



Collective Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Novel Unresolved

Mitikie Liyew ^{a*}, Tesfaye Dagneb ^b

^a Ph.D. Candidate, English Language and Literature, Humanities, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

^b Associate Professor, English Language and Literature, Humanities, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

Received: 24 March 2022

Accepted: 13 May 2022

Published: 04 June 2022

Abstract

This study aims at analyzing collective trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder in the novel *Unresolved Tears*. Trauma can be manifested in different form, and in all forms, it is fear of something bad not happen or inability to recover from something bad happened. It is the part of human life though the extent varies due to the socio economic and family backgrounds the survivors' belonging to. This paper explores trauma in the novel *Unresolved Tears*-an Amharic novel. Characters in this novel undergo various traumatic experiences caused by starvation, civil war and maladministration which caused post-traumatic stress disorder upon them. The interpretation is based on Cathy Caruth's concepts of double nature of trauma. The result of this research is expected to be useful and helpful for those who read this paper in offering supportive information about the selected novels, and would hopefully motivate other researchers to do further study in the area.

Keywords: collective trauma, literature, civil war, starvation.

How to cite the article:

M. Liyew, T. Dagneb, *Collective Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Novel Unresolved*, *J. Hum. Ins.* 2022; 6(2): 69-78. DOI: 10.22034/JHI.2022.329771.1054

©2022 The Authors. This is an open access article under the CC BY license

1. Introduction

Human beings are created accompanied by different challenges, misfortune, which causes various physical and mental wounds in the aftermath. Studies show that violence and disasters as well as bad luck hurt human psyche, in a way that does not easily cure (Tembo (2017), Pitt (2009), Schönfelder, (2013)). And literature provide a safe space to confront fears of human being in the world saturated with trauma, and also engage people in empathetic relation with trauma survivors who lost community connections through the effects of trauma. Though there are different views about when exactly traumatic experiences appeared, literature represents these experiences in one way or another. And trauma narratives play a large role in depicting the wounds of traumatized individuals

and revealing the true reasons that stand behind their trauma.

Trauma gained various definitions in different fields of studies; however what is common about it is the negative effect of an incident, loss of something we need in the aftermath, inability to control the horrifying event and fears of it not to happen again. Though it gained significant attention and scholarly view recently, Trauma, is trace back to Adam and Eve when they were deprived their grace and thrown from the Garden of Eden to Earth; as reproduced here:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.... And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it: cursed

* Corresponding Author: mitikeliyew@gmail.com

(is) the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken (Genesis 3:16-23).

According to the religious narration, the persuasion of the snake to do what they are forbidden was uncontrollable event. Eve could not resist his evil advice which was the cause of their sorrow; and Adam and Eve lost the paradise after their disobedience to God; they were thrown out of heaven for eating from the forbidden tree. Only then did they realize that they were naked, which is a sign of another fall from purity. So, their shocking and surprising heartbreak left them sorrowed and traumatized. And a group of people face such heart breaking as a result of various causes, it become collective trauma.

Nowadays, in Ethiopia, hearing about the slaughtering of civilians, their starvation, and death of children due to lack of basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, and water) is not news. The massacre of citizens in September, 2020, at Metekle, the slaughtering of Amhara labor workers in Mikadra October, 2020, the massacres at Cheena, Gonder, September 2021, the genocide in Kobo, Afar, are some of the holocausts happened in 2020 and 2021, in Ethiopia is our latest memory. Females regardless of their age and maternal status (children, girls, pregnant, and nuns) faced gangster rape and died as a result of this. Others lost their children and spouses; and children become orphan and homeless. All the victims whom we eye witnesses as well as those who hear about are living traumatic life though the degree varies. Children sleeping with the dead body of their mother; they had searched breast milk from their killed mother. Having these holocaust survivors in mind, who encounter with life-threatening violence and death, would one stop to think about them?

Subsequently, trauma is the real experience of many of us; and literature represents and witnesses trauma in various ways; so we need to give attention in uncovering it. Life passes through various events and experiences losses which cause trauma. And there are plenty of novels written in Ethiopian languages which depict the traumatic experiences of citizens due to manmade and natural accidents. Comparing the real experience of the traumatized survivors, it is possible to say that words are unable to represent the pain as Caruth (1996) claims as the unrepresentable nature of trauma. Moreover, only handful studies are conducted on displaying Ethiopian experience of multifaceted trauma; but it does not mean there are no traumatic experiences. Possibly, the reason could be majority of survivors as well as witnesses could not handle their trauma, and do not start explaining about it. According to Caruth's (1996)

explanation, the traumatic incident is traumatic because it is beyond the usual human experience, and it is because of this fact that the survivor is unable to understand the incident in immediacy.

