I've held you, then I want you to tell me what you feel. (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

Hesitantly, Li'l Bit agrees to his request. They lie down on the bed embracing each other. Then Li'l Bit "rises above her uncle and looks at his mouth... [and] starts to lower herself to kiss him". And before she makes a contact with him, she stops herself and announces that she has to leave. Peck asks her if she felt anything during their embrace, to which Li'l

Bit "Lying" reply came with "No!" Peck, "in a rush, trembling," presents Li'l Bit a ring and asks her to marry him and Li'l Bit replies:

You are married to my aunt, Uncle Peck. She's family. You have—you have gone way over the line. Family is family—I'm leaving... I am not seeing you. Again. I'm not coming home for Christmas. You should go home to Aunt Mary. Go home now.

She then stops and apologizes and the scene ends with her departure. Ambiguities related to

psychosexual trauma stem from Li'l Bit's and Uncle Peck's final encounter. This scene reveals

the aim each one of them entered the hotel room for.

Li'l Bit's psychological state is obviously complex. Apparently, she is emotionally terrible, perhaps on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and is desperately seeking to free herself of that which is consuming her. This pushes us to question the extent to which the trauma has affected her and to question her emotional needs from her relationship with Peck.

Li'l Bit addresses her audience in the next scene telling them that from that day, the day of her eighteenth birthday, she never saw Uncle Peck again. She tells them how Peck lost his job, his wife, his driving license and his life, as he drank himself to death over the next seven years.

Ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma rises from Peck's way of living from the day Li'l Bit freed herself from him. It is clear that he became lost to the world, to his wife, to himself. The loss of his driving license symbolizes the loss of his power over Li'l Bit. However, he passed this power to her. Peck was undoubtedly a damaged man who had suffered in his past from a certain type of trauma. However, the nature of his trauma is not revealed throughout the play.

The next scene takes us to eleven year old Li'l Bit persuading her mother to spend an extra week at the beach. Her mother replies:

[This is] out of the question... I am not letting an eleven-year-old girl spend seven hours alone in the car with a man... I don't like the way your uncle looks at you I will feel terrible if something happens. (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*)

Li'l Bit explains that she "deserve[s] a chance at having a father... A man who will look out for me!" and she swears that nothing will happen and that she "can certainly handle Uncle Peck." Her mother, relinquishing herself of the burden of her fears, replies, "All right But I'm warning you—if anything happens, I hold you responsible".

In this scene, obvious is Li'l Bit's mother suspicion of Peck to be a potential pedophile. However, her abandoning of the responsibility is shocking and how she is not looking for her daughter's interest; instead she is protecting herself from future recrimination. Also ambiguous is that Li'l Bit, at the age of eleven, understands that what her mother is referring to is of a sexual nature and that let us wonder if she is really seeking a father figure or the attention that Peck gives her.

Through the next scene Li'l Bit, who is eleven, describes the return journey with Uncle Peck. She is sitting beside him when he decides to let her drive. At first she objects that "it's against the law at my age!" But he convinces her: "That's why you can't tell anyone I'm letting you do this....You can sit in my lap and steer. I'll push the pedals for you" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*). Then, Li'l Bit sits on Uncle Peck's lap and follows his directions— "Now, whatever you do, don't let go of the wheel". Peck suddenly "puts his hands on Li'l Bit's breasts" he continues by "slip[ping] his hands under her blouse". She begs him to stop— "please don't do this." Peck reassures her that it will take "just a moment longer",

at which he "tenses" his entire body against hers. "Trying not to cry", Li'l Bit says—"This isn't happening". Peck continues to "tense more, sharply. He buries his face in Li'l Bit's neck, and moans softly". The scene ends.

This scene provides more answers than ambiguities, as it reveals the nature of the traumatic event, the age at which the sexual abuse began and how it took place. It reveals how Li'l Bit was caught off guard, not suspecting Peck's intentions. It is now clear that Li'l Bit's relationship with Uncle Peck does not involve penetration and that it remained unconsummated and that is a thing which Uncle Peck wanted to change when Li'l Bit turned eighteen. This might be the point at which Li'l Bit rests her sense of guilt.

The final scene starts with thirty five year old Li'l Bit standing before her audience, revealing the "secret" or the "lesson" she wanted to teach us: "That day was the last day I lived in my body. I retreated above the neck, and I've lived inside the "fire" in my head ever since". She admits that, although a lot of time has passed, she now is "believing in things a younger self vowed never to believe in. Things like family and forgiveness". Then, she moves "with pleasure" towards the car she and Peck had occupied during the previous scene, saying:

The nearest sensation I feel—of flight in the body—I guess I feel when I'm driving. On a day like today. It's five A.M. The radio says it's going to be clear and crisp.

