

**BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI YÜKSEK LİSANS
PROGRAMI**

**MASOCHISM AND ART AS A RESPONSE TO TRAUMA: JONATHAN
SAFRAN FOER'S *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* AND
DONNA TARTT'S *THE GOLDFINCH***

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TEZ DANIŞMANI

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ANKARA - 2022

BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

Tarih: 05 / 06 / 2022

Öğrencinin Adı, Soyadı: Elif Erol

Öğrencinin Numarası: 22010065

Anabilim Dalı: Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

Programı: Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı

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Tez Başlığı: Masochism and Art as a Response to Trauma: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*

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ONAY

Tarih: 05/ 06 / 2022

Öğrenci Danışmanı Unvan, Ad, Soyad, İmza:

Doç. Dr. Merve Sarıkaya Şen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I am grateful to my family for supporting my educational journey and me. Thank you for the love and encouragement.

Also, I would like to express my gratitude my advisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Merve Sarıkaya Şen for her guidance throughout the thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank my best friend for her love and support.



ÖZET

Elif Erol. Jonathan Safran Foer'in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* ve Donna Tartt'in *The Goldfinch* Eserlerinde Travmaya Tepki Olarak Mazoşizm ve Sanat. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı. 2022.

Bu çalışma Jonathan Safran Foer'in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* ve Donna Tartt'in *The Goldfinch* eserlerini kullanarak mazoşizm ve sanatı bir travma ile başa çıkma mekanizması olarak incelemeyi amaçlar. Bu tez, travma çalışmaları kapsamında ölen ebeveynleri için yas tutan Oskar Schell ve Theo Decker'ı analiz edecektir. Bu çalışma hazırlık teorisine dayanmakta ve sanatı bir disosiasyon olarak ele almaktadır. İki karakterde travmatik deneyimlerini ve etkilerini anlayabilmek ve baş edebilmek için sanat ve kendileri arasında duygusal bir ilişki geliştirmenin yanı sıra, hazırlık teorisinden kaynaklanan mazoşizmi kullanırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: travma, mazoşizm, sanat, disosiasyon

ABSTRACT

Elif Erol. Masochism and Art as a Response to Trauma: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı. 2022.

This study aims to examine masochism and art as a coping mechanism for trauma by using *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005) and *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt (2013). In the scope of trauma studies, this thesis will analyze the characters, Oskar Schell and Theo Decker, who mourns for their beloved parents. This study bases on the unpleasure principle theory and regards art as dissociation. Both of them use masochism that drives from unpleasure principle as well as developing an emotional relationship between art and themselves so that they can understand and handle their traumatic experience and its effects.

Key Words: trauma, masochism, art, dissociation

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will analyze the traumatic experiences, which leads to masochism and art as a coping mechanism in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005) and *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt (2013). The novels revolve around different stories but they are similar to each other in terms of their treatment of the traumatized people who have lost a beloved and suffer from it. The main characters Oskar Schell and Theodore Decker loses their parents in childhood, which creates a trauma for them with the outcomes of loneliness and guilt. As Dominick LaCapra (2001) states in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*: “One's bond with the dead, especially with dead intimates, may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound” (p. 22). This loss of the beloved becomes the triggering source of trauma for the characters, which opens the way to analyze the novels from the perspective of trauma theory. In her *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth (1996) explains trauma as: “Trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (p. 91). The characters’ masochistic behaviors and tendencies will be examined by using Sigmund Freud’s unpleasure principle theory that suggests people might have benefits from what causes them pain and discomfort even though they are harmful. For this reason, masochism can be a way to control one’s self and coping mechanism. In the novels, characters harm their bodies in different ways such as Oskar’s bruising and Theo’s addictions. These mistreatment of the body makes them have control on themselves as well as handling their problems. Similarly, art is one of the most dominant themes in these novels. The art objects are the central elements that drive the plot. Art is not only important for the context but also for the characters. Through art, the main characters heal their trauma and express their emotions. It has a dissociative quality that helps characters to relax their mind as well as to communicate and understand the source of trauma. This thesis will examine masochism and art as coping mechanism for trauma.

America has the image of a perfect country for the whole world. It is an economically powerful as well as providing a safe country of opportunities, yet, on September 11, 2001, America experienced a tragedy that changed the course of the nation as well as the rest of the world. One of the most important trading centers in America known as the World Trade Center or Twin Towers in New York City fell due to a plane crash made by al-Qaeda. The

skyscrapers that are the center of economy collapsed. The terror attack resulted in a large number of people's death. Such an unexpected incident led to a collective panic, trauma, and grief among people. A *Pew Research Center* article entitled "Two Decades Later, the Enduring Legacy of 9/11" by Hannah Hartig and Carroll Doherty (2021) shows the numbers on the psychological state of people: "Our first survey following the attacks went into the field just days after 9/11, from Sept. 13-17, 2001. A sizable majority of adults (71%) said they felt depressed, nearly half (49%) had difficulty concentrating and a third said they had trouble sleeping" (Pew Research Center). Following the Twin Towers attack, people did not only grieved but also they experienced anxieties such as going out to crowded places or being in long buildings. Additionally, the incident changed the discourse in America. According to Hartig and Doherty's (2021) article, the incident affected the people's common perspective on politics, economics, and America in general which shows how damaging it is to experience this attack. Not only America and Americans but also many people around the world experienced similar fears and perspectives.

All these psychological and physical experiences led to a change in the twenty-first century. Matthew Leggatt (2016) highlights the changes after 9/11 in his article "Deflecting Absence: 9/11 Fiction and the Memorialization of Change" with an emphasis on literature as:

9/11 fiction, and not to mention much of the related nonfiction produced since, has not only proclaimed 9/11 as an event productive of change, but even more as an event that changed everything, that has, in effect, reordered the world. And yet, such a response is both disproportionate and restrictive of the resulting post-9/11 discourse. (p. 208)

Additionally, there have been so many changes in the issues such as economics, politics, and literature. After the attack on Twin Towers, many people expected authors to write about the incident. In such a way, people will be able to understand what happened and share their common feelings of grief and panic, which is the focus of twenty-first-century authors such as Don DeLillo, Richard Bowes, and Jonathan Safran Foer. Leggatt (2016) describes the 9/11 literature and its relationship with people as:

At the same time as these works of fiction offer something concrete onto which can be projected the neuroses of a post-9/11 terrorized society, they are more explicitly works about fear and trauma and as such struggle to expand their scope outside that of the individual's experience of the event. (p. 208)

Therefore, after September 2001, what literature tries to provide is to create a collective spirit for people. Many of the thoughts and feelings are similar for people but they cannot express

them because of the unspeakable nature of trauma. Yet, people require a place for themselves to express their pain. Sonia Baelo-Allué (2011) summarizes in her article entitled “The Depiction of 9/11 in Literature: The Role of Images and Intermedial References”: “Literature has the capacity to make us face the unspeakable, to act out cultural traumas to work through them, mediating between our urge to know and our need to deny” (p. 191-192). That is to say, 9/11 literature and twenty-first-century authors aim to be the voice of people as well as guidance.

Not only literature itself but also art becomes an important part of representing 9/11 because it provides a visual perspective on the issue. For instance, Richard Drew’s (2001) *Falling Man* is one of the most famous pictures of 9/11 that shows the struggle of people to be in the Twin Towers that day, so much that they throw themselves from the building. Although there are speculations and different comments on the picture, people feel sad and grief still. That image took place in mass media such as magazines, television, and the internet. In addition, the powerful image became the central focus of various authors’ writings such as Don DeLillo’s (2007) *Falling Man* and Jonathan Safran Foer’s (2005) *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Chris Vanderwees (2015) emphasizes that: “The novelist may partially attempt to contextualize or historicize these images, but most often, the photographs or descriptions of the falling bodies are included as part of a reoccurring metaphor or rhetorical argument put forward within the novel” (p. 176). With the binding of text and photography, the context becomes stronger which can be a reason why this picture is the topic of this novel.

Jonathan Safran Foer is an American novelist who has a valuable status in twenty-first-century literature. He used to give fiction lessons at Yale University but now he is an academic at New York University. Also, Franklin Foer, his younger brother, worked as the editor of *The New Republic*, and Joshua Foer, his older brother, is a journalist. Foer presents himself as a vegetarian and gives so much importance to vegetarian life for the well-being of the planet and all the living creatures. Especially, his very famous non-fiction *Eating Animals* (2009) focuses on the issue of meat-eating and supports sustainable agriculture. It became a huge success as New York Best Seller and it was adapted into a documentary. Also, he is well known for his fictions *Everything is Illuminated* (2002), *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *Here I Am* (2016).

A common point of Foer’s novels is their autobiographical qualities whether they are fiction or not. For instance, *Everything is Illuminated* is Foer’s first novel presented in two

different but interrelated narratives. The first story is about Trochenbrod, a Jewish settlement in Poland, before the Holocaust. It is inspired by his grandfather's life in the shtetl. The second story presents the author's own trip to Ukraine to learn more about Trochenbrod and its history. The novel won many awards such as National Jewish Book Award in 2001, Guardian First Book Award in 2002, and Young Lions Fiction Award in 2003. Similarly, *Here I Am* is another autobiographical fiction that is about a Jewish family living in America. Maureen Corrigan (2016) who is a teacher at Georgetown University reviews Foer's writer identity in NPR and indicates that his narration of his own life being a part of his fiction is amazing.

Foer integrates his own experiences into his writings, which creates a strong relationship between the author, the work, and the reader because there is an intimate and sincere sharing. His writings emphasize a simple and direct way of addressing the reader and open the way for a clearer share of thoughts and feelings. At the same time, he is regarded as an author who has an experimental style of writing. For instance, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Foer uses pictures to explain the mind of the character. Visualizing the narration provides a difference and new perspective on the issues that are in the novel. Walter Kirn (2005) states that "Foer is just the sort of brainy, playful, young writer." (NY TIMES) in his article called "*Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close: Everything is Included.*"

Nevertheless, some commentators find the novel confusing about how they should feel. In her article "A Tower of Babel", Michel Faber (2005) suggests that:

In the opposite camp, Foer's fiction triggers violently allergic reactions. Dissenters dismiss him as an adolescent chatterbox, all artifice and no substance, all cuteness and no grit. I would have preferred not to take sides. But, looking back at my jottings in the margins of Foer's new book, I can't deny how frequently and furiously I've scribbled 'Aaaarrghh!'" (The Guardian)

From an objective perspective, Faber explains that Foer has a different style of narration, which may create an uncertain feeling towards the novel.

Similar to his other novels, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) is inspired by Foer's life. The fright and trauma that the grandfather, Thomas Schell, feels are caused by his life in Dresden, Germany during World War II, which is a reflection of what the author's family suffered as a Jewish family in Poland. This is the second narrative in the novel. There are letters from Oskar's Grandpa to Thomas Schell Jr., which he never sent. They narrate the struggles he felt during the war and how he lost his lover. He remembers the doorknob he touched when there was a bombing attack. That is why, in the novel, there

are doorknobs to emphasize his traumatic past in the war. Due to these hardships, he lost his ability to speak in time as a reaction to his trauma. He came to America, met Oskar's Grandma but he never loved her. To avoid the feeling of loneliness, Grandma asks Grandpa to marry her. He agrees and they get married but they never have a happy marriage. Eventually, Grandpa leaves his son and wife. Also, there are letters from his Grandma to Oskar which is the third narration. Grandma tells Oskar about the suffering she felt after coming to America from Dresden. She depends upon Grandpa but he never loves her. She expects a kind of affection but their marriage has boundaries with certain rules that will prevent them to develop feelings. For instance, having corners to express how they feel rather than talking. They have a corner to say they are angry or sad. Then, he leaves while she is pregnant and she has to be a single mother. In short, the hard times because of the war indicate the similar traumas that his family had to endure during the Holocaust. Specifically using that period as a reason for trauma is its parallel to September 11, 2001 as well as a reference to Foer's own family. Naomi Mandel (2012) emphasizes the similarities between Foer's novels as follows:

Everything Is Illuminated and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* are strikingly similar in form and theme. The thematic similarities lie not only in their setting in the aftermath of violence but in the fact that each novel tells essentially the same story: the coming-to-knowledge of a young male protagonist propelled by these events toward an engagement with the past. (p. 240)

In that sense, the novel is as an example of a bildungsroman because the reader can witness the development of an individual from childhood to adulthood. Bildungsroman novels tend to portray an improvement both physically and psychologically. Yet, it can also present a mental development without physical growth. In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Foer presents a journey to maturity psychologically. He does not portray a physical growth of a character. Still, it is an effective way to emphasize the emotions and growth of an individual. According to Laura Miller's (2015) review on the novel:

Choosing a child narrator gives Foer access to extravagant emotions and quirky imaginings that would seem cloying or self-indulgent in a grown-up, but at the cost of allowing the central trauma its due. September 11 was a surreal intrusion of the spectacular and malevolent into the banal and safe. But for a kid like Oskar, reality has yet to be fully established, so surreality is impossible. (New York Magazine)

Through the child narrator, the reader can witness how trauma starts to inflict a person from the beginning. By giving a voice to a child, Foer distinguishes how an adult and a child give different responses to collective or individual traumas. It is liberating to use a person who

starts to create an identity and learn about feelings. An adult must react or behave in a logical and controlled way whereas a child has the freedom to express himself or herself without any limits.

The main story of the novel is about the trauma of a nine-year-old named Oskar Schell who lost his father Thomas Schell Jr. in the 9/11 terror attack in New York. Oskar is an imaginative and intelligent boy. Yet, he suffers from loneliness that results as Oskar's strong emotional and unique connection with his father. They like to play a game of hiding the clues and finding the prize called Reconnaissance Expedition. Before Thomas Jr.'s death, they were playing it again and this time the game is about New York City itself. According to Thomas Jr., there used to be the Sixth Borough but now it is gone because the land is separated long time ago. As a boy who believes in facts, Oskar does not believe in this story. The task is to follow the clues about the existence of Sixth Borough. Oskar is not able to finish the game because he loses Thomas Jr. while they were playing. Nevertheless, the game continues after his father's death because Oskar finds a vase that has a key inside and he thinks this can complete the game. It is a way to distract him from his pain and a chance for him to be with his father again. The game serves beneficially for Oskar because he learns to cope with his fears and communicate with others.

Even though there is a happy ending, there is a mental frustration alongside with mourning phase that results in Oskar's bruising himself or the tendency to do it. Consequently, his psychological pain is reflected in Oskar's body whether it is intentional or not. The body becomes an accessory to express and tolerate problematic psychology. He presents self-destructive and masochist behaviors as a coping mechanism against his sorrowful past and present. By causing himself physical pain, Oskar can have a control over himself.

Also, through the use of art, Oskar's obsession with the terror attack and how his father dies are foregrounded in the novel. He puts the falling man image as the central focus of his scrapbook *Stuff That Happened to Me*. As John Updike (2005) states in his "Mixed Messages" article, the novel itself gives importance to the graphic sources:

The book's graphic embellishments reach a climax in the last pages, when the flip-the-pages device present in some children's books answers Oskar's yearning that everything be run backward—a fall is turned into an ascent. It is one of the most curious happy endings ever contrived, and unexpectedly moving. (The New Yorker)

The pictures in the novel are extremely important to the novel because they become a part of the narration as well. Throughout the novel, Oskar's scrapbook provides an insight to his

mind. As well as representing, Oskar expresses his own thoughts and feelings by taking, putting, and searching pictures. He creates a world for himself to speak freely as he likes. In such a way he uses art as a coping mechanism because expressing is one of the most important element of trauma process. Updike emphasizes that Oskar's interpretation of the event and the pictures show his happy resolution. Oskar considers the Falling Man as his father because he does not know how his father died. Therefore, he associates him with the man in the picture. In such a way, he dissociates himself from the present time and be with his father during the incident, which helps him to make a connection and understand his troubles. This scenario of Thomas Jr.'s death changes concept to survival. Oskar reverses the picture and imagines that this man never fell down, so, his father never fell down. Once again, art becomes a representation and a tool for coping with the pain.

Similar subjects are also thematized by Donna Tartt in her 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction winner *The Goldfinch* (2013). Carrie Doyle (2019) who interviewed with Tartt for *Town and Country Magazine* writes about the mysterious Tartt: "I had expected the press-shy author to be skittish and aloof, but she was friendly and outgoing, and I got no sense that she dreaded spending an hour and a half chatting with a journalist over tea and toast" (Town and Country Magazine). She explains that Tartt does not even use social media. Other than advertising a book, she does not want to be in front of the public eye. Tartt is an important figure in contemporary literature. Besides her poems and short stories, she has three novels *The Secret History* (1992), *The Little Friend* (2002), and *The Goldfinch* (2013). *The Secret History* is a fiction about solving the mystery of a murder by college students. Similarly, *The Little Friend* is a fiction of murder mystery. It is about a girl named Harriet's efforts to solve the mystery behind her brother Robin's murder. Robin was hanging from a tree and this was negatively affecting the family. The murder remains a mystery for twelve years until Harriet finds the killer. Through this search, Harriet tries to cope with this trauma and the resolution of the incident equals to finding ease for her pain. After writing the trauma and mystery-based novel *The Little Friend*, Tartt published *The Goldfinch* in 2013.

Kamila Shamsie (2013) explains Tartt's writing in *The Guardian* book reviews suggesting that her prologues are important for the rest of the novel's plot:

It is dangerous to write openings as compelling as Donna Tartt's. In *The Secret History*, the one-page prologue gives us a murder and a narrator who has helped to commit it. *The Little Friend* starts with the death of a child who, by page 15, is found hanging by a piece of rope from a tree branch, his red hair "the only thing about him that was the right colour anymore." (The Guardian)

In addition, as Shamsie (2013) mentions, Tarrt's entrance to *The Goldfinch* is "climactic" (The Guardian). The two sections in the opening are the current whereabouts of Theo Decker in Amsterdam and a turn back to the time he lost his mother. The preliminary information about the protagonist's life causes a disrupted linearity in the story, which increases the suspense; ending of the novel is at the beginning.