Besides, Caruth emphasizes that the victims of a traumatic event experiences a double trauma: in the one hand when he or she has witnessed the trauma of other people's death and on the other hand when the survivor sees his very survival as a trauma itself. Based on Caruth (1996), since the survivor is constantly haunted by flashbacks of other people's death, he/she sees his/her existence as a trauma; due to this, the survivor goes through double traumas which are the trauma of others' death and the trauma of his survival.

This study aims at exposing collective trauma in the novel *Unresolved Tears*. The novel *Unresolved Tears* is historical fiction which narrates the event of history of civil war and famine which caused starve to death of many citizens, in Ethiopia, during the regime of Haile Selassie in flashback, one of the narrative features of trauma fictions. This War as well as drought is unforgettable events which had been creating the horror that eventually change to deep-rooted crisis in the minds of both the survivors and witnesses. Unfortunately, now a day in the same area with the novel's setting, in Northern Ethiopia and Northern Wollo, Ethiopia, considerable numbers of people are dying of war and manmade starvation. And with no doubt there are trauma survivors who faced hunger during Emperor Haile Selassie's regime, who re-experience this horrible incident in Prosperity party's regime too. In the same vain with the former government, the existing leaders are not providing support for these people; so, the people are helpless; they are fighting with death. In addition to this, the novel is also concerned with the atrocities followed the formation of opposing political groups as a liberation front against the ruling classes.

In the novel, *Unresolved Tears*, the extent to which the massacre is depicted by radio news seems practically impossible. The ruling government says that thousands of terrorists are killed within a day; then, following this, the proponents declare the massacre of other thousands, which caused deep fright on the citizens whom families were solders of the either group.

2. Collective Trauma in *Unresolved Tears*

The novel *Unresolved Tears* falls in the category of historical fiction which narrates the event of history of civil war and starvation caused starve to death of many citizens during Dreg regime and Hale Selassie in flashback, which is one of the narrative features of trauma fictions. This War, unforgettable event in many respects, is in no way less than the world wars in terms of creating the horror that eventually change to deep-rooted crisis in the minds of both

the survivors and witnesses. In the novel, the extent to which the massacre is depicted is virtually impossible. In addition to this, the novel is primarily concerned with the atrocities followed the formation of opposing political groups as a liberation front against the bourgeoisie.

According to Vickory as cited in Schonfelder (2013:29), "literary and imaginative approaches to trauma provide a necessary supplement to historical and psychological studies". Through its capacity to represent the unrepresentable, literature reflects the complex experiences of human beings including the terrifying events they faced in various perspectives.

According to Caruth (1996:4) "texts of a certain period—the texts of psychoanalysis, of literature, and of literary theory—both speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience". Similarly, the novel in title *Unresolved Tears*, depicts the horrible experience of citizens due to drought and civil war in Ethiopia. The famine in Wollo is a haunting pain for many survivors as well as witnesses. As long as we do not assure food security as a country, it is worthwhile for us afraid of suffering from this experience; so, as a second generation survivor, we ourselves, who read or heard about the incident, share considerable pain though it is difficult to compare with the direct victims, who lose their lives, or witnessed the death of their families. As can be read the quotation:

During the famine, there were no edible or spoonful drinks in the area. All the people of that area were migrated. Since my father was died due to the famine earlier, my mother and I migrated with the people. At that time, the people of Wollo had only one choice: migration to Dessie; because there was bruit that the king, Emperor Haile Selassie, would come to *Dessie* for visit. And since the king had strewed candy for children wherever they went, they built goodwill. So the hunger people of *Wollo* went to Dessie afoot to beg from the munificent king. (Asefa, 2012 E.C:107-108)

However, it was only exertion; they could not gain what they wanted; it was forbidden to go in to the town for them. The police of the king waited for them in every direction to defy, and they deterred them. Those who came from the North side, put off at *Robit-Gebya*; those who came from the West stopped at *Segno-Gebya*; and those who came from the East and South Eastern direction let stopped, and interred to a cage at *Harego-slop* designed to cram them. A little bread only was flung to each migrant once a day. The above quotation narrates, the unforgettable event happened in *Wollo*, Ethiopia, during 1970s. Though the people are hardworking and productive, the drought lasted for three consecutive years challenge them to survive.