Li'l Bit then explains her driving ritual:

I get in the car. (Li'l Bit does so) I lock the doors. And turn the key. Then I adjust the most important control on the dashboard—the radio... I adjust my seat belt. Then I check the right side mirror—check the left side. (She does) Finally, I adjust the rearview mirror.

Then, "a faint light strikes the spirit of Uncle Peck who is sitting in the backseat of the car. She sees him in the mirror. She smiles at him, and he nods at her. They are happy to be going for a long drive together". Li'l Bit then turns to her audience and announces her final task: "I floor it". The scene ends.

Ambiguities related to psychosexual trauma stems from the effects the trauma had on Li'l Bit. The implication of the driving ritual reflects the psychological state of her. However, the appearance of Peck in the back seat of her car, which the abuse first took place on, besides her reaction to the incident, of not being afraid and being pleased to have him on board, raises the disturbing questions concerning the nature of her life now and let us wonder if she really overcame her trauma of childhood sexual abuse.

This paper will use our previous exploration of trauma in the interpretation of the ambiguities related to sexual trauma involving Li'l Bit, as the play focuses on her psychological development. And although Uncle Peck's psychological state is questioned and we assume that he himself suffered from a traumatic event in his past; however, this was not revealed throughout the play. Uncle Peck is not qualified as a victim throughout the course of the play rather qualified as the perpetrator.

For Li'l Bit, the traumatic event that had fallen over her is really unbelievable to an eleven year old girl who takes her uncle as a replacement figure to her father but instead he takes an advantage of her sexually. Of course she was caught off guards and of course the incident was greater than her assimilation and more than her intake. For that, she only expressed her shock by "This isn't happening". We can say that Li'l Bit suffered from a chronic trauma, as the sexual abuse was repeated many times, each time Peck is alone with her.

Li'l Bit suffered throughout her life from child maltreatment. This is not only

through the sexual abuse by her uncle, but also by her family's neglect to her. We can see this through the way her family maltreated her, only referring to her growing bosom and breasts instead of referring to her intellect and education and this was obvious through her conversation with her grandfather during the family dinner. This is clear through the shocking scene with her mother, when she was eleven and wanted to spend one more week on the beach with Uncle Peck. We saw how her mother suspected Peck to be a potential pedophile and instead of protecting her daughter from him, she accepted, relinquishing the responsibility and burden by putting it on an eleven year old girl saying that if anything happened it will be Li'l Bit's responsibility. This is repeated many times throughout the incidents of the play. So, Li'l Bit not only suffered from the sexual abuse but also she was neglected by her family not finding support from any of them in any of her life's aspects. They refused to support her intellectually, protect her from her abuser, and even refused to teach her how she has to deal with boys of her age in order not to be abused through a sexual act or relationship.

Regarding the symptoms of the trauma, Vogel clearly succeeded in presenting Li'l Bit with her developing traumatic symptoms. We can see that Li'l Bit stood alone in this; she did not have any emotional support from her family. However, the only irony in this play was presented through Uncle Peck, who was her supporter while being her abuser. He is the only one who showed support and that might be a reason for her connection with him although she understands that he is a pedophile.

Also, the traumatic event started when Li'l Bit was eleven years old and lasted till the age of eighteen, which means that at that time she did not acquire the coping mechanisms to help her rise above the traumatic event and take the correct decisions. For that, we saw many times how she arranged meetings with Uncle Peck and

how she surrendered to his requests, although he did not force her to any.

Vogel's implementation of a broken chronology is the most obvious symptom, we see how Li'l Bit's memories are not arranged, how she jumped from one incident when she was thirteen to another when she was twenty seven then go back again when she was fourteen. This broken chronology also suggests that Li'l Bit is suffering from not having the ability to concentrate. The detailed way of narrating the events suggests that she might be suffering from visualizing images of the traumatic event.

The behavioural change is presented through social isolation, Li'l Bit set herself away from her family and throughout the incidents of the play, we did not see her with a friend; most of the incidents of the play took place with her abuser. Another symptom is her lack of interest in education after we saw how she spoke her mind to her grandfather when he underestimated her desire to enter college and how she seemed cultured when spoke of William Shakespeare. However, after entering college, she was kicked out for disobeying the rules. She lost the life she looked forward to.

The psychological symptoms were obvious throughout the course of the play, Li'l Bit suffered from depression and anger; most of the time she is tensed and depressed, she gets angry shortly specifically during her meetings with Peck. This is due to her failure to cope with her trauma and accordingly, she is fighting all the time with her thoughts and that always affected her mood. Moreover, she had a feeling of guilt, as she was the only responsible member for the incest; her mother told her that if anything happens, it will be her responsibility.

If we come to Sigmund Freud's theory, we will find that it is applicable to Li'l Bit as according to Freud the infantile sexual experience does not require direct contact sexual relationship; however it can only involve the "stimulation of the genitals,

[and] coitus-like acts" and the scenario that portrayed the incest is the repeated violation by an adult in care taking position. As Uncle Peck was the figure Li'l Bit wanted to take in replacement of her father.