Many of the reviews and comments on the novel are positive, for instance, *Kirkus Review* (2013) describes the novel as: "A long-awaited, elegant meditation on love, memory and the haunting power of art" (Kirkus Review). Douglas Perry (2014) criticizes the novel for being overrated in *Oregon Live*: "But even if *The Goldfinch* doesn't stand up there in the literary stratosphere with the best of Joyce and Fitzgerald and Faulkner, so what? As Kirkus Reviews points out, it works." (Oregon Live) Even though *The Goldfinch* (2013) is a Pulitzer winner, there are negative comments about the novel as well. Constance Grady (2019) in her review in *Vox Magazine* named "*The Goldfinch* is a bad movie because it is based on a deeply flawed book" suggests that the movie adaptation by John Crowley on the same title is not good due to the lack of a solid story in the novel. Grady points out: "All of which means that *The Goldfinch*'s gorgeous, empty heart is missing. And without that, this already-crumbling story collapses into dust" (Vox Magazine) According to Grady, the plot is problematic rather than the writing technique.

As a contemporary writer, Tarrt does not only concentrate on individual trauma but also highlights the collective trauma of September 11. The novel starts with a bombing incident in Met Museum, New York where the main character Theo Decker's mother died. Since there might be a parallel to the actual terror attack on World Trade Center, it can be argued that even in the 2010s, the effects of 9/11 continue. Through Theo, one could empathize with people who experienced the destructive event. From a smaller setting, Tarrt recreates the incident both physically and mentally. For instance, Theo inhales smoke while he is at the museum, which shows the bodily experience as well as the feeling of desperation, and helplessness that highlights the psychological state of the event.

Both *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013) use 9/11 as the context of the story. Also, *The Goldfinch* is a bildungsroman as well since the reader witnesses the growth of the main character from childhood to adulthood. Unlike Oskar who only matured mentally, Theo develops as a mature adult. Still, both novels have similarities more than differences. For example, both of them portray traumatized children

and adolescents who lost a beloved. Similar to *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *The Goldfinch* presents Theodore Decker who had a violent and traumatic childhood. Theo is exposed to his father's violence who called him Frankenstein when he was little. So, Theo was scared of his drunk and abusive dad. After his father left Theo and his mother, Audrey, he starts to suffer from a fear of loneliness and abandonment. As an outcome of the circumstances, Theo becomes highly depended on his mom. Moreover, he loses Audrey in a bombing attack in Met Museum, New York. In addition to the increasing chain of events and many others to come, Theo finds a way to ease this pain through his self-destructive behaviors by treating his body poorly and art.

Throughout the novel, Theo's relationships with others are toxic. For instance, even though Boris is not a perfect friend figure, Theo loves him. The unhealthy side is not abnormal for him due to the disoriented relationship he had with his father and losing the normal one he had with his mother. Even though he has a chance to do it right, he ruins it. For instance, Theo's forgery of antiques influences his relationship with Hobie, the owner of the shop. Hobie is the person who met him after the incident and the man who takes care of Pippa for a while, the girl Theo likes. Hobie becomes a friend and a guardian for Theo and makes him feel fine but Hobie feels disappointed by the forgery Theo has been doing. Theo finds objects and gives them to Hobie for renovation. Then, he sells them as valuable antiques for a lot of money.

Furthermore, Theo's use of drugs is a way of coping with his problems. Every time he feels overwhelmed or anxious, he turns to drugs. It becomes an addiction for him since it is a way for him to numb the pain. All these masochistic tendencies are the outcome of trying to deal with the troubles of his past. It is easier to be drunk or numb unlike feeling and facing the reality. Therefore, Theo's masochism does not result from his desire for death but serves as a way of coping mechanism just like Oskar Schell's. Although he is doing this to himself consciously, his body responds to his mindset subconsciously. For example, when Pippa moves to her aunt who lives in another country, he feels extremely upset. She is the girl he loves and obsesses with since the bombing of Met Museum. She was there the same day and caught the attention of Theo before the incident. Afterward, they become friends while Pippa was injured because of the bombing. In time, Theo becomes more devoted to her because she is able to understand him even though they never speak about it. Therefore, her departure is a depressive feeling for Theo, which results in his sickness and high fever. When he starts to deal with this issue, his sickness gets better.

Similar to Oskar, Theo uses art as a coping mechanism as well. It helps him to dissociate himself from the time he is in and he uses art as a connection with Audrey. Unlike Oskar, Theo does not create his own art. He steals “The Goldfinch” (1654) by Carel Fabritius from the Met Museum. Audrey loves Dutch painters like Fabritius and they were looking at these paintings before the accident. This leads Theo to make a connection between Audrey and the painting. Because of this connection, he can be with Audrey. He does not have to leave his mother behind. Also, Theo associates himself with the goldfinch in the painting because like the bird he feels lonely and captured. Through art, Theo expresses his thoughts and feelings, even though he is not the one who created it. Eventually, at the end of the novel he understands that he is not alone because Fabritius and many other people suffered from an overwhelming situation. Therefore, art helps Theo to understand and handle the troubles in his mind. Thus, traumatic effects might lead to masochistic tendencies and art as a form of dissociation that function as a way of coping with trauma, which is in both *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch*.

Trauma theory originated from the studies of hysteria that Jean-Martin Charcot focused in 1882. It was a concern of the neurologic field that contains both physical and mental symptoms such as extreme emotions, strokes, or amnesia. The body reacts to the depressed and confused mind. At that time, scientists thought that hysteria was an illness that affects women. Throughout the time, they concluded that men could also suffer from the same disease. As Allan Ropper and Brian Burrell (2019) mention Charcot’s studies in their article entitled “In Search of Hysteria: The Man Who Thought He Could Define Madness”: “Not only was hysteria a disease of the body, but so was the susceptibility to hypnotic suggestion. In other words, according to Charcot, only true hysterics could attain the postures and maintain the poses of artificial hysteria.” (Literary Hub) In time, the researchers find out that hysteria has so many dimensions rather than a neurologic disease. Additionally, Charcot’s focus on hysteria opens the way for trauma studies. Rather than the physical symptoms, the mental situation becomes another part to examine. Within the light of Charcot’s studies, neurologist Sigmund Freud became one of the initiative figures of trauma.

According to Freud, trauma causes hysteria or symptoms of hysteria due to the overwhelming emotions and experiences that affect the psyche. The individual who suffers from trauma may not be able to function well in his or her life. As Freud suggests (1932-36) in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis and Other Works*:

In psychoses, however, the turning-away from reality is brought about in two kinds of way: either by the unconscious repressed becoming excessively strong so that it overwhelms the conscious, which is attached to reality, or because reality has become so intolerably distressing that the threatened ego throws itself into the arms of the unconscious instinctual forces in a desperate revolt. (p. 16)

An individual can suffer from the harsh reality by experiencing and repressing it that harms the human psyche. This results with a dysfunction of the individual's life. The basic structure of the human psyche consists of the id, ego, and superego. The id is the fundamental and animalistic desires of people such as drinking water, eating or going to the toilet that people experience especially in the early ages. Later on, the individual starts to learn about the external world that consists of rules and structures. Therefore, the superego tries to tame or restrict the id. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud (1923) suggests:

The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions. All this falls into line with popular distinctions which we are all familiar with; at the same time, however, it is only to be regarded as holding good on the average or 'ideally.' (p. 19)

The ego aims at balancing the two stages of the psyche so that the person can function well. When the person gets a damage by an external source, this psyche structure distorts. In the same work, Freud (1923) states: "The super-ego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices" (p. 30). This disrupt in the mind starts due to the initial traumatic experiences, especially, childhood is an important stage. The individual might suffer from various neuroses such as anxiety, obsession, or a tendency to self-harming behaviors. In "Masochism and Trauma", Harold P. Blum (2012) states:

Trauma is defined as a state in which the ego is overwhelmed and reduced to relative helplessness and loss of function. Severe shock trauma or protracted stress trauma may result in concurrent physical as well as psychological collapse or impairment may be relative with different effects on various ego functions. Trauma may be acute, recurrent or persistent with ensuing cumulative trauma. (p. 146)

Consequently, the id and especially, the superego maintains to suppress the ego due to a traumatic experience. For this reason, trauma is an important part of the development of the basic structure of the human mind.

Furthermore, Freud and Josef Breuer (1895) broaden the issue in their work *Studies on Hysteria*. They argue that the first experience of a traumatic incident can only function in the memory:

We may reverse the dictum 'cessante causa cessat effectus' ['when the cause ceases the effect ceases'] and conclude from these observations that the determining process continues to operate in some way

or other for years not indirectly, through a chain of intermediate causal links, but as a directly releasing cause just as a psychical pain that is remembered in waking consciousness still provokes a lachrymal secretion long after the event. Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences. (p. 7)

That is why the process of trauma spreads over time rather than experiencing and finalizing instantly. The effects continue repetitively which makes the process longer. The individual who suffers from a traumatic event may act similarly to the incident or dream about it but cannot understand or realize its significance. Rather than facing it, the mind avoids the source of the pain. In other words, the unconscious level of the mind buries the event. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud (1939) suggests:

In the first case it comes about because the instincts strengthened by physical maturity can again take up the battle in which at first they were defeated. In the second case the neurosis becomes manifest later because the reactions and changes of the personality brought about by the defense mechanisms prove to be an obstacle for the solving of new problems of life, so that grave conflicts arise between the demands of the outer world and those of the Ego, which strives to preserve the organization it had painfully developed in its defensive struggle. (p. 124-125)

In other words, when the individual experiences a similar trigger, then, trauma shows itself so effectively that there can be behavioral changes and defense mechanisms. The initial trauma causes a damage but encountering a secondary one disrupts the mind. Then, trauma becomes a repetitive act for the person who suffers from it which is called “deferred action”, “Nachträglichkeit” in German. Freud (1895) explains in *Project for a Scientific Psychology*:

If the cathexis of the memory is repeated, the unpleasure is repeated too, but the ego-facilitations are there already as well; experience shows that the release [of unpleasure] is less the second time, until, after further repetition, it shrivels up to the intensity of a signal acceptable to the ego. (p. 359)

Since the individual is unable to comprehend the source of the trouble, he or she acts repetitively because the problem is not solved. They can repeat their behaviors in relation to the traumatic event as a response. In such a way, the troubling incident turns into a loop that shows itself in various areas in behavior such as obsession or dreaming it continuously. According to Freud’s study, unpleasure principle is similar to pleasure is another repetition that creates the same effects for the traumatized psyche. Even though people tend to benefit from things that will give them pleasure, some individuals might lean on to things that gives unpleasure.

Freud states that trauma patients are unable to verbally express their emotions which makes it harder to represent and additionally, to cure. Nevertheless, it is the most effective solution as Freud (1893) suggests in *On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication*:

Linguistic usage bears witness to this fact of daily observation by such phrases as 'to cry oneself out' ['sick ausweinen'], and to 'blow off steam' ['sick austohen', literally 'to rage oneself out']. If the reaction is suppressed, the affect remains attached to the memory. An injury that has been repaid, even if only in words, is recollected quite differently from one that has had to be accepted. (p. 8)

Explaining what troubles the mind is a healthy procedure for the traumatized people. By telling their stories, they can find a solution or a better way of treatment because it will reveal the source of trauma. Yet, the mind represses the incident; therefore, the individual cannot narrate what happens to them fully. Also, the memory is unreliable as well because the mind changes or avoids the reason behind their hardship. Such complications lead to error in verbal expression and representation of the traumatized mind. These trauma theories from the perspective of psychoanalysis initiate their use in literature in terms of narration and context. Since the psyche is disrupted and fragmented, trauma becomes unrepresentable.

Literary studies try to understand and handle trauma theories as a branch of literary psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytical perspective does not only contain trauma but also it examines the neurotic behaviors of the characters as well as the society of the mentioned period. The main aim of this analysis is to represent and understand the troubled mind of the character or characters in a literary work. By doing so, literature can provide an insight as well as helping and being a guidance to the studies of trauma.

Cathy Caruth who is one of the leading figures of trauma and literary studies describes that trauma studies that opens collaboration for various works such as history, sociology, and literature (Caruth, 1995, p. 4). According to Caruth, trauma is hard process that an individual has to endure because of the treatment process as well as understanding the source of the problem. Caruth (1995) indicates that traumatic experience does not have an exact time; it separates as the first experience and repetition of the event (p.4). In Caruth's (1996) *Unclaimed Experience*, she explains element of trauma as "return to haunt the survivor" (p. 4). In their minds, traumatized people re-live the incident repeatedly whether in hallucinations or dreams. For instance, when a person loses someone important, one can experience hallucinations of the loved one or having dreams about him or her. Similar to Freud, Caruth emphasizes that repetition is a qualification of the traumatized mind that delays the treatment process. They can create incidents that will remind them that person or make them re-live the memories that they have together obsessively, which is a behavioral and neurotic outcome of repetition.

According to Caruth, the traumatized mind distorts the reality of the event. Therefore, that person might not comprehend the event that hurts them and creates trauma, which

arouses the question of reliability. Caruth explains: “The attempt to gain access to a traumatic history, then, is also the project of listening beyond the pathology of individual suffering, to the reality of a history that in its crises can only be perceived in unassimilable forms” (Caruth, 1995, p. 156). From her perspective, listening a traumatized person means listening the truth of the individual, not the reality.

Since there is an “incompletion in knowing” (Caruth, 1995, p. 5), the history that traumatized narrates. That is why; there can be no historical fact. Also, she explains the importance of repetition of the troubling event as an error in achieving the fact. She explains:

The repetitions of the traumatic event—which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing. (Caruth, 1996, p. 92)

According to Caruth’s (1996) researches, the distortion in the memory leads to a “delay” and belatedness” (p. 4) in the treatment process, which results with a paradox. To resolve the issue, the source of trauma is required. This creates the major problem of verbally express because both the distorted memory and delay causes an error in understanding and narration. Repetition as an outcome of the traumatic experience does not clear the memory. Therefore, to understand the core of the traumatic event, repetition does not provide the complete fact about the experience. They are a part of the trauma process and re-living of the event but still, it is not enough to achieve the whole truth.

Even though Freud emphasizes verbally explaining is hard for traumatized people, (Freud, 1893, p. 8), literature tries to show this distorted mind. In her studies, Caruth agrees to Freud’s emphasis on the unrepresentability of trauma. Caruth (1995) in her “Introduction” says:

This simple definition belies a very peculiar fact: the pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a distortion of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. The pathology consists, rather, solely in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. (p. 4)

Caruth suggests that the unrepresentability of trauma affects the mind in terms of memory, which leads to a change in the identity of the individual. The disrupted perspective prevents a regular or standard narration cannot be enough to express the mindset. Nevertheless, literature is a beneficial effort to represent. (Caruth, 1995, p.4) A unique form of narration can represent the mind of the traumatized.

The trauma narration focuses on a fragmented and indirect way of storytelling. In “Trauma within the Limits of Literature”, Geoffrey Hartmann (2003) who is among the important figures in trauma and literary studies, suggests:

Literature both recognizes and offsets that inadequacy. If there is a failure of language, resulting in silence or mutism, then no working through, no catharsis, is possible. Literary verbalization, however, still remains a basis for making the wound perceivable and the silence audible. (p. 259)

Like Freud and Caruth, Hartmann emphasizes that verbalizing the trauma is essential for the individual. If there is an error of explanation, there can be no resolution. In this sense, the aim of literary studies while adapting trauma theory is to give voice as much as possible. Even though the characters are unable to express themselves, symbols and metaphors in literature give hidden messages to highlight the troubles of the character. The narratives are fragmented and distorted. Similarly, postmodern fiction uses fragmentation a lot. It is a literary movement that values indirect and uncertain writing. Therefore, just like postmodern fiction, trauma writings are experimental as Hartmann (1995) states in “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies”:

Emphasis falls on the imaginative use of language rather than on an ideal transparency of meaning. The real -the empirical or historical origin- cannot be known as such because it presents itself always within the resonances of “field” of the traumatic. (p. 544)

Hartmann’s words emphasize that trauma writings does not have to consist concrete or reality based descriptions. Since the perception of traumatized people differ, the writing is not a concrete fact. The aim of trauma literature is to represent the mind, not the fact. That is why using a different language and narration is a part of the trauma narration. In short, as Hartmann (1995) suggests that literature is a tool for understanding the injury of the mind. (p. 537). With its different techniques, literature makes the unrepresentable expressed as well as provides an insight that increases empathy and sympathy towards the wounded people.