Here Terfie, one of the protagonist characters, who suffer a lot, lost both her father and mother in the starvations. She becomes orphan in her early childhood. Seeing the death of people in hunger, other victims in the camp suffer from double trauma. In the one hand, they are suffering from lack of food, cloth and shelter. On the other hand they are witnessing the death of others. This causes them to fill as they are waiting for their death, since no action had taken to save them.

As Asefa (2012 E.C) narrates, during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia 1930s, the king wanted to go by from Ethiopia to abroad in the direction of *Wollo*. However, the people confronted him not to exit; and the king recorded it as grudge and wanted to revenge these people in doom, then he did it. Thought the king had the power as well as the capacity to help these people, he left them to die in starvation. These survivors as well as witnesses realize that once a natural disaster or bad chance confronted them, their fate would be either to challenge it or to die of it. They are acquainted with that no one is willing to save them except their Creator. Following their experience, these peoples lost their families. Since the occurrence was lack of rain, it was out of their control, which this made them helpless and traumatized.

In the same way, to what the extract reflected, Herman (1992) states that trauma is a sense of suffering and helplessness, resulted from the individual's experiences and subjugation to external atrocities and natural disasters. It is, as she states, a feeling of deep fright, vulnerability, loss of control, and risk of entire damages that the people were experiencing. The famine, Ethiopia, caused live loses of many, was doom period for Ethiopians, especially in *Wollo*. This instance caused trauma on many survivors who witness the death of their families; and many other citizens, in their childhood like Tirifie as the quotation below indicates:

Wollo has been abandoned. ...Both humans and God denied. The people withered like leaf since it had no one who helped during the day of evil. (Asefa, 2012 E.C:109)

Since the survivors remember what happened to them, they depict it as they are denied by the government. Those who paid tax for, and expected it to support during their dark period ignored them. The government left them as they were not present; it forgets them. Moreover to magnify his ignorance, the king came to *Dessie*, a town in *Wollo*, Ethiopia, and prepared invitation for Appointee and their followers only excluding the worker class in the era as well as the drought victims. The victims feel as eggs which are laid on sand.

As reflected in the novel, the maladministration of the king's regime reflected the paradox of life in a city that few live in luxury since they are the follower of the ruling class, and majority of the

citizen, who work to their life and help others in farming, died of starvation as a result of drought which lasted for three consecutive years. The natural disaster is out of their control which caused holocaust on thousands of people and animals. However, the government did nothing to help these victims. They walked long afoot and reached *Dessie* to report their trouble to the king; however, it was not allowed to them to enter to the town. Besides, they let to inter a pen designed to jail the victims; children lost their families in this courtyard and become orphans.

The quotation below depicts collective trauma in *Upswept Tears*:

Dessie town became a stage in which two contradictory scenes were displayed at a time. In the one hand, varieties of *stew and sauce* with fatty foods are served with drinks such as Wine and whisky; and champagne was sprayed and danced. On the other hand, it became hell by the crying of hungered citizens who were being burnt by the Sun in the daytime, shudder by the frost in the night; and who were halted as cattle in the camp, and were being suffered in hunger. *Dessie* town felt in grief. (Asefa, 2012 E.C:108)

As depicted in the novel, *Upswept Tears*, the wrong of the king's, Haile Selassie, regime, some were living in surfeit, and others were dying in malnutrition in the same town. Some cadres and their followers celebrated the visit of the king in luxury, whereas, thousands were died of hanger. Though the people went *Dessie* to inform the king, about the disaster they were suffered from, and to gain help, that was impossible; and they passed away banned in comp; except some holocaust survivors. However, it is worth nothing to think that the king was uninformed about the disaster, since the incident lasted for three years, and, appointees from the drought area were involved in the party. Rather it was death sentence, to act as I have not heard. This put mental wound on survivors and witnesses.