When we come to Robert Jay Lifton's "Doubling Theory" and the "Second Self," we will find that the theory offers a great interpretation of the ambiguities related to Li'l Bit's psychosexual trauma. The theory interprets her inexplicable motivations by introducing the existence of an alternative persona. When Li'l Bit is introduced as an eleven year old girl and prior to the initial sexual violation, her former self has the innocence and the curiosity of any child as she was asking her mother to spend one more week with Uncle Peck on the beach and how she took him as a replacement for her father's figure, holding no suspicions that he might harm her in any way. However, after the first assault we find her a different character, no more naivety and no more innocence, she refers to herself as "old" and "cynical" and arranging for the incest with Peck once a week. This suggests that Li'l Bit's second traumatized self emerges in full force after the incest.

Regarding Lifton's central principles of psychoformative theory, as in the case with the "Auschwitz self," Li'l Bit has no choice but to "diminish [her] capacity to feel... [so as to] avoid being overwhelmed by guilt". In order to "insure the complete negation" of the atrocities at hand and to hold the responsibility alone, as she is the one who insisted to pass another week with Uncle Peck although her mother warned her and that was the time when the first assault took place, besides her mother putting her in responsibility if anything happens. Li'l Bit's second self makes a "pledge to stay numb" by living "within... restricted feelings". As Lifton explains, "by surrendering both emotionally and morally to the environment of atrocity", Li'l Bit's second self "could then become an absolute creature of context" and thus participates in the "performance" of her role within the

traumatic scenario. Li'l Bit fails to overcome the moral dilemma as her second traumatized self she became made her an active participant in the incest, specifically when she seduced the younger boy at high school admitting that she now understands how Uncle Peck played it and how he felt (Petit 273).

Through Lifton's theory and by having two separate protagonists leading the incidents of the play, we can now see and understand that Li'l Bit's second traumatized self is the one who suggested to meet Peck on weekly basis, it is the one who easily disrobed for Peck at the photo shoot and that it was the one who was lied down in Peck's arms on the hotel bed; these actions which by all accounts confirm her complicity in the affair. However, as the second traumatized self is driven by the sole objective of psychic survival, she must be approached with a certain degree of reservation.

The consequences of childhood sexual abuse are always multi-dimensional and obscure. Accordingly, the second self might adapt the most unacceptable forms of thoughts and behaviour to avoid psychic annihilation. From the age of eleven onwards, Li'l Bit functions in a state of psychological crisis, despite her outward appearance of freely choosing to interact with her abuser. Her main objective is to control her perpetrator and the course of events in order not to fall a prey to the lack of control she experienced during the first sexual assault. Li'l Bit's former self only emerges triumphantly at the hotel room scene to end the relationship, the former self which was described as "scared... trembl[ing]" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*).

Peck, by accepting to play the submissive role and by making Li'l Bit believe that she has the control over the course of events, "nothing is going to happen between us until you want it to," he maintains the former self suppressed and keeps the second self alive. By doing so, he guarantees the continuation of their sexual relationship. In addition, the manner in

which Peck addresses Li'l Bit throughout the events of the play, is also vital in maintaining Li'l Bit's second self. He addresses her as a "woman" and a "lady" instead of a child; he compliments her well-developed body and appreciates her intellect. Moreover, he always relinquishes her feelings of guilt and that their affair is not right, when Li'l Bit says "this isn't right, Uncle Peck...Someone will get hurt," he tells her that there is not anything wrong and that their sexual feelings are healthy.

As long as Li'l Bit is near to Peck, the second self has a firm hold on her identity. Only when she is away at college that firm hold is untangled and her former self started the process of resurrection. We see how the countdown in Peck's messages and gifts— a trial from him to maintain the second traumatized self in power— invoked fear in Li'l Bit, a variable to which the second self is immuned. Li'l Bit's eighteenth birthday, the mutually understood date for their relationship to legally be consummated, marks the deadline that evoked Li'l Bit's former self. Furthermore, the marriage proposal was the last hope Peck had to resurrect Li'l Bit's second self into action once more. However, Li'l Bit's former self won the challenge terminating the power Peck had on it for seven years.

The battle between Li'l Bit's former self and second self is heated. In the hotel room scene, her former self who "half want[s] to run," while her second self who thinks "so what if I want to be held by him" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*). It is the second self that rises above Peck and initiate to kiss him while the former self is the one that made her jolt of the bed and out of the room. And finally when Peck asks Li'l Bit if she felt anything when she was in his arms, it is her former self which answered with "No. Nothing." However, Vogel informs us that she was "lying" and that was a reference to the second self loss of power over Li'l Bit.