Just as Freud’s other contributions such as dream concept or unconscious, unpleasure principle is another theory that passes to literature. In his identity theories, Freud explains three principles similar to the structure of the human psyche; pleasure, reality, and unpleasure principles. According to him, the pleasure principle is at the core of the identity, which triggers the id. This function as the will to live and it is what gives or fulfills desires. It is buried deep in the unconscious. An error in it might cause a struggle resulting with extreme anger or anxiety. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud and Breuer (1920) explain:

Most of the unpleasure that we experience is perceptual unpleasure. It may be perception of pressure by unsatisfied instincts; or it may be external perception which is either distressing in itself or which

excites unpleasurable expectations in the mental apparatus that is, which is recognized by it as a 'danger. The reaction to these instinctual demands and threats of danger, a reaction which constitutes the proper activity of the mental apparatus, can then be directed in a correct manner by the pleasure principle or the reality principle by which the former is modified. This does not seem to necessitate any far-reaching limitation of the pleasure principle. Nevertheless the investigation of the mental reaction to external danger is precisely in a position to produce new material and raise fresh questions bearing upon our present problem. (p. 5)

It is crucial for human psyche to function well to have a healthy mind. From childhood to adulthood, the pleasure principle turns into a reality principle since the ego starts to maintain the behavior. In such a way, the individual can adapt to society well. It can be said that pleasure principle is what the mind desires whereas reality is what it needs to be. Also, Freud suggests that the mind tries to avoid the incidents that give discomfort because its concern is to avoid pain. Later on, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud and Breuer (1920) explain that unpleasure, just like pleasure, is a driving force for the human mind:

Finally, a reminder may be added that the artistic play and artistic imitation carried out by adults, which, unlike children's, are aimed at an audience, do not spare the spectators (for instance, in tragedy) the most painful experiences and can yet be felt by them as highly enjoyable. This is convincing proof that, even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind. (p. 11)

The child in the experiment they have done repetitive actions while playing which made them realize that even in the strongest age of pleasure principle, unpleasure principle is valid and at the core. Additionally, it can be concluded that pleasure and unpleasure principles come from the same source, from ego. Both of them are the desire to live and die which are among the basic instincts of human. For this reason, they are repetitive compulsions. Similarly, trauma is repetitive. Rather than searching for pleasurable activities, sometimes, people can lean on to things that gives them discomfort. In the traumatic state, this discomfort may result with repetition. That is why, trauma becomes a part of unpleasure and it results in self-harm either physically or mentally:

This 'perpetual recurrence of the same thing' causes us no astonishment when it relates to active behaviour on the part of the person concerned and when we can discern in him an essential character-trait which always remains the same and which is compelled to find expression in a repetition of the same experiences. We are much more impressed by cases where the subject appears to have a passive experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality. There is the case, for instance, of the woman who married three successive husbands each of whom fell ill soon afterwards and had to be nursed by her on their death-beds. (Freud and Breuer, 1920, p. 16)

The individual is triggered by the pain and constantly remembers it even though they do not know the source. It becomes a way to defend one's self as well as the urge to do it. In this sense, repetitive behaviors become a part of the body that comes and feeds the need for unpleasure.

Freud's principles of unpleasure provide insights into Theo Decker from *The Goldfinch* (2013) and Oskar Schell from *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). Theo makes this repetition through his drug and alcohol addiction. In such a way, he numbs himself rather than facing the harsh reality of a world without his mother and the guilt of his mother's death. As all addictions, it is a repetition and it is his way of avoiding trauma. Also, his attitude toward self-harm that he saw from his father continuously affects him. He drinks or uses drugs because he knows that this is what his father does when he feels frustrated. On the other hand, Oskar bruises himself physically due to the grief that he feels from losing his father and the guilt that keeps the voicemails as well as his obsession with finding the secret from his father. In such a way, both of them yield to the way of unpleasure because of the traumatic experiences they had. They are repetitive and they do not avoid pain like it is suggested in the pleasure principle:

The specific unpleasure of physical pain is probably the result of the protective shield having been broken through in a limited area. There is then a continuous stream of excitations from the part of the periphery concerned to the central apparatus of the mind, such as could normally arise only from within the apparatus [...] so that the remaining psychical functions are extensively paralysed or reduced. (Freud and Breuer, 1920, p. 24)

Contrary to his previous studies on pleasure theory, as Freud and Breuer suggest, they yield to pain to handle their suffering. They used to believe that unpleasure principle only damages the mind. Yet, they discover that unpleasure provides similar points with pleasure. Although unpleasure principle is associated with the desire for death, it is also linked with the id that is the source of the basic need. Additionally, it can be said that individuals might lean on pain while solving their trauma. Therefore, trauma, unpleasurable experiences, and masochism are interrelated concepts. Masochism is a psychological condition which is about self-harm. The feeling of guilt, misery, or loss might lead to masochism as a way of punishment. The most common knowledge is the individual's act or urge to harm the body by bruising or cutting the skin. Other expressions of masochism might be an addiction to drugs or alcohol. These self-harming activities give a certain amount of pleasure to the masochist. As in Freud's unpleasure principle, pain initiates positive feelings for the

individual. In the article, “Varieties of Masochistic Experience: Modes of Analytic Relating”, Henry Markman (2012) mentions:

The masochistic experience offers some form of pleasure in suffering and is sought over and over again. This pleasure (“terrible delights”) varies—excitement of all sorts (sexual, aggressive, narcissistic), as well as relief from terror and anxiety—so that the various forms of pleasure contribute to the complexity of the experience and difficulty for the analyst to find the right level to understand and interpret. (p. 130)

Therefore, the behavior does not have to be assumed as a desire for death. Since unpleasure principle itself is another source of pleasure, masochism becomes a coping mechanism or a way to stay alive as well. In “Masochism as a Multiply-Determined Phenomenon”, Glen O. Gabbard (2012) highlights the issue as:

A common theme in masochism that has guided me through many puzzling clinical situations is this: the masochistic solution is better than something else. Collaborating with the patient in a search for what that “something else” is can be highly productive in disentangling the web of conflicts, defenses, anxieties and problematic internal object relations. (p. 104)

Even though some masochistic tendencies are a desire for death, there are people who use it to prevent many other complications. By providing an urge to the body, the masochist can overcome the psychological outcomes. It provides a power to the mind because of this achievement and easing the mind. Rather than being a problem, masochism becomes a solution for the patient. It has punishing aspects but it distracts the mind.

In the novels, masochism can be seen in Theo Decker’s addiction to drugs and alcohol as well as Oskar Schell’s bruising himself. They both punish themselves for the loss of the parent. Theo feels the guilt of getting suspension from school which is the reason why he and his mother left the home that day and go to the Met Museum. Similarly, Oskar feels guilty for not answering his dad’s phone and not telling his mom the voicemails that his father left on the machine. Not only the loss but also the guilt becomes another element of their trauma. The unpleasure principle is the main principle that both characters function from. Therefore, they feel numb and distracted after harming themselves. At the same time, they punish themselves which is another reason for them to feel relief.

Similar to literature, art, in general, has an important part in trauma. Creativity and imagination has a crucial role in the treatment process as a way of expressing and understanding. Additionally, art is a coping mechanism, which helps people to ease their frustrated and depressed mind. Expressing helps to achieve comprehension of trauma’s

source and communication. Also, art is a form of dissociation that works as a coping mechanism. It recreates and avoids the reality. Eventually, it relaxes the mind.

Although trauma is an unrepresentable pain, just as literature, art helps to comprehend the unknown of the traumatized mind. It provides a chance to reevaluate the incident. Either by creating or examining any kind of art evokes the memory and it becomes a tool for knowledge. Caruth (1996) explains: “A rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not” (p. 11). Therefore, art as a way of expression of thoughts and feelings may provide the source of knowledge that one needs. The traumatized person himself or herself can tell what is troubling them through their own perspective. Even though it changes the reality, it still encourages expressing what is in the mind.

Dori Laub and Daniel Podell (1995) suggest in “Art and Trauma”: “Art aids survival (as well as recovery) by widening one’s vision and offering alternative perspectives and ways of seeing things” (p. 998). Therefore, as also Caruth emphasizes in terms of healing the trauma, art is a tool for creating new ideas upon the incident, which can change a negative interpretation to positive interpretation. A person who has an interest in art can make it easier to survive from trauma.

In both of the novels, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013), art has a vital point on the characters. They use it to cope with their trauma as well as a way of expression.

This silence notwithstanding, survivors of trauma or children of survivors often become involved in an ongoing dialogue with the trauma, which leads them to engage, consciously or unconsciously, in artistic expression. The works of art produced by such a dialogue inevitably contain a latent but powerful address that requires the viewer or reader to become engaged in a dialogue of his own with the trauma. (Laub and Podell, 1995, p. 993)

As mentioned earlier, Oskar Schell has a scrapbook named *Stuff that Happened to Me*. It is like a diary that he uses to document what happened to him during his adventure to find the mystery. He takes pictures from the places that he goes to or the people he spoke with to put in his scrapbook. The central picture of it is the “Falling Man” (2001) image, which is a resemblance to his father. In this way, Oskar constantly reminds himself of the day his father died or the possible deaths he had. He could not get over that day and his expressive art is a way of him telling the reader this. On the other hand, Theo Decker does not produce art but he is obsessed with the painting *The Goldfinch* (1654). He steals it the day his mom died and

he keeps it not only because of fright but also as a way to bond with his mom. On the other hand, the painting also symbolizes the grief, mourning, and loneliness that he suffers. Sometimes, Theo uses it to think while looking at it. Later on, his anxiety over getting caught for stealing it grows and he hides it or thinks that way. In such a way, his connection with the painting and his mom never really goes away. At the same time, art becomes a way for him to cope with his own pain.

Through expression, art becomes a way of communication. As mentioned earlier, telling and verbalizing trauma is an important part of the treatment process. By expressing the inner thoughts and feelings, people can create a communication between art and their audiences or between themselves. “The restorative power of such art, which we have described as resulting from its indirectness, presupposes another prerequisite: that it be ‘dialogic’, both in its genesis and its effects” (Laub and Podell, 1995, p. 996). Communicating works as a solution of loneliness as well as expressing. When people feel that they are not alone, it empowers them. That is why; it becomes a coping mechanism as well; to avoid loneliness. In Foer’s (2005) and Tarrt’s (2013) novels Oskar’s own creation and Theo’s relation with art provides a solution to their loneliness because they can communicate through it. Oskar is always expressing, therefore, he is in a constant communication with himself and others because he creates a memoir while talking and taking pictures with new people. Especially Theo formulates a communication between himself, the bird and Fabritius. At the end, he realizes that there is no loneliness because of art.

Moreover, in “Bridging the Black Hole of Trauma: The Evolutionary Significance of the Arts”, Sandra Bloom (2010) highlights the idea of “dissociation” which is initiated by famous psychologist Pierre Janet:

Our primary defense to cope with this physiological overload is a mechanism called ‘dissociation’.

Although a life-saving coping skill in the short-run, dissociation produces fragmentation of vital mental functions, and the result is diminished integration and therefore impaired performance. (p. 200)

Dissociation as a branch of examining trauma is also a part of the fundamental elements of literary theory. It might be a coping mechanism for individuals because it helps to recreate the world around themselves. In such a way, it might help to handle the traumatic affect that people suffer from. Their interpretations change because the mind breaks off from the reality. For this reason, they can handle the traumatic experience better, just as in the concept of art. Through art, dissociation can be achievable as well. By dissociating, one can achieve to leave present time to relocate and be in the past or future. Art is a tool for achieving this freedom.

It makes the dissociation visible for the traumatized, which is a part of expressing and understanding. Even though the mind is disrupted and unreliable, dissociation serves as a way to ease that unknown state of mind. Rather than facing what hurts them, people prefer to create their own ideal world. It opens the way for expression and understanding that art can provide. Therefore, art can be a dissociation.

In the novels, the art that characters have a relationship with refers to a specific period; the day of losing their parents. The Falling Man is a direct symbol of Thomas Jr. whereas “The Goldfinch” (1654) is an association of Audrey. Both of them reject to live in the present time without their beloved parents. Art works as a dissociation for them that recreates a setting for them. By using this picture and painting, Oskar and Theo are able to turn back to their time with their parents. They can comprehend the source of their pain better while remembering their parents. They can feel their grief, guilt, and avoid the absence of their parents.

In the first chapter, the focus will be on masochism as a coping mechanism for trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013) using Freud’s unpleasure theory. To begin with, this chapter will analyze Oskar Schell and Theo Decker’s experiences that lead to trauma, which is loneliness and guilt. There will be a highlight of their unpleasurable experiences in detail such as the physical and psychological violence they encountered during their childhood and the departure of their parents. In this way, this chapter emphasizes that there are initial and secondary traumas for both of the characters. Various reasons that will be mentioned in the chapter lead to a disrupted mind that one can analyze in Oskar and Theo. In order to handle these troubling thoughts and feelings they have, Oskar and Theo lean on masochistic behaviors. For instance, Oskar’s bruising himself and tendency to do it. Similarly, Theo has an addiction to drugs and alcohol. These self-destructive behaviors help them to handle their trauma and pain. Additionally, this chapter will explain masochism as a coping mechanism for traumatic experiences.

In the second chapter, there will be an analysis of art as dissociation and a coping mechanism in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013). Art functions as a bond with Oskar Schell and Theo Decker. In such a way, art becomes a central element of the novels with the use of Richard Drew’s picture Falling Man (2001) and Carel Fabritius’ painting “The Goldfinch” (1654). Characters’ responses to trauma can be examined through their relation to the art. They regard it as a bond with the parent they have lost which helps them to understand and cope with their depressing state of mind. The creative power of art takes Oskar and Theo to different times and places that makes them

reunite with their beloved parents rather than their own reality of pain and misery. By using art, either by creating or associating with one, they express their thoughts and feelings which is necessary while healing trauma. Therefore, art becomes a form of dissociation that is a part of the healing process.

To conclude, masochistic tendencies can serve as a way of coping mechanism for trauma. As Freud pointed out, unpleasurable experiences come from the id just like pleasure. Similarly, life and death tendencies come from the same source, which makes the two concepts interrelated. Therefore, mental or physical masochism can serve it as well as a basic desire. That is why masochism can be seen as an instinct that feeds the id by using unpleasure principle and it becomes a way to handle the troubles of the mind.

Furthermore, art is used as a dissociative element that helps to ease the effects of traumatic experiences in the novels. Art can be seen as the symbol of special bonds in the novels. It becomes a link between Oskar and his father as well as Theo and his mother. By creating another setting for the characters and dissociating their mind, the characters are able to handle the pain and depressive mindset. The associative element of the art leads to what Laub and Podell (1995) highlight for art being a “dialogue” (p.993-996) which means that the characters can communicate through art. This connection becomes an important part of the healing process. That is why, as Laub and Podell (1995) suggest, art has a healing power that opens the way for the individual to understand and express the distorted mind.

Eventually, this thesis will conclude that there are various ways to handle a traumatic experience such as masochism and art. Masochism as a harmful behavior hurts Oskar and Theo but it also helps them to restrain themselves while feeling and thinking negatively. Through the self-harming and self-destructive behaviors, Oskar Schell and Theo Decker reflect their distorted mentality as well as handle the troubles of their minds. On the other hand, by using art as a form of dissociation, both characters can express themselves as well as understand the trauma they have. Art’s communicative and creative power leads characters to overcome their trauma in the end. In short, this thesis will examine these coping mechanisms of masochism and art by using Oskar Schell from *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and Theo Decker from *The Goldfinch* (2013).

CHAPTER I

MASOCHISM AS A COPING MECHANISM IN *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* AND *THE GOLDFINCH*

This chapter will be analyzing the patterns of trauma in childhood and its outcomes on the individual such as loneliness and guilt in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013) with a focus on masochism as a coping mechanism that has a consuming effect on the individual by damaging the body. Both characters, Oskar and Theo, suffer from traumatic effects in their relationships with their family members in specific or with the society in general. After losing their beloved ones, both of the characters increasingly and gradually feel the depth of loneliness within their daily lives. The characters who are already introverts become more and more silent in their relationship with other people as a response to their experiences of losing their beloved parents. In addition, both of the characters feel guilty while they are mourning, which makes them think that they should suffer and not develop feelings of happiness. Besides, they resort to masochism as a coping mechanism, which will be a topic examined by using Freud's unpleasure principle in this paper since pain works as a way to ease misery and gain control over one's own body and life as Freud argues in his works.

From the early studies of psychoanalysis, it is highly important to analyze its developmental stages since childhood has a determinative role in one's life. The reflection of the differentiation between health and unhealthy childhood in one's life has been highly acknowledged. It could come to conclusion that a loving childhood might lead to a person who develops positive attitudes to life whereas a traumatized childhood with hard and sad experiences might lead to various mental problems. As Sigmund Freud (1939) suggests in *Moses and Monotheism*:

A trauma in childhood can be immediately followed by a neurosis during childhood; this constitutes an effort of defense accompanied by the formation of symptoms. The neurosis may last a long time and cause striking disturbances, or it may remain latent and be overlooked. As a rule, defense obtains the upper hand in such a neurosis; in any event changes of the personality remain like scars. (p. 124)

Being said that, affection that comes from a beloved person, either a family member or a friend, has undoubtedly major importance for the development of the child as one starts to comprehend the relationship between the world and himself or herself through their relationship with their parents or the inherited lens given by them. Therefore, the parent-

child relationship is highly crucial as a neglect or an abundance of the family can initiate a psychological problem in the individual. For instance, a child who wishes to see affection from his or her family might show signs of aggression. Since the needed attention is not given, the kid can demonstrate the socially unaccepted behaviors. Therefore, he or she can be violent or aggressive to friends and family throughout their life from childhood to adulthood.