On the other way, Asefa (2012 E.C) represent collective trauma caused by civil war in Ethiopia. Ullah (2016) argues that the collective trauma is best judged when it comes to incidents, like war, which takes into its folds the society as a whole. The extract provides an insight into the condition of people, who undergone the trauma of the war is read as follow:

The civil war in Northern Ethiopia aggravated. The death news of the contradictory group seemed the criteria for leading the future Ethiopia based on the number of people they killed. If the radio of one group said, I killed one thousand in the morning; the opposing group would say, I killed two thousand in the night. This was

every day's news. The number of death increased day to day; the same news every day. Not only the land but also the air was overflow by blood, in the computation of killing; by death news; in killing spirit. In the Northern part of the country there is always war, heavy arms were rumbled every day; there was death every day; the country was bleeding every day. There was blot every day. The property of the country got damage day to day. There was suffering every day; crying and chaos every day. (Asefa, 2012 E.C:142)

As reflected in the extract above, the daily news of both the leading and the opposing groups were death. Unfortunately, the victims were citizens of one country. It was killing each other; patricide. The community faced trauma; in the one hand the soldiers felt helpless seeing the death of other combats in both side, and on the other hand, the families of these soldiers of the both side passed in an unedifying event; especially, the people of the northern Ethiopia, where the war was taking place, were direct victims in many aspects. In that area, it was not only combats that died of the war, but also civilians. Generally this incident was horrifying event, which caused intergenerational trauma, a scary experience even for witnesses of the other generations who were not on the time, on Ethiopians.

In relation to trauma through witnessing, Weine (1996:168) writes as follow:

To witness is to see; to know, and to be engaged with another's experience of traumatization. In all of its complexity and enormity, witnessing encompasses more than the traumatic experiences themselves; it also includes the life that was shattered and the life of the survivor. Witnessing is conceded both with the individual and the collective. It is private when a confession embodying the survivor's spiritual, aesthetic and moral essences; and it is public since a documentation of historical events and cultural traditions, the witness receives processes and transmits survivors' knowledge.

Similarly, the extract below depicts the interference of foreign invaders which caused the massacre. Though they did not succeed to invade the country, their malice put scar in the mind of Ethiopians. It was so horrifying even to read about the incident, which cause mass slaughter, and made the place to become full of human dead body, then dragged by wild animals. Generally the people around the area experienced more than collective trauma, which can expanded as cultural trauma. Based on Alexander's (2004:1) statement, "cultural trauma occurs when members of a collective feel

they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.” And the extract below depicts the heartbreaking incident faced by Ethiopians which can be called as collective trauma.

a battlefield of centuries, the northern Ethiopia, the place of civil war and land of blood, since there were no mediators, who lend a hand to brotherhood, due to the foreign invaders’ conspiracy. The northern Ethiopia, cursed by Ethiopian mothers, since there was no Ethiopian mothers who did not lost their son in it. It had been burned by arms and bombs, then, become arid zone of the cold place. The northern Ethiopia, where blood is flowed like flood, bones are crashed, and the dead body of human being is eaten by wilds; the place where the sound of cry and ordeal shouted and unfortunate place which cries itself too. (p.170)

These victims of civil war had no the chance to get grave; even their dead body could not gain approach. It had been eaten by savages. And there are families who are not know and lament for their dead children, who have been expecting as they may come one day.

The other state of affairs that reflected trauma in Asefa (2012E.C), which shows collective trauma, is the happening where the car accident happened to Aschalew and many other passengers traveling from Dila to Addis Ababa. This accident, as reflected in the novel, caused loses of live for majority of passengers, and physical wound for some others, including Aschalew. The event is heartbreaking. In this traumatic event, Aschalew was injured badly, though he recovered after a special treatment in Saint Paul hospital. However, unlike him there were many victims who lost their life in the accident. As a result many individuals faced grief of losing their family. The quotation bellow is evident for this:

That place horrifies everyone who saw it. All travelers who went to Addis Ababa and returned back, alight from the bus, and cry. The crashed cars itself disturb whom they saw. Swaying the crashed cars aside, when looking at the ground where they crashed, it shocks. The blood of victims of the accident made passage and was flowing. The flies infested on floods flooded from fractured skull. Shoes of both males and females with different size, color and shape were thrown in the field. Blooded clothes and papers are tossed. Moreover, when passengers to Dila arrived at, and cried, the place became terrifying more. (Assefa 2012 E.C:79)