When Li'l Bit addresses her audience, it is her former self who speaks, reflecting

on the past. It is again her first self when she once again talks to her audience, admitting that at thirty-five she finds herself "believing in things that a younger self vowed never to believe in. Things like family and forgiveness" (Vogel, *The Mammary Plays*). However, after she discloses her secret, the audience is allowed to take a glimpse into Li'l Bit's inner psyche, at which is revealed how far she was affected by the trauma and that it is far from over. She gets in the car, after describing her complex relation with driving – and after we understood the symbolism of her sexual abuse for which driving stands– and spots Uncle Peck ghost in the backseat (of her mind). Her smile at her discovery then driving together with Uncle Peck, suggests that she has not completely healed from the wounds inflicted by the sexual abuse and that she did not get rid of her second traumatized self fully. Thus, the ghost of Peck, i.e., her attachment to him, lives on, as does Li'l Bit's second-self.

Likewise, *Wit* by Margaret Edson, tells the story of fifty-year-old Vivian Bearing, an English department professor and who is an indomitable force in the academic field of seventeenth-century poetry (particularly the sonnets of John Donne). The play starts by Vivian's discovery of being with stage-four ovarian cancer. She swings between being the narrator of the play and acting the scenes at the same time. Being the narrator, she knows the events and how her story will end by death; however, as her character-self she does not know that. This separation between Vivian's narrator-self and her character-self instructs the play's dramatic irony, in which the audience knows the end before the character-self does. This irony is linked to a major theme in Donne's work, which was concerned with life's big questions like death and God, but usually ends up losing itself in its own wit and intellectual quandaries.

The play focuses mainly on the trauma of facing one's own death. Vivian, over the

course of the play and her deteriorating case, is forced to face her own impending death. Throughout the course of the play, Vivian gets to understand life and to change her mind about some concepts of life, particularly her belief that the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual excellence is the most valuable part of life. At the beginning of the play, we see how she deals with her cancer diagnosis as an intellectual problem that needs to be solved. However, over the course of events and as her body and mind begin to fail her, she struggles to remain tough and brave understanding the concept of life.

The playwright Margaret Edson, worked as an inpatient floor captain in the cancer and AIDS wards of the National Institute of Health's research hospital in Washington, D.C. while earning degrees in history and literature. This low-level administrative position made Edson witness each and every detail involved in the treatment of terminal illness. In an interview with Jim Lehrer, Edson explains:

I was the unit clerk, which is a very low-level job in a hospital. But for anyone who spent time in the hospital, you know that that's the center of the action... I was able to really see a lot of things first hand. I was sort of unnoticed because I was so insignificant. And so I was able to witness a lot, both the actions of the care givers and reactions of the patients. (Nichols)

Edson began writing her only play, *Wit*, in 1991. In 1995, *Wit* premiered at California's South Coast Repertory Company, won several awards, then temporarily disappeared. In 1997, New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre mounted a production of *Wit*. This production was restaged in New York City, moving from the 99-seat MCC Theatre to the 499-seat Union Square Theatre, where it was received with critical acclaim. In 1999, *Wit* received the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished drama by an American author.

Unlike *How I Learn to Drive*, the trauma which this play revolves around and based on is the trauma of having to face one's own mortality. The ambiguities stem from the main question of how could the play's protagonist, Vivian Bearing, face her own impending death. The dramatic conflict rises from the form her dying will take and how she will cope and develop in the process. The most ambiguous part is the effect this traumatic event will impose on Vivian Bearing and how she will cope with it and prepare herself to face death.

As a play within a play and as Vivian Bearing plays the role of the narrator and the protagonist of the play, we will find her continually stepping out of the immediate dramatic action involving her health crisis in order to address the audience directly, offering personal reflections, heartfelt commentaries and sarcastic insights. This juxtaposition between her external behaviour during the course of events and her feelings at the moment described by her as a narrator is a strong device that Edson used to impose ambiguities related to Vivian Bearing's psychological trauma.

The play begins with Professor Vivian Bearing, "fifty, tall and very thin, barefoot, and completely bald" (5), walking onto an empty stage pushing an IV pole. She is wearing two hospital gowns, one tied in the front, the other in the back, a red baseball cap and a hospital ED bracelet. She delivers her first line with "false familiarity" saying, "Hi. How are you feeling today? Great. That's just great" (5). She introduces herself formally, "a professor of seventeenth-century poetry, specializing in the Holy Sonnets of John Donne" (5).

Then, ironically, she describes the place where she has been asked "How are you feeling today?"

I've been asked...while throwing up into a plastic washbasin. I have been asked as I was emerging from a four-hour operation with a tube in every orifice... I am waiting for the moment when someone asks me

this question and I am dead I'm a little sorry I'll miss that. (5)

Then, she informs us of her medical condition— "stage-four metastatic ovarian cancer" (6). Referring to her role as "an unwitting accomplice" within the play itself, she informs her audience that although "it is not my intention to give away the plot... I think I die at the end" (6).