Having said that, in *The Goldfinch* (2013), Theodore Decker's trauma starts in his early childhood. At a very early age, he experiences a life that is filled with fear. His father, Larry, who is an alcoholic, has abusive and aggressive behavior towards his family. Larry has a life that he does not want for himself as he wants to be an actor but he fails. Rather than choosing a stable way of life, he starts to gamble. As a result of the stress that comes from earning and losing money constantly, as well as living an unwanted life, Larry becomes an alcoholic, which increases his anger and its management. Furthermore, he blames his family for the unsuccessful life that he has. Theo, therefore, has exposed to his father's aggression and manipulated into thinking that they were the reason Larry has failed in achieving his life goal, which is to be an aspiring actor. As Theo states:

Though I didn't understand why he was so unhappy, it was clear to me that his unhappiness was our fault. My mother and I got on his nerves. It was because of us he had a job he couldn't stand. Everything we did was irritating. He particularly didn't enjoy being around me, not that he often was: [...] Warily he eyed me when I came in, nostrils flaring if I made too much noise with the silverware or the cereal bowl. (Tartt, 2013, p. 55)

Not only does Larry is alcoholic and abusive to Theo, he also argues with Audrey, his wife, and constantly shows an unloving attitude towards his son. As Theo explains:

Luckily, when he was drunk, his footsteps slowed to a jarring and unmistakable cadence-Frankenstein steps, as I thought of them, deliberate and clumping, with absurdly long pauses between each football- and as soon as I realized it was only him thudding around out there in the dark and not some serial murderer or psychopath, I would drift back into a fretful doze. (Tartt, 2013, p. 55-56)

In other words, considering that Theo parallelizes his father with Frankenstein, it could be said that this monster-like resemblance provided by Theo represents how he is afraid of his father and his abusive behavior towards him. As he feels uncertain and unsafe around him, Theo feels a little relieved when Larry leaves them. Theo is consent with the situation despite the fact that abandonment by a close family member is traumatizing which, it shows that Theo finally feels pacified and reassured:

It had all started, or begun to snowball rather, when my father run off and left my mother and me some months before; we'd never liked him much, and my mother and I were generally much happier without him, but other people seemed shocked and distressed at the abrupt way he's abandoned us (without money, child support, or forwarding address. (Tartt, 2013, p. 11)

However, the neglect that Larry shows towards his son continues even when he is gone as well. He does not leave anything behind for Theo and Audrey to help them, not behaving as a fatherly figure. Theo, not seeing his father as a fatherly figure when he is around or when he is gone, internalizes the abandonment issue and continues his life with the trauma of being abused and then left by his very own father. Such trauma can be seen in his daily life:

Even before I'd learned to count I'd been obsessed with learning to read a clock face: desperately studying the occult circle crayoned on the paper plate that, once mastered, would unlock the pattern of her comings and goings. Usually she was home just when she said she'd be, so if she was ten minutes late I began to fret; any later, and I sat on the floor by the front door of the apartment like a puppy left alone too long, straining to hear the rumble of the elevator coming up to our floor. (Tartt, 2013, p. 55)

Freud's highlight of the neurosis that might occur in a child due to an upsetting event applies to the novel. As a child who encounters a traumatic incident, Theo develops a neurosis, which is his obsession with Audrey's arrival to home, which, later on, becomes a repetitive act for Theo. This routine, as a type of neurosis, is the way he feels safe and reassures him that he is not alone. This scene from the novel is a foreshadowing of the upcoming reaction against the loss of his mother.

Theo's reaction to waiting for Audrey on the day of the incident parallels what he does when he was younger: "Never had I been alone and awake at such an hour. The living room- normally so airy and open, buoyant with my mother's presence- had shrunk to a cold, pale discomfort, like a vacation house in the winter." (Tartt, 2013, p. 69) He feels the atmosphere of the house changes with the departure of his mother. Considering that he is extremely devoted to her, spending hours without knowing what happened to her becomes an extreme pain for him. Nevertheless, Theo continues to act like nothing happened to her and all he needs to do is wait. Theo's avoidance of his mother's possible death demonstrates his defense mechanism for the underlying traumas that he had in his childhood.

Similarly, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Oskar Schell experiences a traumatic incident about his father during the 9/11. He constantly struggles with this traumatic memory that belongs to his childhood whereas his adult life is kept intentionally

untold. Nevertheless, the development of the displeasing experience is still evident throughout the story. As a nine-year-old child, Oskar tries to endure the pain of losing his father. He tries to ease his pain by playing the Renaissance Expedition seeing the game as a possible connection to his father. In his journey, Oskar is going through obsessive, fearful, and extremely emotional stages all while he attempts at concluding the game.

Unlike Theo Decker, Oskar's loneliness does not initiate in the family but start in the outside world. Oskar is an outcast child among his peers. As it was mentioned before, Freud argues that childhood is like a determinative factor for one's future life. Therefore, Oskar's loneliness around his peers becomes a traumatic event for him since he cannot communicate well and have healthy connections with them. Although a nine-year-old is expected to live in an imaginary world that does not need any concrete facts, Oskar requires a reasonable explanation and fact to believe. Even the stories that his father, Thomas Schell Jr., told are doubtful for him: "'Dad?' 'Yes?' 'I know there wasn't really a sixth borough. I mean, objectively.'" (Foer, 2005, p. 235) Oskar looks for certain and rational evidence to believe, which is a characteristic that separates him from other nine-year-olds. For instance, he is interested in science and his idol is Stephen Hawking unlike most of his peers who enjoy other interests such as creating imaginary places or people as well as playing in the park. Such attitudes of rationality and realism are not appreciated by the children of his age as well. They see Oskar as a different person who should be excluded from the world of kids where the unexpected are not welcomed. Therefore, throughout the novel, Oskar does not encounter any nine-year-old child except in the school play, *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (1603), which is not a good memory for him either as everyone in the backstage laughs at Oskar's Grandma because of her extreme emotions and reactions during the play such as cheering up or crying:

I sat there while he made all the kids crack up. Even Mrs. Rigley cracked up, and so did her husband, who played the piano during the set changes. I didn't mention that she was my grandma, and I didn't tell him to stop. Outside, I was cracking up too. Inside, I was wishing that she were tucked away in a portable pocket, or that she'd also had an invisibility suit. I wished the two of us could go somewhere far away, like the Sixth Borough. (Foer, 2005, p. 158)

Although this is an incident that happens after Oskar loses his father, it practically and easily sums up Oskar's entire school life and his relationship with other kids. He tries to get involved but he gets annoyed by what is happening. Once again, he is separated from other kids because he thinks differently and he thinks that there is nothing funny about his

grandma's reactions during the play. In the scene, Oskar extremely feels like he does not belong in a world where no one understands or thinks in the way he does, which leads him to think that he can only be pretentious in such a world.

While Oskar's situation is exclusion from the outside world, Theo's peers also bully him at school when he was little:

Andy and I, in elementary school, had become friends under more or less traumatic circumstances: after we'd been skipped ahead a grade because of high test scores. Everyone now appeared to agree that this had been a mistake for both of us, though for different reasons. That year—bumbling around among boys all older and bigger than us, boys who tripped us and shoved us and slammed locker doors on our hands, who tore up our homework and spat in our milk, who called us maggot and faggot and dickhead (sadly, a natural for me, with a last name like Decker)—during that whole year (our Babylonian Captivity, Andy called it, in his faint glum voice) we'd struggled along side by side like a pair of weakling ants under a magnifying glass: shin-kicked, sucker-punched, ostracized, eating lunch huddled in the most out-of-the-way corner we could find in order to keep from getting ketchup packets and chicken nuggets thrown at us. For almost two years he had been my only friend, and vice versa. It depressed and embarrassed me to remember that time. (Tartt, 2014, p. 84)

Besides having an abusive and abandoning father, Theo encounters violence, once again, from his peers this time. By not having any healthy communication or relationship, both in the family and social world, Theo feels lonely and unloved. Such deeply embedded feelings eventually become traumatic for him.

Both of the characters, Oskar and Theo, suffer from a secondary trauma of loneliness after losing their parents. The first encounter with a traumatic experience initiates a neurosis in the mind, yet the effect increases in the second experience of the trauma. As Freud (1939) highlights:

The phenomenon of a latency in the neurosis between the first reactions to the trauma and the later appearance of the illness must be recognized as typical. The illness may also be regarded as an attempt at cure, an endeavour to reconcile the divided Ego-divided by the trauma-with the rest and to unite it into a strong whole that will be fit to cope with the outer world. Yet such an effort is rarely successful unless analytic help is sought, and even then not always. Often it ends in entirely destroying and breaking up the Ego or in the Ego being overpowered by the portion that was early split off, and has since been dominated, by the trauma. (p. 125)

Moreover, loneliness that Theo and Oscar deeply feels starts to grow more after losing their beloved parents, which takes them to the stage of mourning. As Freud (1917) describes mourning in his article "Mourning and Melancholia": "Mourning is regularly the reaction to

the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (p. 243). When considering Theo and Oskar, it is obvious that their loss of loved ones lead them to react to this mourning phase. As both characters are extremely attached to the parent they have lost, encountering their death naturally has a highly devastating effect on their lives.

By expressing thoughts and feelings that trouble the individual, the treatment process of trauma can be more effective and fast. Freud (1893) highlights in "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication" that verbalization of trauma is nearly impossible for a person because it is hard to represent the troubling ideas and feelings which can make the neurosis or the behaviors more problematic as an outcome:

If the reaction is suppressed, the affect remains attached to the memory. An injury that has been repaid, even if only in words, is recollected quite differently from one that has had to be accepted. Language recognizes this distinction, too, in its mental and physical consequences; it very characteristically describes an injury that has been suffered in silence as 'a mortification' ['Krankung', lit. 'making ill']. -The injured person's reaction to the trauma only exercises a completely 'cathartic' effect if it is an adequate reaction-as, for instance) revenge. But language serves as a substitute for action; by its help, an affect can be 'abreacted' almost as effectively. In other cases speaking is itself the adequate reflex, when, for instance, it is a lamentation or giving utterance to a tormenting secret, e.g. a confession. If there is no such reaction, whether in deeds or words, or in the mildest cases in tears, any recollection of the event retains its affective tone to begin with. (p. 8)

As a response to their trauma from the grief of losing their parental figures, Theo and Oskar become more introverted towards other people in terms of sharing their thoughts and feelings. Rather than talking to others, they cease to pretend like there is nothing wrong in their lives. Both kids misinterpret the affection shown by others as a way of being pitied. For instance, this behavior can be easily observed when Theo does not want to go to school because of the way people could treat him:

But most people responded to me with a cautious, half-terrified politeness. It wasn't as if I went around crying or even acting disturbed but still they'd stop in the middle of their conversations if I sat down with them at lunch. Grown-ups, on the other hand, paid me an uncomfortable amount of attention. (Tartt, 2013, p. 92)

Theo's misinterpretation of people's affection as a way of pity can be a signifier for how he wants to be alone and intentionally detached from others because he does not even want to communicate with his friend Andy about where he stays after Audrey's death. As Andy knows Audrey, he is the only person who can show empathy towards him: "It was Andy

who had talked me into sneaking over and scattering them in defiance of the city rule, scattering them moreover in that particular spot: well, I mean, it's where she used to meet us" (Tartt, 2013, p. 453). Nevertheless, talking about losing the person he loves causes him a sort of pain that he cannot endure on his own. In addition, the way he detached himself from the social life gradually increases Theo's anxiety and depression. As a mere child, he tries to manage the negativity in his mind, yet, he is unable to achieve solace as he refuses to talk about his trauma with others.

Even though Theo's peers do not bother him that much, the adults seem to use him to express their own losses. They talk about their past traumas, especially the teachers. For example, his English teacher talks about his mother's death or his math teacher tells him about losing his brother in a car accident. Theo's teachers think that he understands and empathizes with him whereas it results as an explanation of their own problems. Also, adults seem to misunderstand Theo's way of experiencing trauma or grief:

Many adults seemed to interpret this numbness as a positive sign; I remember particularly Mr. Beeman (an overly clipped Brit in a dumb tweed motoring cap, whom despite his solicitude I had come to hate, irrationally, as an agent of my mother's death) complimenting me on my maturity and informing me that I seemed to be "coping awfully well." And maybe I was coping awfully well, I don't know. (Tartt, 2013, p. 92)

Additionally, these behaviors make Theo feel estranged and alienated from the world that he perceives as selfish and pretentious. Even though he is the one who refuses to communicate with others, it feels to him like the social world around him does not seem to care either. That is why, until he meets with Hobie, Theo cannot talk about his emotions and genuine thoughts.

Similarly, Oskar does not talk about his feelings openly which increases his feeling of loneliness. Nevertheless, Renaissance Expedition forces him to meet with new people. Therefore, Oskar's effort to solve the puzzle and play the game will force him to talk with people. Even though it is not a direct and open communication, Oskar manages to achieve what Freud highlights in his work about the importance of verbally expression during the treatment of trauma:

That was kind of how I felt when I decided that I would meet every person in New York with the last name Black. Even if it was relatively insignificant, it was something, and I needed to do something, like sharks, who die if they don't swim, which I know about. (Foer, 2005, p. 100-101)

The game requires Oskar to speak with strangers. In order to feel the same connection he felt when his father was alive again, Oskar returns to the game. When he finds a key in the vase, he goes to a key store just to learn that he needs to find someone with a Black surname. In such a way, Oskar can feel a connection with his dad one more time and reminisce him.

According to Freud's studies, not communicating or speaking makes trauma worse in terms of its responses to the individual. Similar to Theo, Oskar does not speak with anyone as well but he has an unintentional effort to make a connection. In such a way, he gets some feelings and thoughts out of his system. Still, it does not enough for him because as Freud emphasizes, directly expressing a trauma is nearly impossible. Throughout his journey, Oskar makes various connections that show how he feels about being lonely. For instance, in one of his first visits, Abby Black welcomes Oskar with a sad face. Oskar understands that she is lonely as well. She does not have a very good relationship with her husband, which makes her upset. While asking Abby about the key and Thomas Schell Jr., a conversation opens up about elephants:

"Anyway, elephants can set up meetings from very faraway locations, and they know where their friends and enemies are going to be, and they can find water without any geological clues. No one could figure out how they do all of those things. So what's actually going on?" "I don't know." "How do they do it?" "It?" "How do they set up meetings if they don't have E.S.P.?" "You're asking me?" "Yes." "I don't know." "Do you want to know?" "Sure." "A lot?" "Sure." "They're making very, very, very, very deep calls, way deeper than what humans can hear. They're talking to each other. Isn't that so awesome?" "It is." (Foer, 2005, p. 108)

Even though Oskar does not fully express what he has on his mind, he tries to explain it with symbols. For this reason, he cannot get a satisfactory answer to help him with his troubled mind and feelings. Through this conversation, Oskar reveals how he feels lonely and longs for a company. He does not want to speak about it but he wants others to understand him just like elephants that can hear each other from far away. Their loneliness has bounding effect on Oskar, even so, he wants to kiss Abby before leaving but she does not allow him. Instead, they hug each other.

Another important encounter for Oskar is Mr. Black, one of his neighbors. He finally learns that there is a Black living in his apartment. Black is someone who collects memories and reads a lot, but never leaves the house. After meeting with him, Oskar feels a sudden but expected connection with him:

My boots were so heavy that I was glad there was a column underneath us. How could such a lonely person have been living so close to me my whole life? If I had known, I would have gone up to keep him company. Or I would have made some jewelry for him. Or told him hilarious jokes. Or given him a private tambourine concert. (Foer, 2005, p. 177)

“Heavy boots” is Oskar’s expression implying for his overwhelming feelings of depression. Beverly Haviland (2015) explains in “After the Fact: Mourning, Melancholy, and ‘Nachträglichkeit’ in Novels of 9/11”: “The force of gravity pulls on his body, as it did on those who fell or jumped from the towers (p. 437).” In other words, Oskar attempts at giving an effort to explain his suffering by making a physical association. Learning that there is someone alone, just like him, he wants to be present in that individual’s life. Similar to what happens with Abby, once again, Oskar feels a bond through the loneliness that someone else has. Such encounters give Oskar heavy boots because he knows that there are people who go through similar stages that he has been facing.

This kind of connection with the outside world becomes new for Oskar because he is an introverted child. Even though he is actively in communication with other people and uses symbols in his expressions, he feels lonely because he does not speak about his thoughts and feelings directly. He listens and feels angry or sad about a situation but he keeps it to himself. For instance, when he does not want to lose his companion, Mr. Black, he puts his feelings into words as follows:

“I’ve loved being with you. I’ve loved every second of it. You got me back into the world. That’s the greatest thing anyone could have done for me. But now I think I’m finished. I hope you understand.”
His hand was still open, waiting for my hand.
I told him, “I don’t understand.”
I kicked his door and told him, “You’re breaking your promise.” I pushed him and shouted, “It isn’t fair!”
I got on my tiptoes and put my mouth next to his ear and shouted, “Fuck you!”
No. I shook his hand... (Foer, 2005, p. 268-269)

He deliberately buries his actual feeling in his mind. He seems like a kid who is on an adventure all while, in reality, he is a sad kid who feels lonely and needs others’ company. He thinks differently than what he says, which results in another verbal error for Oskar and improves his response to trauma as feeling more depressed. Still, in a comparison with Theo’s situation, he is able to express more than Theo, which is important in terms of their trauma development. Even though it does not completely help Oskar’s healing from his traumas, Renaissance Expedition helps him to communicate a little bit. On the other hand,

Theo has never had the chance to make such a bond with others. Nevertheless, the game makes Oskar withdraw from his family, more which makes him lonelier and has a poor connection. Since he does not have any friends, he cannot communicate with anyone other than his family but he does not speak with them either. He has a great relationship with his grandma but he does not have such a connection with his mother: “Every time I left our apartment to go searching for the lock, I became a little lighter, because I was getting closer to Dad. But I also became a little heavier, because I was getting farther from Mom” (Foer, 2005, p. 66). He also does not enjoy his mother’s new friend named Ron as he is depicted to be around his mother who should be grieving. According to Freud, repressing thoughts and feelings may lead to a disruption in the mind. Having said that, Oskar’s reaction is what Freud has told about the repressed thoughts and feelings. By not saying what he actually thinks makes him reach bad decisions about his relationship with his mom. He constantly lies about his attendance at school and French courses because he skips them so that he can go to research the Blacks all over New York. Although he feels extremely enraged at her, Oskar still desires to be able to talk to her: ““Mom?” “Yes?” “Nothing”” (Foer, 2005, p. 50). Every time he tries to speak with his mother, he cannot do it because he thinks that he will not be understood by her. As Bryan (2015) expresses:

Oskar’s habit of self-harming, or giving himself a bruise when he feels depressed or upset with himself, his mother, the loss of his father, etc., serves as a way to transfer his emotional pain into physical pain. Though this transfer helps him process his emotional pain, it also allows him to avoid finding constructive avenues to work through his trauma. (p. 284)

As Bryan also highlights, the lack of conversation and sharing of feelings leads Oskar to find a solution, which is masochistic behavior. For a nine-year-old, Oskar experiences many complicated and depressing emotions. Not being able to explain them as he should increases the burden he has. As a child who believes in realism and concrete facts, he searches for ways to make his pain physical. He bruises himself as a self-control because it makes his feelings concrete rather than abstract.