In addition to the direct victims of the accident, passengers of other buses too felt dismay since they

witness such horrible scene, the blood of survivors fill the road. These witnesses experience as Caruth (1996) double trauma; because, in the one hand, they feel that this type of accident may happen to them since they are travelers. On the other hand, the extent of the wound faced the victims caused upsetting. Moreover there were died travellers which aggravates their trauma. In the above quotation, Aschalew, one of the protagonists in the novel, who suffers a lot due to his resistance behavior against the Dreg Appointee, who oppress the people, was one of the passengers to Addis Ababa. He was traveling to Addis Ababa to ask transfer from Dila, though he could not succeed, since his boss challenged him due to their ideological difference. And it was in this way, fighting from saddle, that Aschalew faced accident and faced mental as well as physical wounds. At last, his boss decided to be sent him to Eritrea for constrains combat, which is so traumatic, where many young generations of both countries were sacrificed like him.

In addition to his mental wounds faced in the aftermath of his war experience, Aschalew lost not only his charm, but also his healthy life. When his friend Belihu had gone Asmara to know the condition that he was in, he got him being between life and death. They could not know each other. Behailu was with his charm, but it is the withdrawal of Aschalew’s memory that he did not identify. It was difficult for Belihu to accept the person who seems corpse with no ear, eye, hand and leg as Aschalew. His flesh complexion disappeared, he was only skin and skeleton; and he had so heartbreaking appearance. Generally, he was dissociated from his identity, and he surrendered to death. Belihu thought as that how much mistreatment had he passed.

The citation below depicts this.

... The sick person could not see in focus; instead Blihu stared the facial of the sick man and seems trying to identify who he is. The extent of his face’s feebleness, how his face got thin, and his face bones are bared, which seem as spear, how his teeth are bared, and how his charm is faded, confused Belihu whether he is Aschalew or not. However, there are indicators to believe as he is. He sat in the bed edge and observed the sick man. ...Belihu said “believe me Aschalew I am Belihu,” and cried gravely; then he fondled Aschalew’s chest. The knock of grief crying boomed from the two sides. The tear canals are opened from their eyes. (Assefa 2012 E.C: 243)

As read from the quotation, hurt by psycho physical wounds in the aftermath of the war, Aschalew decided to live in Asmara instead of returning to his home town, *Dila*, Ethiopia. Though he knew that his

fiancée had been waiting for him, he did not want to make her unhappy due to his injury; he believed that a man with such physical feature would not fitted to her, simply his self-esteem was eroded as a result of the traumatic events he undergone. According to Herman (1992), traumatic events reduce the belief or the confidence that one can be oneself in relation to others, and it has the power of destructing the self. According to her explanation the traumatic event deprives the former identity of the survivors; or the victims possess another personality. Based on Herman's view, even though the individual may survive the trauma, the permanent effect of trauma significantly changes the person's psychological and physical life. And it is this behavior that Aschalew is reflecting. His decision to live Asmara is the result of low self-esteem in the aftermath of the bomb accident. Went to Asmara to find his friend, Belihu had told the condition how Hewan, Aschalew's fiancée, had been living, to persuade Aschalew to return to his home town as read from extract below:

Belihu as he stands said "frankly speaking what Hewan seeks and expects in suspense is your voice. This opens new way of life to her. She had been feared, missed and disturbed for long time since she did not know that what happened to you; and if she pass away in this manner, her soul may not rest in peace. ... If you believe me Aschalew, Hewan asked us whether you died; she is your true lover who said 'show me the grave, then I will collect his bones and cover in cloth and hide in side my burst till my death.' Please do not ashamed me; please lets return to Dila. (Assefa 2012 E.C:248)

Seeing his wounded ear, eye, and his artificial hand and leg, his family as well Tafesu felt terrified. He was changed completely; observing her brother as such was unbelievable for her. It was a combat from Asmera who informed Aschalew's family his alive. When he decided as he would not return back due to the heartbreaking condition he was in, to persuade his fiancé as he is died, he stopped his monthly salary he was sending to her. His health is distorted badly; he lost his eye, hand, leg and ear in the war.; and wanted to pass away there; he became helpless and was waiting the date of his death; he was dreaming it.