Ambiguities from the unusual opening monologue rise to negate Vivian's apparent medical condition and the way she introduces herself and the end. She formally introduces herself and then manages to be comic with her medical condition and how she will die at the end of the play. Although her way offers that she is in complete control, even with announcing her own death, one wonders whether these are her authentic sentiments.

The next scene portrays the moment in which Vivian learns of her cancer. Dr Kelekian bluntly announces "Miss Bearing... you have cancer" (7). The news coming as "something of a shock", Vivian mentally detaches herself from the present crisis by focusing on specific words Dr Kelekian uses in his description of her health condition. He explains that with the fast spreading of the tumour, she needs a "very aggressive" therapeutic plan involving eight cycles of a highly experimental form of chemotherapy begins immediately. He ends his diagnosis by stating that they will be relying on Vivian's "resolve to withstand some of the more pernicious side effects"(9).

Then, Dr Kelekian and Miss Bearing, as teachers, discuss the challenge of dealing with today's students. He refers to his as "blind" while she refers to hers as "deaf." And from this moment, Dr Kelekian refers to Miss Bearing as Dr Bearing. Vivian signs the informed-consent form and when he informs her that she will be "mak[ing] a significant contribution to our knowledge", she is delighted for her contribution in the medical intellectual level. Kelekian informs

her of the importance of taking the full dose of the chemotherapy:

There may be times when you'll wish for a lesser dose, due to the side effects. But we've got to go fiill- force....You must be very tough. Do you think you can be very tough? (12)

To which Vivian responds: "you needn't worry" (12). Then she directs herself to the audience to declare: " I have stage-four metastatic ovarian cancer. There is no stage five. Oh, and I have to be very tough. It appears to be a matter, as the saying goes, of life and death" (12).

Vivian feels that she is ready for that challenge, reminding herself that she is a scholar of Donne's Holy Sonnets, which "explore mortality in greater depth than any other body of work in the English language" (12). This scene uncovers the point at which the traumatic event occurred, revealing how Vivian reacted to the announcement of her illness as "something of a shock" that made her mentally detached focusing only on certain words Dr Kelekian uses to describe her condition. The most prominent ambiguity related to her psychological trauma emerges from whether she will be able to withstand her treatment plan. In addition, we wonder whether she signed the consent form because she wants to live or to prove to herself that she can withstand the severe treatment plan.

The next scene at the hospital, we see Vivian seated on a wheelchair and being taken for a chest x-ray by Susie Monahan, her primary nurse. Then, during her X-ray, she tries to converse with the technician who is obviously not interested in the conversation. Vivian then goes on at length about what it means to be a scholar of Donne, concluding that "after twenty years, I can say with confidence, no one is quite as good as I" (20). At this, Dr Jason Posner, one of Kelekian's clinical fellows, enters. We understand that Jason happens to take Miss Bearing's course in seventeenth-century poetry because "you can't get into

medical school unless you're well-rounded" (21). He tells Susie that the course was "very tough", for that he received an A minus.

After looking into Vivian's medical history, Dr Jason administers a pelvic examination. After he finishes, Vivian directs herself to her audience declaring "That...was...hard" (31). She describes that the process of treatment is humiliating and that she is only "learning to suffer" (31). We then find Susie interrupting by entering the room to measure room "brightly" in order to measure and record Vivian's fluid intake and output. She treats Vivian with pure kindness to which Vivian declares that she is "Uncomfortable with kindness" (34).

Ambiguities related to psychological trauma still involve the question of whether Vivian Bearing will be able to withstand her treatment plan that started to take place, emotionally and physically. We see how she is more comfortable with Dr Kelekian as she matches herself with him in status, while she regards Dr Jason as one of her students. Also ambiguous is relationship to Susie as she treats her arrogantly, despite Susie's kindness to her, expressing that she is not used or comfortable in being dealt with kindness.

In the next scene, Vivian lies in her bed alone and describes to her audience how time passes slowly and heavily. Next are the Grand Rounds, in which she is examined as a specimen by Dr Kelekian and his fellow doctors. She describes the process saying, "they read me like a book. Once I did the teaching, now I am taught" (37). After they leave, Vivian declares to her audience that despite her ironic description of the process, she still respects it. Then, she proceeds by placing herself within the same category as the doctors through their mutual commitment to detailed examinations, in her case, of language.

Ambiguities related psychological trauma rise from Vivian's strategy to cope with the medical treatment. She places herself in the same status of the doctors;

however, she all the time places herself in a higher place than theirs. This makes us wonder if her intellect will prove to be sufficient against cancer. In the next scene, we see Vivian sitting in an isolated room when Kelekian comes to congratulate her on the completion of her fifth cycle: "You're doing so well. Isolation is no problem. Couple of days. Think of it as a vacation"(46).