After the experience of trauma, in psychoanalytic narrative, it is highly understandable for an individual to go through a stage of depression and to be unable to accomplish daily basic responsibilities. Due to the mindset under the heavy depression and confusion, a person who experiences the death of a loved one might feel as if going back to a daily routine is difficult to achieve, as they unconsciously feel guilty as if they are not

properly respecting the memory of him or her. As LaCapra (2001) suggests in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*:

To blur the distinction between, or to conflate, absence and loss may itself bear striking witness to the impact of trauma and the posttraumatic, which create a state of disorientation, agitation, or even confusion and may induce a gripping response whose power and force of attraction can be compelling. The very conflation attests to the way one remains possessed or haunted by the past, whose ghosts and shrouds resist distinctions (such as that between absence and loss). Indeed, in post-traumatic situations in which one relives (or acts out) the past, distinctions tend to collapse, including the crucial distinction between then and now wherein one is able to remember what happened to one in the past but realizes one is living in the here and now with future possibilities. (p. 46)

What LaCapra emphasizes above can be observed in Theo and Oskar's lives as the feelings that trauma arouses determines their past, present, and future lives. Even though there are differences, Theo and Oskar suffer from the feeling of guilt as they naturally cease to move on with their lives. To a certain level, they torture themselves so that they will prove that they do not forget about their beloved parents.

To begin with, Theo blames himself for Audrey's death, even though people around him says that her death is not about Theo. They were going to school that day. Even though he knows that it is thought to be a bad luck, he does not care or believe such a notion, as he claims. The incident happened when they were going to school that day. Even though Theo thinks the reason behind the incident is smoking with his friend Tom Cable, the real reason for their punishment is actually due to the fact that they go into the vacation houses. On their way, as rain starts, they enter into the Met Museum to wait. Meanwhile, they decide to look and examine the paintings. At that moment, the bomb attack happens. Theo survives but cannot get rid of the feeling that if he had never done a bad thing, school would not have call Audrey, so, she would be alive. For this reason, he thinks he should not move on as he puts the whole blame on himself. Therefore, Theo explains:

"Her death was my fault. Other people have always been a little too quick to assure me that it wasn't; and yes, only a kid, who could have known, terrible accident, rotten luck, could have happened to anyone, it's all perfectly true and I don't believe a word of it." (Tartt, 2013, p. 9)

Even though he knows that it is bad luck, he does not care or believe, as he says. But he cannot forgive himself which makes guilt a deeper issue and prevents him from moving on with his life. Similar to Oskar, he should grieve and feel the pain of losing his mother. Therefore, Theo explains:

Worse: the thought of returning to any kind of normal routine seemed disloyal, wrong. It kept being a shock every time I remembered it, a fresh slap: she was gone. Every new event—everything I did for the rest of my life—would only separate us more and more: days she was no longer a part of, an ever-growing distance between us. Every single day for the rest of my life, she would only be further away. (Tartt, 2013, p. 88)

Through the examination of Theo's words, it is evident that the way he defines his daily life with being away from his mother and cannot go back to a normal routine and function. Audrey has a big place in Theo's life and her absence prevents him from moving forward. He thinks that he should not be moving on as well because he should mourn her death and show her the respect that she deserves. He suggests that he cannot explain how bad and balanced he feels; suddenly he is happy but then he is about to cry (Tartt, 2013, p. 145). Dominick LaCapra (2001) mentions that a traumatized person might not be able to adapt the life since he or she is living in the past. Therefore, the future is a blur for the traumatized. For Theo, this mood change from happiness to sadness originates from feeling guilty and moving on. Even though he feels happy for a moment, he becomes sad like when he is in the science lab. Therefore, Theo gets worse, not better. He cannot move on and laugh, he is inexpressively sad.

Similar to Theo, Oskar feels guilty for not answering the phone during 9/11. Thomas Jr. calls the house that day and expects to speak with Oskar. Yet, he cannot do it because Oskar does not answer it, even though he hears it and listens to the voicemails immediately. For this reason, Oskar describes how he feels about that day as:

He needed me, and I couldn't pick up. I just couldn't pick up. I just couldn't. Are you there? He asked eleven times. I know, because I've counted. It's one more than I can count on my fingers. Why did he keep asking? Was he waiting for someone to come home? And why didn't he say "anyone"? Is anyone there? "You" is just one person. Sometimes I think he knew I was there. Maybe he kept saying it to give me time to get brave enough to pick up. Also, there was so much space between the times he asked. There are fifteen seconds between the third and the fourth, which is the longest space. (Foer, 2005, p. 315-316)

Oskar knows the exact minutes and words which highlights how he has stuck on September 11 as well as the guilt for not talking with his father. As LaCapra's theory about the traumatized possibility of a distorted future suggests, he is holding on to a ghost not to move forward similar to Theo. In his dialogue with Dr. Fein, Oskar mentions a lot of feelings one of which is guilt:

“Not really. Life is impossible.” “When you say that you're having an impossible time, what do you mean?” “I'm constantly emotional.” “Are you emotional right now?” “I'm extremely emotional right now.” “What emotions are you feeling?” “All of them.” “Like...” “Right now I'm feeling sadness, happiness, anger, love, guilt, joy, shame, and a little bit of humor, because part of my brain is remembering something hilarious that Toothpaste once did that I can't talk about.” “Sounds like you're feeling an awful lot.” (Foer, 2005, p. 214-215)

He thinks that he should say to his mother that his father left voicemails. By doing so, he will feel relief but still, he does not do it. On the contrary, he lets the voicemails torture them. Also, he does not want to mention a funny situation he encounters like the Toothpaste incident that he cannot speak about because it means he can laugh and be happy are not a part of the mourning and grieving process. Otherwise, it will be disrespectful to his father and he should not do that. In relation to what LaCapra (2001) says, for Theo and Oskar, the past is the place they should be in and what they carry with them as long as they live. That is why they neither adapt nor create a future life for themselves.

Moreover, Oskar justifies and normalizes himself for feeling depressed and not moving on. He says:

“On Tuesday afternoon I had to go to Dr. Fein. I didn't understand why I needed help, because it seemed to me that you *should* wear heavy boots when your dad dies, and if you *aren't* wearing heavy boots, *then* you need help. But I went anyway, because the raise in my allowance depended on it.” (Foer, 2005, p. 214)

Going to a psychiatrist is not necessary for Oskar because he thinks it is normal to be depressed and sad after losing someone you love deeply and the opposite is abnormal. As in his perspective of his mother's grieving, it is a must to be upset. Consequently, the process of treatment and being able to move on delays.

As a result of their trauma, Theo and Oskar develop a similar coping mechanism which is masochism. According to Robert Glick (2012), pain is a common feeling that indicates life in it, yet, under the concept of masochism it is confusing:

While it is a truism that pain and suffering are inescapable in life, interwoven with our common experiences of disappointment, failure, regret, loss, grief, shame and guilt, the driven pursuit of misery in masochism requires a complex and more disquieting understanding of mental life. (p. 77)

Nevertheless, masochism becomes a confusing term considering that it means that an individual is in pain, which contributes him or her with an any kind of positive emotional

response such as joy or relaxation. In their article, “Some Suggestions for Engaging with the Clinical Problem of Masochism”, Kerry Kelly Novick and Jack Novick (2012) argue that:

In closed-system functioning, relationships have a sadomasochistic pattern; the psyche is organized according to magical, omnipotent beliefs; hostile, painful feelings and aggressive, self-destructive behavior cycle repeatedly with no real change or growth. Omnipotent beliefs are invoked as the main defensive self-protection. Externalization, denial and avoidance are used to support those beliefs. The aim is to control the other rather than change the self. Reality-based pleasure is experienced as a threat to omnipotent beliefs, since the closed system depends on feeling victimized. Pain is central to the closed system, as a means for attachment, defense, and gratification. Ego functions are co-opted in the service of maintaining omnipotent defenses and beliefs. (p.52)

It is a confusing concept due to its pain-based nature. An individual who has masochistic tendencies is regarded to be suicidal since he hurts himself physically. Yet, masochism is not only for the purpose of suicide but also for defending one's self from psychological hardships. According to Freud's unpleasure principle, the traumatized person might initiate the opposite of pleasure. Every individual likes to have pleasure because of the ego's desires. In *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud and Breuer (1895) suggest that:

If the trauma (experience of pain) occurs-the very first [traumas] escape the ego altogether-at a time when there is already an ego, there is to begin with a release of unpleasure, but-simultaneously the ego is at work too, creating side-cathexes," If the cathexis of the memory is repeated, the unpleasure is repeated too, but the ego-facilitations are there already as well; experience shows that the release [of unpleasure] is less the second time, until, after further repetition, it shrivels up to the intensity of a signal acceptable to the ego. (p. 359)

For this reason, it can be argued that unpleasure is another form that feeds the ego. The sense of pain becomes a repetitive act that helps an individual to hold on to life just as pleasure.

In *The Goldfinch*, Theo's addictive habits of using drugs and alcohol indicate that he has masochistic tendencies in order to handle his problems. Since he rejects to live his life with joy after Audrey's death, he finds a way to ease his misery in a way that damages his body. At such an early age, he starts using pills that his psychologist Dave gives him but Mrs. Barbour, Andy's mom who takes care of Theo for a time gives not as prescribed which shows him that in a sedative state, he can cope with his troubling ideas:

The bad part wasn't trying to find her, but waking up and remembering she was dead. With the green pills, even these dreams faded into airless murk. (It strikes me now, though it didn't then, that Mrs. Barbour was well out of line by giving me unprescribed medication on top of the yellow capsules and

tiny orange footballs Dave the Shrink had prescribed me.) Sleep, when it came, was like tumbling into a pit, and often I had a hard time waking up in the morning. (Tartt, 2013, p. 110-111)

Similarly, at an early age, he gets drunk. When his father comes back for Theo, Larry takes Theo to dinner to eat lunch where he lets him have a drink. Theo admits and realizes that he is drunk and coming home drunk. (Tartt, 2013, pg. 199-200) Additionally, Theo's involvement with drugs starts.

Being intoxicated creates numbness in the mind, which helps Theo to relax. He tries to ease his harsh thoughts and feelings by taking alcohol and drugs. Additionally, he is able to hold on to life. He takes the risk of damaging his body rather than attempting to commit suicide:

Only one or two pills a week, to get me through the very worst of the socializing, and only when I really really needed them. In lieu of the pharms I'd been drinking too much and that really wasn't working for me; with opiates I was relaxed, I was tolerant, I was up for anything, I could stand pleasantly for hours in unbearable situations listening to any old tiresome or ridiculous bullshit without wanting to go outside and shoot myself in the head. (Tartt, 2013, p. 522)

In this scene, Theo decides to lower the number of drugs he is taking. Although the number decreases, still, there is a requirement for the drug. As Freud suggests, the continuous unpleasurable experience can be seen as a coping mechanism in Theo's way of holding on to life. Even though pain seems like a desire for death, damaging the body becomes a necessity to live in Theo's case.

At some point, towards the end of the novel when he is an adult, Theo explains that he knows the exact amount or way to overdose and kill himself. Nevertheless, he tries to endure his misery. He describes his feelings as:

But there wasn't enough to be sure of finishing myself off. I didn't want to waste what I had on a few hours of oblivion only to wake up again in my cage (or, worse: in a Dutch hospital with no passport). Then again my tolerance was down and I was pretty sure I had enough to do the job if I got good and drunk first and topped it off with my emergency pill. (Tartt, 2013, p. 710)

As well as evidence of the desire to live, this scene from the novel hints that Theo has an emergency pill. He has this because at some point when he is overwhelmed with anxiety or depressing thoughts, he will be able to relax his mind and manage to control his body. Robert Glick (2012) mentions this as follows:

For individuals with a history of early and sustained developmental trauma, I have found it crucial to understand and respect the tenacity of the unconscious attachment to damaging and damaged, selfish

and cruel, fragile and demanding primary, usually severely narcissistic objects. Issues of boundaries, identity and impulse control shape their lives. These apparently wretched early relationships remain essential to maintaining self-cohesion and self-regulation. As a consequence, the patient develops complex identifications with the suffering of the primary objects—"keeping them alive through suffering." These are amongst the most persistent and severe forms of masochistic phenomena that I have encountered and therefore are often the heart-breaking and challenging treatments. The process of "transplanting" one pathological attachment with a new, analytic attachment can be interminable. (p. 81)

A masochist might accomplish self-control when they hurt themselves. One's control over the body is important while fighting against various depressing thoughts and feelings. In such a way, what Theo tries to do by carrying drugs with him is resistance to these ideas.

Likewise, in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Oskar Schell has self-harming behaviors in order to cope with his misery and grief. Even though Oskar does not intoxicate himself, he has the same desire to live just like Theo. He tries to endure the misery in his head by bruising himself. Whenever he feels down, he either hurts himself or mentions that he has a tendency for it:

I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP ON THE FLOOR.
WHEN I WOKE UP, MOM WAS PULLING MY
SHIRT OFF TO HELP ME GET INTO MY PJS,
WHICH MEANS SHE MUST HAVE SEEN ALL
OF MY BRUISES. I COUNTED THEM LAST
NIGHT IN THE MIRROR AND THERE WERE
FORTY-ONE. SOME OF THEM HAVE
GOTTEN BIG, BUT MOST OF THEM ARE SMALL. (Foer, 2005, p. 186)

By doing so, his ego is served by unpleasure. Additionally, unpleasure becomes a repetitive act to cope with troubling thoughts and feelings rather than pleasure.

Similar to Glick, Helen Meyers (1988) defines masochism as: "I am in control. I want to be pained. I asked for it. I enjoy it. I can handle it. I have more discomfort than anyone" (p. 182). The impact of masochism on self-control is equally evident in Oskar. He states that "I zipped myself all the way into the sleeping bag of myself, not because I was hurt, and not because I had broken something, but because they were cracking up. Even though I knew I shouldn't, I gave myself a bruise." (Foer, 2005, p. 51) Oskar wants to feel constant misery and expects others to feel sad as well. So, seeing others happy and moving on irritates him. When he cannot see grief in others, he gets angry. That is why, in the quoted scene, he hurts

himself. Also, when he finds out that the key he has found in his dad's vase results as nothing important, just a key to open a box. He learns that they are meaningless and all his work on the key, Blacks, and Sixth Borough results in nothing he expects:

"It opens a safe-deposit box." "Well, what's it got to do with my dad?" "Your dad?" "The whole point of the key is that I found it in my dad's closet, and since he's dead, I couldn't ask him what it meant, so I had to find out for myself." "You found it in his closet?" "Yes." "In a tall blue vase?" I nodded. "With a label on the bottom?" "I don't know. I didn't see a label. I don't remember." If I'd been alone, I would have given myself the biggest bruise of my life. I would have turned myself into one big bruise. (Foer, 2005, p. 309)

In this scene, Oskar mentions that he wants to hurt himself. If he can do that, he will be able to suppress his disappointment. Therefore, he will be able to maintain a balance between his negative thoughts and feelings. He does not do it, yet, he has the urge to do so. Oskar's self-harm cannot be done as openly as Theo's which is why he mentions he wants to bruise himself throughout the novel as well as practicing it.

Another reason for the masochistic behavior that both characters show might be their need for a punishment similar to their trauma response. Meyers (1988) suggests that:

The self-directed aggression is libidinized. The sadistic superego is appeased and feels pride in its punishing, the ego feels pleasure in its suffering-moral masochism. At the same time, aggression is directed outward as the masochist provokes and invites hurt and anger from others and with his pain tries to play on their guilt. In this context, one meaning of a negative therapeutic reaction during treatment is the patient's guilty refusal to accept anything good, which he does not deserve, or to have pleasure without pain, which is without punishment. (p. 179-180)

Additionally, a desire to feel pain and damage the body can be a result of guilt. After making something wrong, a person might want to compensate for his or her mistakes. For a masochist, the body is a tool for making up as well as punishing one's self for the mistakes. Since masochism works as self-control, it also controls the feeling of guilt.

For Oskar, his guilt comes from his secret, which is hiding his father's voicemails and not mentioning them to his mom. Whenever he listens to the voicemails that Thomas Jr. left before his death, Oskar gives himself a bruise:

I wrapped the phone back up in the unfinished scarf, and put that back in the bag, and put that back in the box, and that in the other box, and all of that in the closet under lots of junk.
I stared at the fake stars forever.
I invented.
I gave myself a bruise.

I invented. (Foer, 2005, p. 83)

Since he does not want to relieve himself of this pain, he listens to the voicemails. Also, it results from his need to punish himself.