Aschalew returned back to Dila, Ethiopia, with his friend Belihu. But the grief for the family was worse than their expectation. They could not believe his horrifying injury. Nothing good returned back with him, he lost all except his breathes; as a result Tafesu yelling as follow:

"They have destroyed your glamor; they have withered your charm my brother; they have detached from your being my brother"; said Tafesu touching his artificial leg and

hand. They have taken yours and replaced their choice my darling? Those butchery! Those boarfish! Ehhh..." ... Tafesu stop short and she behave as mad, like drunkard, and raised her hands and cried as eyyy...! Eyyy...! Eyyy...! She sits on the bed and sob bitterly covering her face by her hands. (P.249)

His families as well as people who knew Aschalew before feel heartbreaking grief. It was he had afraid to return back from Asmara. All who witness his injury faced anxiety. Aschalew understood that his condition would hurt his family, his fiancée as well as people that they knew him before traumatized badly. That was why he stroked down to comeback since he expected this wound, because it was for revenge that his boss forced to go; Aschalew remembered this event as follow:

"My death had been designed when I was here, Tafes! What faced there was the action. I am ill-fated my Tafes" said Aschalew, and scrubbed his whole face to wipe his tear in his normal hand. (Assefa, 2012 E.C:249)

As read from the quotation, Aschalew was afraid of being hurt before he joins the combat; and he was sure of the damage that would face him. So he experience psychological trauma before he is sent to front. It is the physical trauma he confronts in the battlefield. And based on Caruth's (1996), he is a undergone double trauma; because, first, he faced anxiety when he heard about war since he witnessed the fate of combats; and second, he practically challenged with the horrible event itself.

The other character who traumatized badly is Aschalew's fiancée, Hewan. She resisted sexual harassments and rape trials by gangsters motivated by her elder sister, Shewaye who wants to distract their relationship. To achieve this, Shewaye became the mistress of Barnabas, who was appointee and boss of Aschalew. It is he who sends Aschalew to war to favor his mistress. Hewan had great hope to build family with Aschalew after he returned back from the battle; and it was this hope which made her strong to overcome challenges. However, when she saw him, she could not accept the fact; it is the overwhelmed feeling as well as the inability of mind to entertain the terrifying event which creates trauma on the survivors. She would not witness such horrible experience ever before, and she could not expect such heartbreaking hurt happened on human beings. Following this, her mind stuck as the quotation reflects bellow:

She saw humanoid, dragged in crutch, in her day dream. Even his normal leg did not look leg, only his trousers only move. His facial feature seems masked horror. Before she was not sure whether it is human being, Aschalew got closed to her. Aschalew called as "Heyu"-short form of Hewan, pouring his tear from both the hurt and normal eyes; but for her,

even the voice could not seem human being's. It was too weak. Hewan could not respond except moving her eyes. (Assefa, 2012 E.C: 252)

According to Caruth's theory, survivors with such experience, faced unconsciousness and become unable to react against the trauma at the moment. However this experience haunts the victim belatedly, after some weeks, months or years. So the survivors start reliving the past, and responded either in the form of acting out, that is the stage of the trauma in which survivors could not handle their pain, rather they react as they are living in the traumatic condition; or in the form of working through, stage of the survivors to mourn about their past pain and live new life. Such reaction to trauma after it happened long time ago according to Caruth (1996) is called the belated nature of trauma. As the extract above reflects, Hewan got groggy when she saw Aschalew's physical disorder. It was difficult to her that man like creature, who walks in crutch, is her Aschalew. As Walker (2014) stated that trauma defies understanding and breaches our comprehension of normalcy, time stills, a space opens up, a rupture, where the body moves into an uncertain future dramatically marked by the unknown.

The other collective trauma reflected in the novel is caused by car accident, which makes happen mass atrocities. In this accident several families lost their children who were going to school, and many other metropolitans lost their families which results traumatic experience on these survivors as well as witnesses as can read from the extract below.