Vivian then directs her speech to the audience and speaks with a deeper level of understanding:

I am not in isolation because I have cancer, because I have a tumor the size of a grapefruit. No. I am in isolation because I am being treated for cancer. My treatment imperils my health. Herein lies the paradox. (47)

She then recalls a scene in which she is at "the height of her powers" as a teacher" (48), standing before a room full of students analyzing Donne's Holy Sonnet Five.

Ambiguities related to psychological trauma arise from Vivian's psychic struggle, which is apparent through her recalling of scenes when she was at the height of her powers and we see how she is starting to face the reality of her impending death in what appears as a deeper level of wisdom.

In the next scene, we see Vivian sitting in a wheelchair and directing her speech to the audience saying that "this is my play's last scene" (52), as she is "becoming very sick. Very, very sick. Ultimately sick, as it were" (53). She then reveals how she feels physically and emotionally:

In everything I have done, I have been steadfast, resolute—some would say in the extreme. Now, as you can see, I am distinguishing myself in illness...ladies and gentleman. I have broken the record. I have become something of a celebrity. Kelekian and Jason are simply delighted. I think they foresee celebrity status for

themselves upon the appearance of the journal article they will no doubt write about me. But I flatter myself. The article will not be about me...What we have come to think of as me is, in fact, just the specimen jar. (53)

Ambiguities related to psychological trauma rise from Vivian's monologue which involves how Vivian comes to a deeper level of understanding, the shift in the way she presents herself and how she no longer flatters herself as we saw in the first scene and how she used to praise her powers and stamina. She now sees the real image, she is no longer afraid to reveal that she is weak and that she is just an experiment or a jar of specimen to Jason and Kelekian. This monologue makes us wonder about the nature of the brutal treatment that affected Vivian psychologically that makes her pull herself from the status of being an equal strip to Dr Kelekian and pushes her to reduce herself to nothing more than "a specimen jar".

In the next scene, Vivian reaches out to Jason for kindness, only to find that he is incapable of giving her what she needs. It is important to remember how Vivian took pride at earlier scenes in the fact that her "uncompromising scholarly standards" (15) helped in the establishment of the individual Jason has become. However, she now comes face-to-face with the absence of compassion she planted in her students, embodied in Jason, that he cannot show sympathy to his professor. Vivian now reveals her emotional weakness and her need to someone who sympathizes with her. She is no longer able to maintain her identity of the uncompromising strong intellectual. She confronts now with herself that she, as any human being, needs kindness and sympathy.

In the next three scenes, Vivian recalls three incidents through which she faces how she did not have compassion for her students. The first scene, when she sharply reprimands a nineteen year old student in front of the entire class. In the second scene,

Vivian stands enjoying watching the struggle of a student to articulate his underdeveloped thoughts on Donne and how she did not initiate in helping him. The Third scene, Vivian denies a student, who has suffered a death in his family, an extension for his paper. At the end of the last memory, Vivian confesses "I don't know. I feel so much—what is the word? I look back, I see these scenes, and I.." (63). She goes to her bed and the scene ends.

Perhaps the word Vivian searches for is regret. Now, she faces that her wit and intellect could not help her with her condition, all what she needs now is human kindness, which is a something she refused to show towards her students in the past and now what went around, comes around; the way she treated her students in the past is the same way she is being treated now from her doctors.

In the next scene, we see Vivian sitting with Susie declaring how she feels and how she is struggling emotionally, "I can't figure things out. I'm in a...quandary, having these...doubts... I don't feel sure of myself anymore... I'm scared" (64-65). Susie shows how she understands Vivian compassionately and brings her an "orange two-stick Popsicle" .Vivian splits the popsicle in half, and offers it to Susie.

Consequently, Susie suggests that Vivian begins thinking about the code status to choose when her heart stops which will either be Full Code " meaning that "if your heart stops, they'll call a Code Blue and the code team will come and resuscitate you," or a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR), which means that if "your heart stops we'll...well, we'll just let it" (67). Vivian chooses to be DNR, "Don't complicate the matter. Let it stop... Just let it stop" (68). Susie exits and Vivian turns to her audience:

That certainly was a maudlin display. Popsicles? 'Sweetheart'? I can't believe my life has become so... corny... Now is not the time for verbal swordplay...for metaphysical conceit, for wit...

(Slowly) Now is the time for simplicity. Now is a time for, dare I say it, kindness. (Searchingly) I thought being extremely smart would take care of it. But I see that I have been found out.

Ambiguities related to psychological trauma stem from Vivian's choice to be DNR and how she now is not willing to be "a jar of specimen," she no longer places herself in equal to the professionals; however, she chooses Susie's side now. We wonder if Vivian accepts the inevitability of her own death and now understands what her life really needed and how kindness was more important than intellect.