Similarly, by intoxicating his body, Theo sentences himself to damage. He states that:

It was as if I was trying to punish myself—maybe even make things up to my mother—by setting my sights so high. I'd fallen out of the habit of doing schoolwork; it wasn't exactly as if I'd kept up my studies in Vegas and the sheer amount of material to memorize gave me a feeling of torture, lights turned in the face, not knowing the correct answer, catastrophe if I failed. (Tartt, 2013, p. 389-390)

In this scene, Theo admits that he is punishing himself for what happened to his mother as well as living without her. Due to his addiction to alcohol and drugs, he cannot keep up with school as he should be. He is self-destructive in terms of both damaging his body and his future life. He is in constant misery because he feels guilty and he feels like he needs to be punished. In this sense, being unhappy is not enough, he needs to hurt himself.

To conclude, Theo Decker from *The Goldfinch* and Oskar Schell from *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* suffer from the trauma of losing a beloved, which they try to overcome through their masochistic tendencies. Both of them also suffer from loneliness. While Theo's loneliness starts in the family because of his father's abusive and absent behavior, Oskar feels like an outcast since he cannot communicate with others of his age. Similar to Oskar, Theo is bullied at school as well. Then, this trauma of loneliness gets triggered by a secondary one after Theo loses his mother Audrey, and Oskar loses his father, Thomas Jr. The loneliness they feel increases because the person they love the most is gone. Also, they feel guilty for their deaths as well as living or moving on without them. That is why they develop a coping mechanism, which is masochism. It has a consuming effect because it damages the body and psychology while helping to handle trauma. Yet, for a time, it is used as a physical way to control the body and the mind. Theo uses sedatives such as alcohol and drugs whereas Oskar bruises himself. In such a way, they are able to achieve self-control and deal with their grief and mourning process. As Glick (2012) puts it:

Rethinking our understanding of masochistic character structure offers a valuable opportunity to examine both our psychoanalytic models of mental life and of therapeutic action. The notion of the pursuit of misery, and of motivated suffering, demands an appreciation of the tenacious power of primitive unconscious fantasy. This is most evident in the impact of early traumatic object relations on ego structure and self-organization and regulation. (p. 87)

With specific attention to trauma and masochism, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch* portray how an individual might suffer from a death of the beloved as well as the responses, which are loneliness and guilt. Masochism as a coping mechanism indicates that these characters try to hold on to life even if they hurt themselves.



CHAPTER II

ART AS A COPING MECHANISM IN *EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE* AND *THE GOLDFINCH*

This chapter will analyze art and dissociation as a coping mechanism in *The Goldfinch* (2013) by Donna Tartt and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) by Jonathan Safran Foer. Both Theo Decker and Oskar Schell try to ease their pain with the help of art. Theo gives importance a lot to Carel Fabritius' "The Goldfinch" (1654) painting and associates it with himself as well as using it as a bond with his mother whereas Oskar creates his own scrapbook named *Stuff that Happened to Me* to express his emotions about his father's death. Contrary to masochism, art and dissociation are constructive as a way to cope with trauma because it does not hurt the body. On the contrary, it aims at creating and opening mind, which helps to achieve a relief. Additionally, art becomes a tool for dissociation by drawing on the theories of using art as a way of healing trauma as well as its reputation in literary texts.

Similar to the initiation of trauma theory, the studies on dissociation theory are related to hysteria researches and date back to the 1800s. Onno van der Hart and Rutger Horst's (1989) article entitled "The Dissociation Theory of Pierre Janet" summarizes the initiation of dissociation theory and how Pierre Janet's contribution to the study. According to the article, Benjamin Rush who is an American author used the term "dissociation" for the first time to describe people who have schizophrenic behavior. On the contrary, psychologists in France used the same term for people who have hysteria. Theoreticians like Jean Martin Charcot who is famous for his theories on hysteria and famous neurologist Pierre Janet expanded their studies in this area. As a result, they find that individuals can dissociate their minds and memories without any complications. Later on, Janet concludes that dissociation is a response to a traumatic incident that makes an individual to create a world for themselves out of the reality. (p. 1-6)

In another article called "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma", Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart (1995) explain Pierre Janet's studies on dissociation. They argue that Janet approaches the issue as "subconscious fixed ideas" (p. 432) which means that the daily and responsive behavior is driven by the memories of the individual. Moreover, when people dissociate themselves from a traumatic incident, they tend to do it continuously to handle their problems (van der Kolk and van der

Hart, 1995, p. 432). Moreover, in “A Reader’s Guide to Pierre Janet: A Neglected Intellectual Heritage”, Onno van der Hart and Barbara Friedman (2019) explain that Janet’s dissociation is a mental issue that “doubles” the identity (p. 16). The “fixed idea” is not a memory, it is only the perception of an incident. In a summary, all these readings indicate that dissociation is creating another self or memory. Therefore, the memories, ideas, and feelings change and create new ones. Eventually, dissociation becomes a disorder that results from posttraumatic stress in order to escape from the reality and create another world. (van der Hart and Horst, 1989, p. 1)

On the other hand, Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer (1886-1899) define dissociation as: “the presence of a dissociation-a splitting of the content of consciousness” (p. 151). Similar to Janet, they suggest that dissociation is a coping mechanism. Nevertheless, they do not see it necessarily as a disorder but as a way to handle the traumatic event. The mind produces ideas rapidly while one cannot have a full function physically (Freud and Breuer, 1893-1895, 233), which highlights the fact that it is normal to experience dissociation in one’s mind. These continuous ideas can create a world for the individual to escape the harsh realities of his or her own life. In *Studies of Hysteria* (1893-1895), they explain their study on a patient as follows:

This led to a habit of day-dreaming (her ‘private theatre’), which laid the foundations for a dissociation of her mental personality. Nevertheless, a dissociation of this degree is still within the bounds of normality. Reveries and during a more or less mechanical occupation do not in themselves imply a pathological splitting of consciousness, since if they are interrupted if, for instance, the subject is spoken to -the normal unity of consciousness is restored; nor, presumably, is any amnesia present. (p. 41-42)

By emphasizing that dissociation is normal for the mind, they oppose to Janet’s claims of the issue as a disorder. They suggest that dissociation is the “co-existence” of ideas and “functioning” (Freud and Breuer, 1893-1895, p. 233). That is why dissociation can be beneficial to overcome trauma. Since the traumatized people can separate themselves from reality, they can avoid what troubles and frustrates them.

In addition to these psychological studies that explore dissociation, literature uses the theory as dissociation in trauma literature. Trauma has a complex structure due to the fact that it depends on the individual’s own interpretation and struggles with an upsetting incident. Since it can change from person to person, the healing process naturally and expectedly differs as well. Literature represents the process of healing by giving an insight

into traumatized people. In “Trauma Within the Limits of Literature”, famous literature theoretician Geoffrey Hartmann (2003) suggests that:

In developmental terms, however, when psychoanalysis and art join forces they suggest a *paideia*: an aesthetic education in which the capacity to feel – as it moves from passive and overwhelmed to active, and broadens into the sympathetic imagination – depends in good part on our relation to a universe of things (‘mute, insensate things’, to cite Wordsworth) psychically and physically less vulnerable than we are. Less vulnerable because our advanced individuation is accompanied by an acute sense of mortality, an anxiety about loneliness, isolation, exposure. The unsteady autonomy of individuals or even social groups stands in contrast to the apparent stability or self-regenerative capacity of ‘Nature’.

(p. 270)

Hartmann emphasizes that art and psychology are intertwined due to the fact that art gives psychology a voice and a chance to reflect. The imagination improves to produce art that results in a subjective and personal way to explain the troubles of the mind. That is why as forms of expression and representation, literature and art are important in the field of trauma studies.

Not only Hartmann but also other literary critics have studies on the relationship between psychology and literature such as Anne Whitehead. In *Trauma Fiction*, Whitehead (2004) introduces the trauma fiction as:

The term ‘trauma fiction’ represents a paradox or contradiction: if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction? This monograph seeks to suggest that there are various ways of thinking through the relation between trauma and fiction. The rise of trauma theory has provided novelists with new ways of conceptualising trauma and has shifted attention away from the question of what is remembered of the past to how and why it is remembered. This raises, in turn, the related issues of politics, ethics and aesthetics. (p. 3)

Whitehead emphasizes that literature brings a new way to understand the studies of trauma by attempting at narrating something difficult to represent. In her studies, she explains the tests about dissociation that emerged after World War II. She explains that people who are traumatized by the war goes through a kind of therapy that will help them to cope with their traumatic memories by trying to transform them. By so doing, one will be able to remember the incident differently and will be able to ease it in the mind (Whitehead, 2004, p. 47). Once again, it is evident that dissociation can be used as a coping mechanism and a part of the healing process.

As mentioned in the previous chapter of this thesis, masochism is a way to handle the troubles of the mind that helps to control one's self on depressing thoughts and feelings. Similarly, dissociation is another technique for the treatment of trauma and it is another coping mechanism for the individual. The imagining of a new world can be an abstract form by using art. In *Bridging the Black Hole of Trauma*", Sandra Bloom (2010) suggests "We must keep in mind the lessons of our ancestors about the essentially social nature of human survival and of artistic performance – creative expression may turn out to determine the state of health or illness of an entire society as well" (p. 199-200). In such a way, Bloom emphasizes that creativity provided by art represents the traumatized person's mind, which is an important part of the healing process. The idea is to be able to understand the main cause of trauma while distracting or disconnecting from the reality that gives suffering to the traumatized person, which is an opportunity that art and literature can provide. Art as a tool of association and expression that helps to create a world for people to ease their minds. Additionally, art becomes a form of dissociation.

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013), it is visible that art is a form of dissociation. Oskar and Theo's effort to explain and recreate by using art is a constant way of novels to portray how their mind work. To begin with, Richard Drew's "Falling Man" taken on September 11, 2001 is a central image in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.

According to Alex Nelson's (2022) examination of the picture in the National World article "The Falling Man: who was the person in the 9/11 photo, who was Jonathan Briley - and who took the picture?", Drew's picture was taken at 9.41 am in a twelve series of pictures (National World). As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the 9/11 terror attack on World Trade Center can be called to be a traumatic incident that changed America's collective memory. After the incident, people has started to feel public anxiety and depression over losing their loved ones. The publication of "Falling Man" became controversial due to its ability to visualize and spread the harsh reality of the incident. It shows the desperation at Twin Towers during the terror attack. It clearly demonstrates that people had to jump from a skyscraper in order to escape even though it leads to their death.



Figure 1: photo taken by Richard Drew in 2001.

Not only historically but also literary, the image in Figure 1 becomes very important. Chris Vanderwees (2015) explains in “Photographs of Falling Bodies and the Ethics of Vulnerability in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*”: “The novelist may partially attempt to contextualize or historicize these images, but most often, the photographs or descriptions of the falling bodies are included as part of a reoccurring metaphor or rhetorical argument put forward within the novel” (p. 176). In the novel, Oskar uses this picture in *Stuff that Happened to Me* to create a visual image of how his father dies as an outcome of his assumptions about the day. Other than the violent pictures in his scrapbook, this image specifically can be said to be the most important one for Oskar because it directly represents his father and his tragic death.

While in the first one the focus is on a real image, in *The Goldfinch* novel, art is expressed through the painting called “The Goldfinch” (1654) by Carel Fabritius who was born in 1622 and died in 1654. He died in a gunpowder explosion in 1654, which is why most of his paintings did not reach to today. Ron Charles (2014) describes Fabritius in “‘The Goldfinch’ — in print and paint” as “master at creating the illusion of life.” (Washington Post)



Figure 2: Carel Fabritius’ (1654) painting “The Goldfinch”

The painting consists of a bird, specifically a goldfinch. It freely stands on a grey wall decoration rather than being kept in a cage. On the other hand, the bird has a faded chain on his ankle. In “Clipped wings: the tragic true story of *The Goldfinch*” article, Jonathan Jones (2016) suggests that the painting has “enigmatic melancholy” (The Guardian) which is

related to the melancholic mood of Tartt's novel. The position in which the bird specifically stays resembles to the social pressure Theo feels within the society. While Theo is not caged for many people, it is still invisibly attached to the past and his traumas. While this subtle and discreet obsessions Theo has to his mother's death creates a detachment from the society, he cannot free himself to heal from his traumas as long as he is ready to lose the metaphorical chain he has to his mother's death. The feeling of detachment, therefore, creates a parallelization between the goldfinch in the painting and Theo's own life in which he does not feel belonged within any kind of social situation.

As I will try to demonstrate below, Oskar and Theo do not have recourse to art as a form of dissociation on a pathological level. On the contrary, they dissociate themselves from their traumatic memories by creating a world for themselves, which helps them to handle and comprehend their traumatic memories. Art expresses Theo and Oskar's stories, especially in Figure 1 and Figure 2 above. Both *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch* are first-person narratives and characters try to speak through their perception of art either by creating or by having an association with art. In the novels, art becomes a tool for Oskar and Theo because it helps to dissociate themselves from the reality and provides a visible understanding of the place and time they choose to live.

Art helps the process of dealing with trauma as well as contributing to the treatment and makes it visible to comprehend the suffering of an individual as Dori Laub and Daniel Podell summarize in "Art and Trauma" (1995):

In creating a holding, witnessing 'other' that confirms the reality of the traumatic event, the artist can provide a structure or presence that counteracts the loss of the internal other, and thus can bestow form on chaos. Through such form the artist can "know" trauma. (p. 993)

Through art, one can completely reflect what they think as Oskar and Theo in the art of photography and painting. In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, the reader can see the powerful imagery that Jonathan Safran Foer uses. Rather than reading what Oskar thinks, the reader can only see what Oskar thinks through the art of photography. Therefore, it could be said that Oskar also does not open his mind up to the reader as he refuses to talk about his feelings with other people around himself. In the book, what Oskar actually feels is not directly told but seen in his attachment to the art. In his journey, Renaissance Expedition, in which he tries to find the mystery of his father's key all over New York City, Oskar makes a scrapbook called *Stuff that Happened to Me*. He takes pictures for the scrapbook such as the city, animals, or objects he has found.

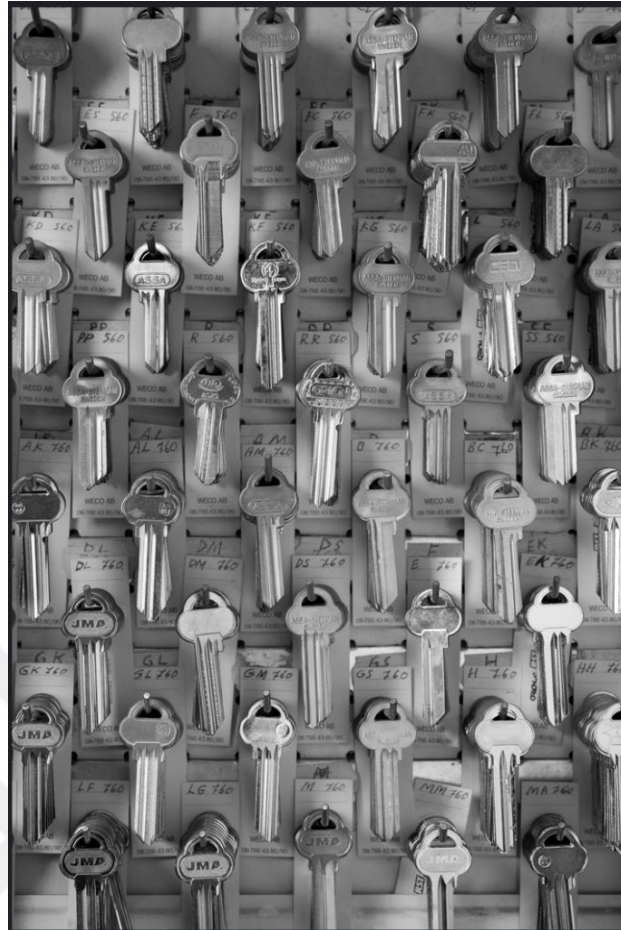


Figure 3 (Foer, 2005, p. 67), photograph © Jann Lipka

As Oskar does not talk about the incident, he uses the art in order to express his feelings and thoughts. The pictures he takes in the city for his scrapbook function as a way of recalling for Oskar. The journey itself is a way of gaining the lost connection with his father. Therefore, the way of seeking the connection through the journey leads him to remember the details. As can be seen from Figure 3, the keys demonstrate Oskar's visit to the key store so that he can learn the secret behind his father's key in the vase. As a mystery for him to solve and comprehend completely, picture in Figure 3 reflects Oskar's hidden thoughts and feelings. Also, there are other photographs throughout the novel that shows how Oskar perceives New York City after his father's tragic death and 9/11:

I printed out some of the pictures I found—a shark attacking a girl, someone walking on a tightrope between the Twin Towers, that actress getting a blowjob from her normal boyfriend, a soldier getting his head cut off in Iraq, the place on the wall where a famous stolen painting used to hang—and I put them in *Stuff That Happened to Me*, my scrap-book of everything that happened to me. (Foer, 2005, p. 56)

The images he puts are violent and inappropriate for a nine-year-old. They emphasize the anger and pessimism in Oskar's mind. Even though the journey is supposed to help him

reconnect with his father and find ease, it affects him harshly. As mentioned previously in Chapter I, Oskar does not want to feel happy because he thinks he should be grieving. Therefore, wandering around the city where Thomas Jr. died does not help him. He does not view the city as a positive place:

Even after a year, I still had an extremely difficult time doing certain things, like taking showers, for some reason, and getting into elevators, obviously. There was a lot of stuff that made me panicky, like suspension bridges, germs, airplanes, fireworks, Arab people on the subway (even though I'm not racist), Arab people in restaurants and coffee shops and other public places, scaffolding, sewers and subway grates, bags without owners, shoes, people with mustaches, smoke, knots, tall buildings, turbans. A lot of the time I'd get that feeling like I was in the middle of a huge black ocean, or in deep space, but not in the fascinating way. It's just that everything was incredibly far away from me. (Foer, 2005, p. 50)

Such a pessimistic and traumatized perspective of the city reflects itself in Oskar's scrapbook. He feels angry and anxious in the city. As the introduction of the thesis states, 9/11 terror attack evoked a feeling of anxiety and uncertainty in people's lives. The public and crowded places made people feel unsafe about where they live. It became a tragic place because people lost their loved ones in the accident. Similarly, Oskar experiences these feelings in an extreme way. Therefore, being in the city brings violent images to his mind. Such emotions and reactions are in line with Laub and Podell's (1995) arguments:

"Imaginative acts" that occur spontaneously within the process of survival itself. These imaginative acts arise in one's attempt to 'know' the traumatic events that confront him. They produce emotional resonances parallel to those produced by conventional art forms, and, we would suggest, are themselves a form of art. (p. 998)

In keeping with these arguments, Oskar is able to understand and reflect his thoughts and feelings to survive. By making them visible, Oskar's mind is visible which helps him to relax. When he is on his journey, Renaissance Expedition, he directly witnesses the depressed and frightening mood around the city. That is why images that will reflect how he feels comes to his mind.