Saint Paul hospital became crowded. ...it is due to the fact that while a school bus was serving many students of *Medihanialem* general secondary school; and when it arrived at the school gate and dropping them, the city bus with no controller/ ferine crashed students who were dropping. As a result, many of them died, and many others faced sever disability. ... In addition to the students, other passengers too faced the accident. And the problem transcends and hurt those who care for too. (Assefa, 2012 E.C:260)

The other heartbreaking episode which depicts collective trauma is the burning of Tirfe and loses of her life. Tirfe who is holocaust survivor of Wollo famine, and lost her family in the starvation passed through different ups and downs in the house of her employers. Her trauma ranges from sexual abuse, in her childhood bay the husband of her employer, to lose of her baby in death. She had lived a poor life in Dila. But around the last phase of her life, she had become Aschalew's house servant while he was doing in Dila hospital. Tirfe had gained better family who think good for her and love her, and she

was living in love with Aschalew's family. Unfortunately she faced an accident while working in the kitchen. The pain of the fire burn hurt Tirfe badly, and it caused to pass away. But the family face deep grief since Ascalew too was between life and death, who was in hospital for better treatment. And before the accident, she was doing variety of foods to be sent for Aschalew and Belihu who were in hospital. The extract which depicts this is read as follow:

"...when she was adding fuel to the kerosene, she poured in the edge. ...the fuel was being burned.... When we arrived, her dress was fully burned on her and she was in pain. ...the doctors tried to help; but it was impossible to save her." Said Hewan. (Assefa, 2012E.C:269)

Hewan had worn black clothes, which symbolize grief, and went to Addis Ababa to visit Aschalew, her fiancé, with Merid, his best friend and member of love family, but Belihu was returning back to Dila with Aschalew's corpse by rented car, and he met with Hewan and Merid at the Barrier. Belihu asked Hewan why she wore black, and when she told as Tirife died, he felt heartbreaking grief since he is with Aschalew's corpse in hide. They return together since he persuades them as Aschalew got better and return after some days. But when they reached at home the people were crowded in their house to welcome Aschalew's corpse. The grieving accompanies the car which carried it; however, Hewan and Merid did not know this fact. Since it was a day after Tirfe's death, they could not suspect that another disconsolate happen in their house. The extract below narrates this incident.

...the road is full of grieving. ... The photograph hold by Tafesu Engidasew was Aschalew's. Merid felt nervousness while Hewan became paralyze. The car stopped when it arrived at the people; then Belihu dropped from the front gate, and he looked at Hewan, who stuck, said "please console, Aschalew is passed". But she seemed that she did not hear; and she stayed stuck. Her eyes faded and she slied from him down. ...Hewan was passing, and her breath stopped for last. (Assefa, 2012E.C: 270-271)

Hewan suffers from aphasia according to Goldberg's (1994) word which means loss of speech, which is a common phenomenon among Holocaust survivors, some of whom slipped into total silence as a result of their avoidance and inability to frame and to articulate their traumatic experiences. Goldberg (1994) sees aphasia as the "symbolic death" of an individual, a loss of self that is clearly expressed in Hewan's response as depicted in the above extract. Her aphasia is followed by "traumatic grief," arising from grief that cannot be resolved, and died then. She could not accept the fact, and she stick out on what she was

seeing. Unfortunately, Hewan, could not get the chance to react the trauma neither in the form of acting out nor working through; rather she passed. The extract depicts the power of trauma up to depriving life as happened on Hewan who died of witnessing the death of her fiancé.

Moreover, Hewan's mother becomes groggy; though she had come to condole her daughter, since her fiancé Aschalew was passed, unluckily Hewan herself died witnessing the death of Aschalew. As a result, her mother could not accept the death of her daughter. Constriction, the type of post traumatic disorder, explains the state when the victim's system of self-defense paralyzes then surrenders. Conviction defines the victim who is too weak and has no means to defend her against the perpetrator at the moment of the trauma that she ends at accepting the abuse and submit to it. Herman (1992) explains that the individual's "system of self-defense shut down" and a powerless person who cannot escape physically escapes by shifting her state of consciousness. She illustrates with the analogous states observed on animals that sometimes freeze when attacked. In similar way with what Herman's said, Hewan's mother is paralyzed or stopped responding in the aftermath of the horrible incident that her daughter died in the grief of her fiancé's death as the following extract depicts.

They grasped her hand and took to the place where Hewan's corpse is placed; then uncover the dead body and show the fact. Hewan's father, Ato Tesfaye, shout when they saw. However, her mother laughed abruptly; a lough of bad look. She exposes her teeth, bares her eyes, and as she was in nightmare she observed the wall and the roof. ...they hold her hands strictly and take of her girdle from her belly, and then they baled both of her hands with her girdle. Still she did not show reaction. (Assefa, 2012:273)

As reflected in the novel, some characters can afford their pain and live with their trauma as Ato Teshale did; some others cannot work through their trauma, rather they live in unconscious like Hewan's mother faces and others died of it like Hewan.