The coming scenes reveal how Vivian's health condition declines strongly and how she becomes too weak until we come to the last scene, when Jason enters Vivian's room to find that she is unresponsive. Unable to locate a heartbeat, "he reaches for the phone and punches in the numbers". Calling out for a "Code Blue". Upon hearing the announcement of the Code Blue, Susie rushes in to the telephone to cancel it; however, it is too late. When the Code Blue enters, Jason and Susie try to stop them but they are repeatedly pushed away. Chaos ensues. Finally, Jason "howls": "I MADE A MISTAKE!" and "collapses on the floor" (84). At this, the Code Team stops.

Still on the attack, Susie "pushes them away from the bed" screaming: "Patient is no code. Get away from her!" (84) Vivian then:

walks away from the scene, toward a little light. She is now attentive and eager, moving slowly toward the light. She takes off her cap and lets it drop. She slips off her bracelet. She loosens the ties and the top gown slides to the floor. She lets the second gown fall. [And] the instant she is naked, and beautiful, reaching for the light— Lights out. (85)

In this scene, the play comes to a powerful end that shows how Vivian got rid of the sterile thoughts and manner she used to adopt, how she came into confrontation with life and understood that it is not about wit and intellect but about compassion and human kindness.

Ambiguities related to psychological trauma stem from facing one's own impending death and the effects trauma has on Vivian Bearing. This study applies the victim/perpetrator paradigm as before to interpret the ambiguities related to the trauma, its evolution and effects on Vivian Bearing. In addition, the paper will state the symptoms that were previously stated through our study, and how Margaret Edson was successful in portraying the trauma with its effects on Vivian Bearing.

Professor Vivian Bearing throughout the course of the play suffers from three separate traumas and for that the type of trauma that she suffered is a complex one, which results from the exposure to variant and different types of trauma (Learning of Ovarian Cancer is an acute trauma, as it is not repeated, her medical treatment course is a chronic trauma, as it is repeated and prolonged, while the doctors' behaviour towards her is another chronic trauma).

The first trauma occurred the moment she learned of her stage-four ovarian cancer, an unexpected incident which she described as "something of a shock." This trauma was not repeated again and her description refers to the severity of the moment on her and accordingly the impact of the trauma. Margaret Edson was successful in showing the impact of the traumatic event when she described that after knowing of her cancer she was mentally detached and her brain started to focus on some medical words that Dr Kelekian used. When we come to the perpetrator of Vivian, we would say that she is only a victim of the disease and her trauma is not a result of someone's violence or abuse of her.

The second trauma is a chronic one, it stems from her medical treatment plan.

Accordingly, as the course of the treatment which was too severe and aggressive on her body, her health condition deteriorated and that had an effect on her psychological health portrayed by Margaret Edson in the form of cognitive symptoms of disorientation and lack of interest in previously lovable activities; throughout the course of the play, we see how Vivian Bearing gradually detached herself from the teaching environment with its superiority and powers as she used to locate herself as an equal to Dr Kelekian and how he started to call her Dr Bearing while maltreating her nurse Susie, who was always kind to her and how she described that she is "uncomfortable with [Susie's] kindness". However, by the end of the play Vivian wanted to be near her and asked her if she will continue taking care of her. Also, at the beginning of the play, she always linked her personal incident to Donne's sonnets and she used to refer to herself as superior than the medical crew; however, at the end she realized that life is not about wit and intellect and she gave up that and started to show and reach for kindness from other people.

Although Vivian's medical treatment plan was aggressive and of course had a great impact on her health condition, also, the trauma doubled the pain and that was among the symptoms that Edson was successful in showing; when Vivian was for the first time talking about how she feels physically and emotionally and how she could not withstand the pain anymore. However, we could not identify the pain resulted from the treatment and that from the trauma.

Moreover, among the symptoms that Edson showed were those related to her psychological condition, over the course of the play, we see how Edson became depressed and had a feeling of disbelief. The great inversion from being a professor in her full powers with all the intellect she had to "a specimen jar" being experimented and being taught to others, that was remarkable

in her recall of memories and in her conversations with Susie.

The third trauma is a chronic one, stemming from doctors' behaviour towards her, from them not being able to give her the kindness and compassion she needed. However, not only their behaviour was the reason for this trauma, karma was another one. Professor Vivian was a professor who never showed empathy towards her students, she found some enjoyment in them suffering intellectually and she never showed kindness or compassion to them, when she entered the hospital and started her treatment plan, she tried to reach for kindness and compassion from her equals, like Dr Kelekian, or from her students, embodied in Dr Jason, and it was something that she never took. She did not have a family, no colleagues except for Professor Ashford and none of her students ever visited her. The trauma that fell on her was that of how she was wrong and how after all these years she turns to find no one to stand by her as that was the way she used to treat others. The most prominent symptom for this trauma was her sense of guilt, whenever she recalled any of her memories.

When we come to the application of the theoretical part of this study, we will find that Freud's 'Seduction Theory' is not applicable to ambiguities stemming from Vivian's psychological trauma as she did not suffer from any kind of childhood sexual abuse.