Similarly, in *The Goldfinch*, art plays an important role for Theo's process of trauma and healing. Right after the incident at the Met Museum, Theo steals "The Goldfinch" painting by the Dutch painter Carel Fabritius (1654) that gives its name to the novel. He recalls the peaceful moment when Theo and his mother, Audrey, are looking at the paintings before the bombing attack. As Audrey loves art and talks about it:

They really knew how to work this edge, the Dutch painters—ripeness sliding into rot. The fruit’s perfect but it won’t last, it’s about to go. And see here especially,” she said, reaching over my shoulder to trace in the air with her finger, “this passage—the butterfly.” The underwing was so powdery and delicate it looked as if the color would smear if she touched it. “How beautifully he plays it. Stillness with a tremble of movement.” (Tartt, 2013, p. 24)

Such admiration that Audrey has for art, especially Dutch painters, clearly affects Theo. The obsession he feels for his mother makes him steal the painting as a memoir of his mother. The panic he feels for not finding Audrey and getting out without her overwhelms Theo. Therefore, stealing the painting is a momentarily act for him. He does not think about it but he just does it. It emphasizes that even though he is frightened by the explosion and needs to get out immediately, he still requires a souvenir:

The painting slid out more easily than I’d expected, and I found myself biting back a gasp of pleasure. It was the first time I’d seen the painting in the light of day. In the arid room—all sheetrock and whiteness—the muted colors bloomed with life; and even though the surface of the painting was ghosted ever so slightly with dust, the atmosphere it breathed was like the light-rinsed airiness of a wall opposite an open window. (Tartt, 2013, p. 222)

Since he survives, he finds the painting brighter. After surviving from such a grey and depressing place where he cannot breathe, he feels alive again. As Laub and Podell (1995, p. 993) suggest this becomes the first insight into Theo’s mind. In such a way, the painting starts to reflect how Theo feels for the rest of the novel. Even though he does not verbally express his thoughts and feelings, his relationship with “The Goldfinch” (1654) functions to show his mental state after the traumatic incident.

In her review of *The Goldfinch*, Barbara Beckerman Davis (2015) comments on the painting as follows:

The goldfinch looks directly at his audience, engaging, questioning and dialoging with us, forcing us to self-reflection. Unlike human portraiture, though, the goldfinch does not enjoy complete freedom: he is tethered to a feeder by a long chain, barely visible at first glance, that inhibits his movement. (p. 186-187)

As Davis suggests, the painting enchants a person by its closeness to the individual. One can find himself or herself in the painting, reflected by a bird. That is why going to the apartment with his father and reuniting with the painting provides a sense of ease for Theo:

Too much—too tempting—to have my hands on it and not look at it. Quickly I slid it out, and almost immediately its glow enveloped me, something almost musical, an internal sweetness that was inexplicable beyond a deep, blood-rocking harmony of rightness, the way your heart beat slow and

sure when you were with a person you felt safe with and loved. A power, a shine, came off it, a freshness like the morning light in my old bedroom in New York which was serene yet exhilarating, a light that rendered everything sharp-edged and yet more tender and lovely than it actually was, and lovelier still because it was part of the past, and irretrievable: wallpaper glowing, the old Rand McNally globe in half-shadow. (Tartt, 2013, p. 315)

As Davis (2015) highlights, his self-reflective power affects Theo because it is as if he is communicating with the painting. He gets excited by the presence of art because after a long time with Barbours, he is finally connected with something that he can associate himself with. Even though he cannot do it freely as he desires, he sees an object that reminds him of his mother as well as an object that helps him to “know” (p. 998) his mind, which resonated with Laub and Podell’s (1995) emphasis on the function of the art. Art allows him to get reassured and connected with the past memories of his mother as it can be seen as the first step for healing process.

Another example of the reflective power of the painting is evident when Theo moves after his mother’s death. He lives with Barbours, his father Larry, and Hobby. He does not have a place where he can feel fully peaceful until living with Hobby. While staying with Larry, Theo explains his feelings about the painting:

When I looked at the painting I felt the same convergence on a single point: a sunstruck instant that existed now and forever. Only occasionally did I notice the chain on the finch’s ankle, or think what a cruel life for a little living creature—fluttering briefly, forced always to land in the same hopeless place. (Tartt, 2013, p. 303)

He is always at a place where he feels hopeless like the goldfinch does in the painting to which he feels special attachment. Knowing that he could have a much more beautiful life with Audrey, he wanders around and feels like a stranger everywhere as he clearly is aware of the fact that such a wanted life is not attainable for him anymore. Like the goldfinch in the painting, he has a “chain” on his ankle that is difficult to be seen by others at the first look. Since he is underage, he needs to be taken care of by adults. If he does not want to live with the adults he knows, he will have to go to the orphanage, which he does not want at all. Once again, by using the subtle and non-verbal language of the painting, Theo discreetly expresses how he feels overwhelmed and unable to be understood by the other people around him, which leads him to heavy depression and detachment from the society.

Moreover, art does not only function to represent the present time of being. It can metaphorically move one person to a different time and place from the one they are really

in. As Laub and Podell (1995) emphasize: “The system in which ‘compulsory memory’ is strictly adhered to in the production of art denies life in the present, often even minimizing one’s own right to speak out and live, in deference to the seemingly overwhelming authority of the trauma” (p. 997). This theory can be seen in the lives of Theo and Oskar in both of the novels since both of them have memories of the ones they have lost and they do not wish to move on without them being in their lives. Therefore, they create a world that they can live with even though it is clearly unhealthy and risky for their status within the society. Oskar says:

It had taken us four hours to get to her house. Two of those were because Mr. Black had to convince me to get on the Staten Island Ferry. In addition to the fact that it was an obvious potential target, there had also been a ferry accident pretty recently, and in *Stuff That Happened to Me* I had pictures of people who had lost their arms and legs. Also, I don't like bodies of water. Or boats, particularly. Mr. Black asked me how I would feel in bed that night if I didn't get on the ferry. I told him, “Heavy boots, probably.” (Foer 2005, p. 254)

Oskar’s frustration at getting on the ferry reminds him of his scrapbook he has been working on. He explains that he has violent pictures that can prove why it is dangerous for his mental health. He gets what he calls “heavy boots” because he remembers the devastating events that can hurt people both physically and mentally like September, 11, something that caused his anxiety and fear to be in public places. Regardless of the violence the content threats, he still would put them into his scrapbook. All these explosions and accidents that delicately has found their way into his scrapbook clearly becomes a link to his own trauma of losing his father in a tragic and violent incident. While he seek the destructive contents to insert into his scrapbook, he intentionally finds himself back in the timeline when his father dies, which is a clear choice of masochism due to his guilt of moving on. Sudden recalls of those images and contents indicate that he feels a need to express his negative thoughts and feelings as well as a tendency to survive the frustration of his present life. Similar to Laub and Podell’s explanations, Oskar puts himself in the time of 9/11 and refuses to move on with his life. By doing so, he does not need to live without his father anymore. With the help of the destructive contents, he does not only attempts at a masochistic behavior, but he also keeps himself living in a imaginary world in which he can easily connect to his father.

In a similar situation to Oskar’s obsession with his father’s death and refusal to move on, “The Goldfinch” (1654) functions as a way for Theo to live with Audrey, his mother. Whenever he feels overwhelmed or anxious, Theo either looks at the painting in order to

remember his mother. The memories with Audrey clearly becomes Theo's safe space as she was the one who was there for him when he had issues with Larry, his alcoholic and abusive father, as a kid. Audrey in Theo's memories burdens the role of protector for him, which makes their relationship stronger and more dependent to live with her memory. Therefore, in a world in which Audrey does not live anymore, it becomes essential and crucial for Theo to have a possession that will remind him of Audrey. Even though he constantly recalls the memories with her, a concrete object makes it easier for him to handle the memories as well as a frustrating state of mind. Theo says:

The panic that overtook me then was hard to explain. Those game days broke up with a swiftness, a sense of losing blood almost, that reminded me of watching the apartment in New York being boxed up and carted away: groundlessness and flux, nothing to hang on to. Upstairs, with the door of my room shut, I turned all the lights on, smoked weed if I had it, listened to music on my portable speakers—previously unlistened-to music like Shostakovich, and Erik Satie, that I'd put on my iPod for my mother and then never got around to taking off—and I looked at library books: art books, mostly, because they reminded me of her. (Tartt, 2013, p. 226)

The way Theo verbalizes his obsession with his mother's memories is a great example of what Laub and Podell (1995) say about comprehending trauma through art and its power to enable a person to live in a different timeline. While smoking his weed, Theo intentionally hurts his body, which is a sign of his masochistic tendency. He uses art to remember Audrey, which turns his misery into a concrete object as well. Remembering Audrey takes Theo off the contemporary time he is in and allows him to be with her in his troubling state of mind. Therefore, it becomes a coping mechanism of grief and loneliness for him. He is not alone when he recalls Audrey, his mother, as his obsession to the painting of goldfinch demonstrates.

On the other hand, *Stuff that Happened to Me* helps Oskar to understand the cause of trauma which is also emphasized by Laub and Podell (1995, 993). Especially, "Falling Man" by Richard Drew is present throughout the novel as Oskar's tendency to associate the man in the picture as his father. Therefore, he creates a special bond between him and the image.



Figure 4 (Foer, 2005, pg. 76), photo illustration based on a photograph by Lyle Owerko (2001)

By using the internet, Oskar constantly watches and examines this picture about 9/11. In Oskar's imagination, this picture becomes the concrete visualisation of his father's tragic death in 9/11. Oskar, as a kid who wishes to find concrete facts and truth, needs to find his father's death in a rational and visual way in order to fully comprehend it. Since he cannot see the actual body of Thomas Jr., he can only find the possible way that his father dies in the destructive and violent photographs of the incident. Therefore, Falling Man has a representative quality that becomes a part of Oskar's healing trauma.

As can be seen from the analysis above, art has the power to help the healing and overcoming process of trauma both for Theo and for Oskar. As Laub and Podell (1995) consider art as "diologic" (p. 996). Accordingly, since art does not have to be direct and clear, it can be subjective. Therefore, the relationship between art and person becomes an individual dialogue. It does not have a certain outcome. Every individual creates or interprets an art piece through their own background and feelings. This subjective dialogue between

the two becomes a treatment and coping mechanism for a traumatized person. They might struggle to communicate with people, yet, they can speak through or speak with an art. In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch*, Oskar and Theo are dealing with their traumatic past can be seen through their relationship with art. As the previous chapter of this thesis states, they have hard times communicating with people, no matter if they are family or friends. Nevertheless, they need to express themselves in a way to ease their mind and art is a dominant part of this process.

In *The Goldfinch*, Theo later finds out that the painting he puts into a storage room years ago is not “The Goldfinch” (1654). It turns out that Theo’s friend Boris stole it from him when they were hanging out as fifteen-year-olds. Boris finds the painting and loses it. Instead of the painting, he puts a book. Theo does not understand it until he speaks with Boris because he never opens it after he comes back to New York. With the lost of the physical attachment to the painting, Theo finally separates his real and imaginary world. Along with the painting, he also loses the same world in which her mother is still metaphorically with him. When he realizes that the painting is no longer physically there for him, he loses the connection that he has been building up for his mother after her death. He explains:

Whatever reason I’d had for storing the painting all those years ago—for keeping it in the first place—for taking it out of the museum even—I now couldn’t remember. Time had blurred it. It was part of a world that didn’t exist—or, rather, it was as if I lived in two worlds, and the storage locker was part of the imaginary world rather than the real one. (Tartt, 2013, p. 473)

In addition, what makes the storage important is the painting itself. He puts it away because the painting should not be found by anyone. It is a historical object that belongs to a museum and people have been looking for it since the bombing attack at Met Museum. Although Theo has several opportunities to give it to officials, he does not because of his fear as well as his emotional attachment to it. By finally putting the goldfinch into a metaphorical cage, his attachment and obsession to his passed mother exacerbates. Just like the goldfinch that is put into a physical cage now, his detachment from real work had got weaker than ever. As the quotation indicates, Theo does not have to see “The Goldfinch” (1654) all the time to feel its presence and keep his connection with it. According to Laub and Podell (1995, p. 996), the dialogical power of art is a part of the healing process. This dialogue never ends with Theo since he assumes he still has the art. Knowing that it is safe and still his belonging

is enough for Theo, no matter how much anxiety it gives him. After learning that it is gone, Theo says:

But ever since the painting had vanished from under me I'd felt drowned and extinguished by vastness—not just the predictable vastness of time, and space, but the impassable distances between people even when they were within arm's reach of each other, and with a swell of vertigo I thought of all the places I'd been and all the places I hadn't, a world lost and vast and unknowable, dingy maze of cities and alleyways, far-drifting ash and hostile immensities, connections missed, things lost and never found, and my painting swept away on that powerful current and drifting out there somewhere: a tiny fragment of spirit, faint spark bobbing on a dark sea. (Tartt, 2013, p. 599)

As this scene shows when he learns that, he does not have the painting he feels extremely overwhelmed and frustrated as he realizes that the goldfinch is not actually in the cage in which it was safe. In the allegory between the goldfinch and his mental status, he realizes that the cage he puts himself does not actually protect him. He has so many reasons to feel anxious considering that it is a crime to steal art. At the same time, it is important because it is his coping mechanism and connection to Audrey. This quotation above supports and explains the leading resolution of Theo's dealing with his traumatic past because, at the end of the novel, he has to give the painting.

While Theo and Boris are in Amsterdam chasing after the painting to find it, Theo feels depressed a lot as he lost his concrete attachment to his passed mother, which leads him to thinking about committing suicide and seeking a lot of drugs as a coping mechanism. As he lost his faith in the imaginary cage he put himself, he seeks new ways to cope with his mother's death. Since he does not have the painting anymore, he gets anxious both for legal and emotional purposes. Nevertheless, it turns out that Boris not only handles the issue by giving the painting to the authorities but also getting money for helping them. After all of these, Theo comes back to New York to have a fresh start. This time, after losing the attachment to the cage, the imaginary world he has created to cope with his mother's death in other words, he finally is ready to move on. He starts to correct his mistakes in his relationships and work. Eventually, he gets redemption from all his misery. Just like getting rid of the painting, he gets rid of his negative attitude and feelings. For the last time Theo expresses his thoughts about the painting:

And if what they say is true—if every great painting is really a self-portrait—what, if anything, is Fabritius saying about himself? A painter thought so surpassingly great by the greatest painters of his day, who died so young, so long ago, and about whom we know almost nothing? About himself as a painter: he's saying plenty. His lines speak on their own. Sinewy wings; scratched pinfeather. The

speed of his brush is visible, the sureness of his hand, paint dashed thick. And yet there are also half-transparent passages rendered so lovingly alongside the bold, pastose strokes that there's tenderness in the contrast, and even humor; the underlayer of paint is visible beneath the hairs of his brush; he wants us to feel the downy breast-fluff, the softness and texture of it, the brittleness of the little claw curled about the brass perch. (Tartt, 2013, p. 760)

By giving this speech, Theo admits that Theo sees this painting as a self-reflection since it speaks for Fabritius himself. Theo's last perspective about "The Goldfinch" (1654) is to understand the fragile nature of the chained bird. It is similar to how he feels, and even what Fabritius may have felt. In such a way, Theo understands that he does not have to be alone. There will always be someone or something that will understand him. (Tartt, 2013, p. 575) Sandra Bloom highlights in her article "Bridging the Black Hole of Trauma: The Evolutionary Significance of the Arts" (2010): "Our feelings will not let us rest until our inner conflicts have been resolved" (p. 203) which is what art helps to achieve. He does not need the painting to remember his mother. She will be important and never forgotten but from that moment on, he is ready to leave his own chains and turn back to life.

As it was mentioned before, Laub and Podell (1995, 993) emphasize that art's ability to be a part of the healing process of trauma. Similar to Theo, Oskar experiences a similar resolution which he goes through with his art. After learning that his mother always protected him by calling Blacks earlier and asking to take care of Oskar and understanding that she has her own way of grieving, Oskar finally feels relaxed. As mentioned above in Figure 1, the "Falling Man" image in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), the most important photograph in the novel, represents the possible death of Thomas Schell Jr. in 9/11. Although throughout the novel, the man has been always depicted as falling, the novel finally ends with the picture of the man that actually crushed as it gradually disappears from the pictures.

Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8 are the pictures last for thirteen pages, in 340 and so on. This long portrayal of the incident reverses what happens in the picture. Systematically, the man goes up to the building rather than falling down. The critiques of contemporary literature examines Foer's narrative style for using pictures. Especially, the ending of the novel increases the use of art and photography because it gives thirteen pages for the "Falling Man." In his article, "Ethics in the Wake of the Image: The Post-9/11 Fiction of DeLillo, Auster, and Foer" Lewis S. Gleich (2014) explains:

Here, Foer narrativizes the static image by making continuous the discontinuous time of the picture. In place of the primitive repetition compulsion of the spectacle, Oskar creates his reverse flipbook. Through the anti-chronological sequencing of his visual narrative, he appropriates the medium of the spectacle to achieve a form of mourning that until now has eluded him. (p. 171)

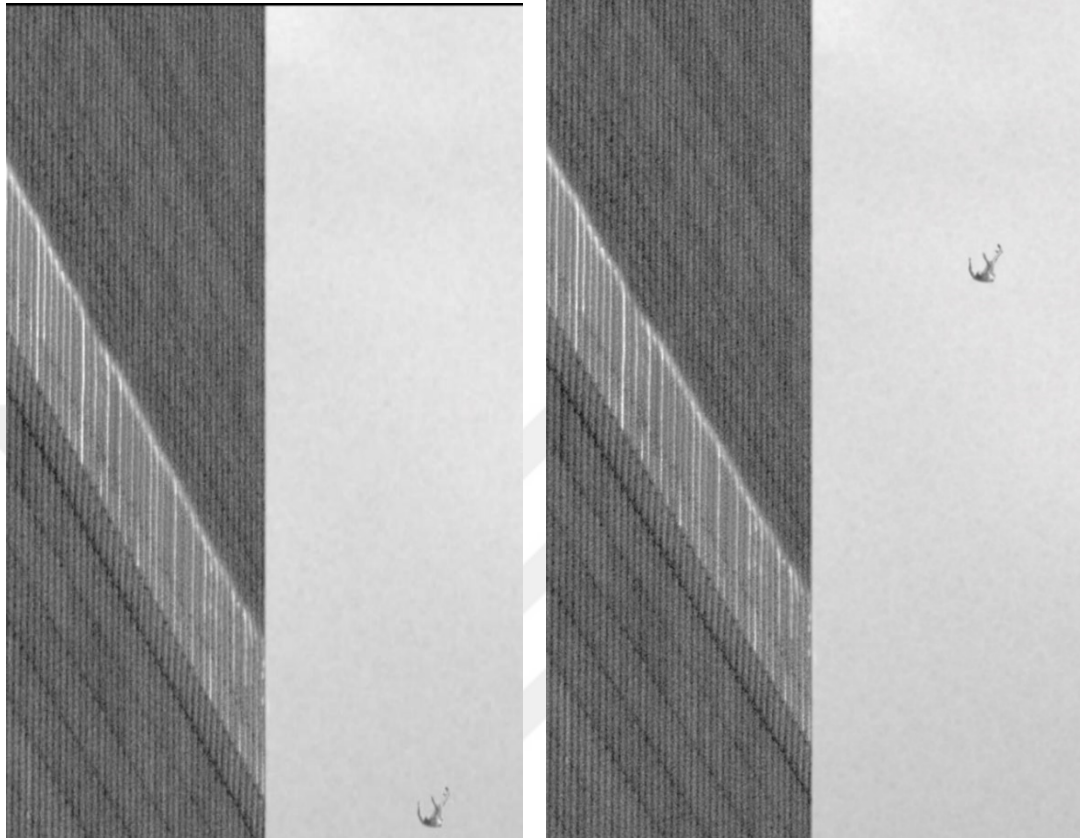


Figure 5 and Figure 6 (Foer, 2005, p. 340) designed by Anne Chalmers

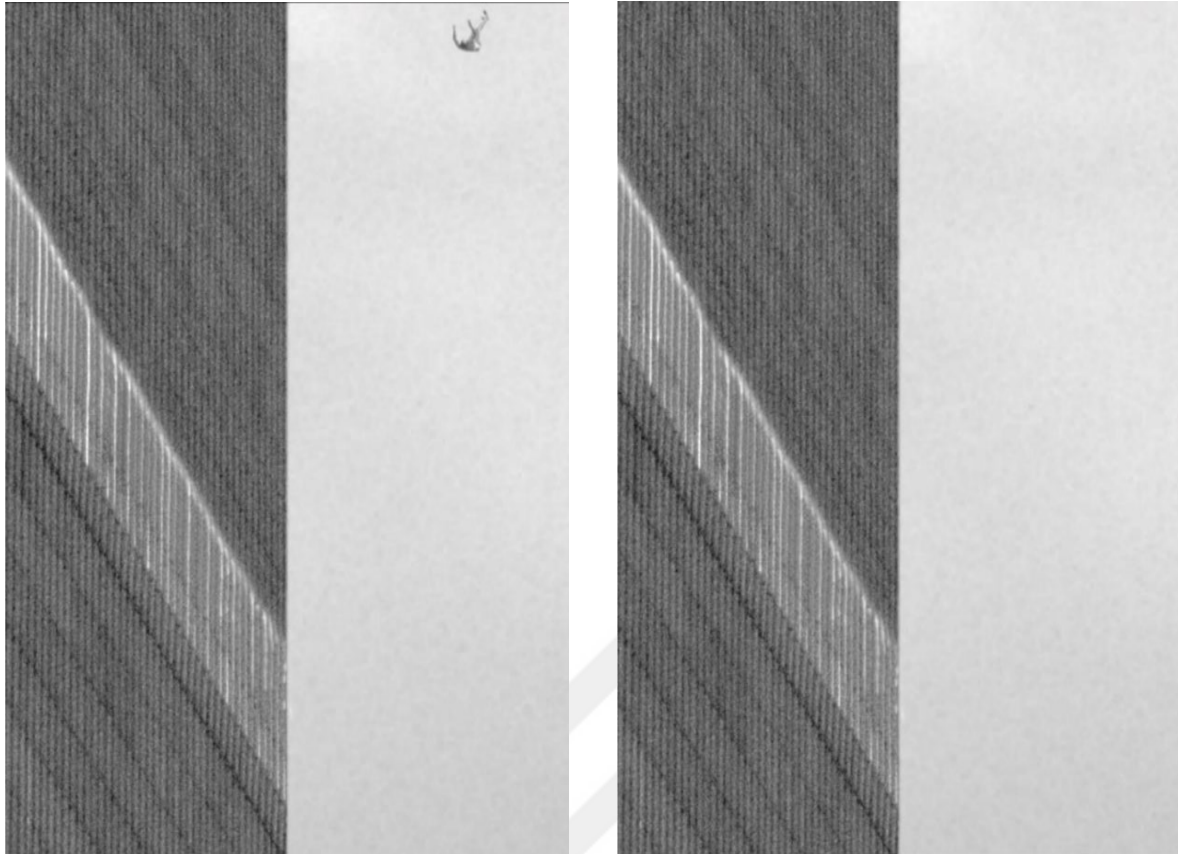


Figure 7 and Figure 8, Foer, 2005, p.340 designed by Anne Chalmers

As known, the picture shows that man is falling to his death. Yet, Oskar reinterprets it by stopping the man from falling. Instead, he goes up as can be seen in Figures 5, 6, 7, and 8, which means that Thomas Jr. did not die by falling and Oskar saves himself from the continuous obsession of how his father died. Moreover, Allué (2011) explains the importance of images as:

Images prove especially important in the trauma process since to be traumatized is to be possessed by an image or an event not assimilated or understood at the time. Precisely because the experience cannot be assimilated and put into words when it takes place, it is arranged on an iconic level and returns in the form of hallucinations, nightmares, and images that haunt the traumatized person. Thus a traumatic experience is reenacted belatedly through a series of images that cannot be assimilated, preventing the linguistic retrieval. (p. 188)

By doing so, the recreating of 9/11 is provided by the “Falling Man” picture which makes it easier to express and visualize the trauma for a person. As Gleich describes, the way the image is used at the end emphasizes that Oskar has changed his attitude towards the incident and Thomas Schell Jr.’s death.

Finally, I found the pictures of the falling body.
Was it Dad?

Maybe.

Whoever it was, it was somebody.

I ripped the pages out of the book.

I reversed the order, so the last one was first, and the first was last.

When I flipped through them, it looked like the man was floating up through the sky.

And if I'd had more pictures, he would've flown through a window, back into the building, and the smoke would've poured into the hole that the plane was about to come out of. (Foer, 2005, p.339)

By using his imagination and creativity, Oskar is able to express how he feels one more time. In the beginning, *Stuff that Happened to Me* is a memory collection and a reflection of his mind by using images from his visits, New York and Falling Man. Eventually, it becomes the embodiment of Oskar's journey to a more mature mind. He is not alone anymore, knowing that his mother is with him and shares his pain. That is why he knows that he needs to move on. He does not know how his father died and he never will, yet, there is a life for him. His understanding can change in order to be better which is what the reverse version of Falling Man indicates, a new perspective.

To conclude, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013) shows another coping mechanism than masochism which is art. In the second chapter, this thesis analyses art as a form of dissociation and a way of expression that gives insights into Oskar Schell and Theo Decker's mentality. Contrary to Janet's ideas that say it leads to disorders, as Freud and Breuer explain in their later studies, dissociation can be a coping mechanism that an individual does, so that he or she can survive a trauma. To handle a traumatic experience, one creates another world that creates a different time and setting. Dominick LaCapra (2001) summarizes the function of dissociation in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* as:

Trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel. Working through trauma involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to some viable extent counteract, a reenactment, or acting out, of that disabling dissociation. (p. 42)

Since dissociation itself is a representation and recreation, art becomes a part of the healing process as a dissociation by converting the mind into a concrete object. Additionally, one can escape from the hardships of his or her contemporary life. In the novels, Theo does not only use "The Goldfinch" (1654) as a way to remember his mother but also as a chance to live with Audrey. By doing so, he grieves and rejects the time he lives in. Similarly, by

creating *Stuff that Happened to Me*, Oskar does not move on. He associates Falling Man with Thomas Schell Jr. and continues to live in 9/11.

By creating or associating pictures and portraits with characters, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Goldfinch* (2013) emphasizes that art has an important part in healing trauma. If the mind feels overwhelmed by thoughts and cannot get a solution, it may damage the psychology of a person. Explaining and talking is a necessity for an individual to understand and get a solution for his or her problems but traumatized people may not have a healthy communication because trauma cannot be verbally expressed. Nevertheless, this need can be provided by art. It can be considered as an object that embodies thoughts and feelings. A person might give meaning personal to himself or herself such as Theo's perspective about "The Goldfinch" (1654). It is his bond with Audrey as well as a representation of his current state of mind. On the other hand, Oskar experiences a similar bond between his scrapbook *Stuff that Happened to Me* by putting pictures that will reflect his mentality and interpreting "Falling Man" as his father. Since both characters attribute their grief and guilt to the art, they start to have a bond with the object. It reminds them that they are not alone and there is something that they can express themselves. In short, dissociation and art as coping mechanisms have great importance in trauma studies and literature because of their ability to heal trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch*.

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzes masochism and art as two coping mechanisms for trauma in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005) and *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt (2013). In the novels, two main characters and narrators Oskar Schell and Theo Decker experience trauma after the death of their parents. Oskar loses his father Thomas Schell Jr. in 9/11 whereas Theo's mother Audrey dies in the Met Museum bombing attack. The plot that the authors have chosen indicates that even after years, 9/11 is still an issue that affects people. Both incidents are inspired by September 11, 2001 terror attack which is a national trauma that changes the perspective of America being a safe country. Like many other areas that has new interpretations on America, terror, and psychology, American literature experienced a change, which aims at giving voice to the sufferings and traumas of people. Therefore, the Foer's (2005) and Tartt's (2013) novels can be examined from the perspective of collective trauma which means a majority of people experiencing as well as responding similar anxieties and frustrations. Yet, this thesis focuses on how such destructive events affect individuals by examining Oskar and Theo.

As it was summarized in the paper, trauma is an incredibly complex mental response to a devastating or upsetting event that changes the behavior of the traumatized. According to Sigmund Freud's studies on trauma, there is an initial trauma that the individual suffers from which is triggered by the secondary one and releases the "delayed effects" (Freud, 1939, p. 124). In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Oskar's initial trauma is his loneliness and detachment he deeply feels after his father's death in 9/11. Oskar, therefore, cannot have healthy relationships with people because of his poor communication skills. That is why Oskar's dependence on his passed father increases more than ever. Losing Thomas Jr. becomes Oskar's secondary trauma that changes his behavior entirely. He becomes more introverted, lonely, and aggressive. Similarly, in *The Goldfinch*, Theo has an initial trauma, which abuse of his father Larry. Since he has a bad relationship with his father, Theo is very dependent on his mother, Audrey. Losing her makes Theo more lonely and introverted than ever. Through such a story and character development, Freud's studies on first and secondary traumas can be seen in the characteristics of the narrators.

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch* masochism is used as a coping mechanism because it is an expression and a distraction for the individual. Freud

and Breuer (1920) mention that unpleasure can be a response to trauma as well as a coping mechanism:

Most of the unpleasure that we experience is perceptual unpleasure. It may be perception of pressure by unsatisfied instincts; or it may be external perception which is either distressing in itself or which excites unpleasurable expectations in the mental apparatus that is, which is recognized by it as a 'danger. The reaction to these instinctual demands and threats of danger, a reaction which constitutes the proper activity of the mental apparatus, can then be directed in a correct manner by the pleasure principle or the reality principle by which the former is modified. This does not seem to necessitate any far-reaching limitation of the pleasure principle. Nevertheless the investigation of the mental reaction to external danger is precisely in a position to produce new material and raise fresh questions bearing upon our present problem. (p. 5)

By experiencing unpleasure, a masochistic individual is able to relax and control their mind, which is the underlying reason that masochism becomes a coping mechanism for people with untreated traumas. Both novels focus on the masochistic behaviors of Oskar and Theo, both of whom happen to mere children struggling with the deaths of their family members. Although, both of them have self-harming behaviors, they do not desire death. On the contrary, it can be said that their masochistic behaviors are their effort to hold on to life and to finally feel something rather than the guilt. Glick (2012) mentions this process as “keeping them alive through suffering” (p. 81). Oskar bruises himself whereas Theo gets addicted to drugs. They express their guilt and sadness by harming themselves as well as distracting themselves from negative thoughts and feelings caused by the deaths of their parents. The damage they cause to their own bodies helps them to control themselves in the way that they cannot do the otherwise. Therefore, each of the novels is an example of the unpleasure theory as well as masochism as a coping mechanism.

Another coping mechanism in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *The Goldfinch* is art as a form of dissociation. Dissociation is a response to trauma that helps an individual to create, understand, and express. Art is a way to dissociate which is a part of the healing process. Dori Laub and Daniel Podell (1995) suggests:

Finally, we explore how close the art of trauma can come to representing the empty circle, the core of a traumatic experience, and, in the context of clinical and non-clinical examples, search for the point at which the struggle for knowing and representing trauma may not be able to proceed any further. (p. 992)

As Laub and Podell's study presents, art provides a better understanding of trauma as well as a way of expression for their depressive and estranged feelings in the society. As

introduction and previous chapters of the thesis emphasize, telling and expressing feelings are important while the treatment of trauma is hard to achieve because trauma is hard to express and represent. By using art either to create or associate, traumatized can communicate, express, and understand themselves.

Theo and Oskar, in that sense, use various forms of arts to express the hidden feelings caused by their traumas. The novels use art as an important theme and coping mechanism for characters. Oskar creates *Stuff that Happened to Me* scrapbook to put the pictures of his journey and express how he feels. In the scrapbook, there are violent pictures that show Oskar's confused and frustrated mind, especially, Richard Drew's (2001) "Falling Man" is powerful in the novel. Oskar uses that image to imagine and understand Thomas Jr.'s death and to stay in the same time with him, rejecting to move on from his pain. Whereas Theo associates himself with Carel Fabritius' (1654) "The Goldfinch". The painting reminds Theo of Audrey as well as a way for him to stay in the same period with her. Similar to Oskar, it is Theo's way of rejecting to move on. In such a way, they dissociate themselves from the time they are living in. Also, they are able to understand the reason for their suffering and express their pain in their own way. At the end of both novels, characters express their development through their perspective of art. Oskar reverses "Falling Man" and creates a world where he never falls. Whereas, Theo feels relieved after understanding that just like Fabritius who drew the painting, someone will understand him and communicate with him. Barbara Haviland (2010) emphasizes:

The unconscious psychic processes of repression and/or dissociation may create gaps that foreclose meaning for a time, but from different temporal and subjective perspectives, the gap might become a period of latency after which a new meaning can be made thanks to *Nachträglichkeit*. Thus, melancholy may be brought to an end, and the work of mourning can proceed. (p. 447)

Additionally, as explained in the paper, art as a form of dissociation can be a part of the healing process as art itself is a coping mechanism. It helps to understand and express, which eases the mind of the traumatized. Both Oskar and Theo represent that art is a healthy way to cope with traumatic experiences. Their excessive attachment to the art pieces leads them to the realization of their obsession for their passed parents when they finally get detached from the art itself.

To wrap up, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer (2005) and *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt (2013) indicates that even though trauma is a hard and damaging experience, it does not last forever. With various techniques and solutions, one

can overcome trauma. Although the two techniques of masochism and art are in contrast to each other, both of them are successful at an ease of mind temporarily which gives hope that it will be over and it can be manageable. Masochism might be a negative process to the healing of trauma since it damages the body. Whereas art is a positive process since it is a healthier way to express the feelings that are buried. For all the reasons mentioned above, these novels can be examined by trauma theory. In this thesis, I have mentioned masochism and art as coping mechanisms and focused on the individual perspective of trauma, yet, further examinations can be made on the topics such as violence, conditions of children after 9/11, and ethics.



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