However, when we turn to Lifton's 'Doubling Theory and the Second Self', we will find that it acts as an innovative methodological lens through which we could interpret the ambiguities related to Vivian's transformation in order to be ready to face her impending death. His theory helps in analyzing the shift which occurs within Vivian's sense of self and her uncharacteristic decisions.

According to Lifton, psychic doubling was essential to the survival of the "Auschwitz self." Besides, for the first principle of psychoformative theory, which

discusses how experiencing the immersion of death in the trauma could have great influence over the traumatized person who surrenders both emotionally and morally to the environment of atrocity. Consequently, the second self which emerges is capable of "becom[ing] an absolute creature of context" (Weir) and participate in performance of the traumatic course of events.

Faced with the threat of her own death, Vivian, like the "Auschwitz self," willingly signs the consent form surrendering to being the subject of an experiment to Dr Kelekian. When she first appears in the hospital gown with a bald head, she is bold and spirited. At this stage, she is talking about her illness with the same "steadfast, resolute" curiosity with which she learned and taught Donne. Equally alive is the wry wit with which she conducted her professional life. However, as she advances in her treatment, she is psychologically changed to be Vivian, who narrates the incidents of the play portraying the second self.

The next scene, a pre-traumatized Vivian sits in Dr Kelekian's office to face the traumatic event of learning of having fourth stage of ovarian cancer. At this precise moment, the split within her psyche takes place. However, by signing the consent and by Dr Kelekian's conversation she tries to maintain her first self. However, by every stage of treatment, by every humiliation she withstands and by every pain she bears, her second self gets stronger and takes more control in order to be able to cope with the traumatic scenario.

Through *Wit*, an unexpected pursuing of the first self takes place from Vivian and the doctors and that is because her trauma is based on "what appears to be a matter, as the saying goes, of life and death" (Edson 12). Both Vivian and the doctors exert enormous energy to keep her former self in different situations like Vivian referring to herself as superior to the medical crew and how she takes pride in forming Jason, also,

when Dr Kelekian started to call her Dr Bearing, putting her in an equal position to them, he was trying to negate the existence of the second self by nourishing her former self and Jason saying that she is strong and can handle the full dose of chemotherapy. The underlying motivation behind the doctor's denial of the second self is that as long as Vivian does not give up and surrender to the fact of her coming death, they will complete using her as a specimen.

Accordingly, the conflict within the play stems from the struggle between Vivian's former and second self to stay, between the scholar and the patient, intellect and compassion, life and death. Over time, Vivian understands life and accepts herself as a patient, and by doing so, ceases to be human. Her former self acknowledges that it has descended into a "pathetic state as a simpering victim" (Edson 58) and that she is only an experiment to the doctors: "But I flatter myself. The article will not be about me, it will be about my ovaries" (53). Accordingly, tragically, Vivian's second self eventually becomes too powerful and gains the upper hand; she understands that the "verbal swordplay" which had previously distinguished her former self no longer an option, Vivian knows that time is running out.

Consequently, the second self, who realized that life is not about wit and intellect, is the one that reaches out for compassion and kindness. It is the second self who shows kindness and shares the popsicle with Susie. It is the second self who chooses to be DNR as she understands that wit and intellect are of no use now and by that the former self is announced to be dead. By choosing DNR, Vivian agrees to retire her former self's commitment to scholarship and concedes to letting her heart stop and allow death its due course. Finally, Lifton's concepts of 'Doubling and the Second Self' offer a highly a distinctive means through which we succeed in interpreting the ambiguities stemming from Vivian's psychological trauma and the

transformation she undergoes as she prepares herself for death.

In conclusion, this paper tackled the trauma, as one of the most important dilemmas of our current century from a scientific level and applying it on a literary level. The research tried to identify the definition of trauma with its types, nature and symptoms. Furthermore, the paper discussed the 'Seduction Theory' by Sigmund Freud and how he was the first one to tackle this topic. The study illustrated some of the contributions that draw on Freud's theory making use of Robert Jay Lifton's 'Doubling Theory and the Second Self' as one of the most significant and great contributions to the psychological field.

The paper attempted to apply Lifton's theory on two contemporary plays, *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel and *Wit* by Margaret Edson. The study applied the victim/perpetrator paradigm in determining the nature of the trauma, its severity, duration, frequency and type. In addition, the relationship between the trauma victim and the perpetrator was identified and critically discussed. Lifton's theory is the most significant contribution of this study and the one that merits further study and application. With this theory, we were able to understand the meaning and the inexplicable passages and dramatic turns of the two plays. Lifton's theory also allowed the researcher to see the relationship between the second self and the perpetrator, as in Uncle Peck's condition of trying to maintain Li'l Bit's second self to keep the incestuous love affair and Dr Kelekian and Jason's efforts to maintain the former self in favor of their interest and medical experiment as well as will to continue fighting for her life.

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