Tragically, in the country in which majority of the citizens are traumatized in inability of insuring food security, the politics is another challenge of people which deprave their lives before the famine; as a result apolitical intellectuals are flog to death of political wave of different periods, which causes massacre on significant number of people; especially professionals who stand for public interest, and asked right are intended victims. It is not exaggeration if it is said that scholars in our country, Ethiopia, have political phobia since they

are being witnessing the trauma of authors who contributed literary works which reflects the facts of politics in the country and pass judgment on it, either as assassinated, arrested, or migrated; or others who witnessed this trauma stayed silent in maladjusted. Scholars have been forced to forget their country; to forget the pain of their citizen; rather, may be appreciated if they analyze the issue of others which adds no value on the live of the poor, who are in the trauma of famine still. This is the fact that Tafesu witnesses throughout her life. Tafesu stayed Dila for years, and participated in many funeral ceremonies. She realized that families, who lost their children due to their ideology, left the funeral of the day, and fail in the grave of their children. Perhaps Tafesu believes that today's grave gusts are indirect victim of politics. Like Tafesu, many peoples who faced the trauma of losing their families due to the cruel administration and injustice practiced in the country. So the incompetent political system itself is a source of trauma for considerable numbers of citizens. The political assignees conspiracy in workplace or on organizations they are working and their limitless power on the workers create awkward way of life and trauma on them. It was this that caused nurse Aschalew to go to the battlefield and lose his life, which result the death of his fiancée, and this in turn caused grogginess on her mother. As a result her father left alone.

3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Unresolved Tears*

What makes trauma so worse is its long lasting consequence on victims in its aftermath. The survivors of a traumatic incident go through new traits with complex traumatic disorders. As Caruth (1995) explained that it is not possible for the human mind to register an incident of trauma as soon as it occurs; rather its impact is more severe when it haunts the mind much after it has taken place. This results survivors to deplore their life, which also leads to the feelings of guilt and unworthiness, which are the direct results of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Caruth (1995, p. 152) argued that the flashback provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of 'willed memory or the very continuity of conscious thought. The traumatized are called upon to see and to relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection'. And the extract below elaborates Aschalew's post trauma experience.

The worst thing that ever happened to him was a car accident. His wounds were healed, but his spirits were high. He can serve his country and his people professionally and live in peace, but from his point of view, they are useless. Angered by the pressures of arrogance and

malice, he shuts his eyes to the fact that he had survived such a tragic accident and had barely survived. He always regrets it. He always annoys him. What if he died? His spirits soared, his lips quivered, and he shook his head. Asefa, (2012 E.C:94)

Caruth (1996) argues that the survivors of trauma are troubled by the flashbacks of some traumatic incident as a result they are telling the actual incident. She explains that the survivors' minds record the incident in fresh reality and while replaying those incidents, they cannot either increase or deduct things from that occurrence that is recorded in their mind. Thus, Caruth concludes that the flashbacks are actual pasts which are re-experienced by victims. Similarly, Aschalew is being haunted in the traumatic incident happened before months. He memorizes his conversation with Mrs. Abonesh and her daughter sat near to her, who lost their life during the accident, which took him to relive the trauma. And this causes to memorize the source of all these which is the maltreatment faced in work place.

Talking to the deceased on a car trip, Mrs. Abonesh Haile, she said "Is there a country where they are not?" On the same occasion, he remembered the horrible deaths of Mrs. Abonesh Haile and her daughter, and he was saddened by their deaths. Asefa, (2012 E.C:95)

While adjusting to life after a violent event, survivors often suffer from traumatic recall. The violence produces loss and suffering so overwhelming to the victims. Instead of attempting to share their experiences with others, many slip into silence and attempt to leave the horrors behind. Others try to share their stories in the form of oral testimonies and written memoirs, a common way for Holocaust survivors, for instance, to frame and process their experiences. These issues are explored in depth in the selected novel.

Everyone who listens will hear a voice from outside saying, "O land! You, Ethiopia; How long will a few be having fun, and the many weeping; As pride reigns, Do you live in a world where injustice is rampant? When will you have a bloodless government and people!? ... When will you become a country where pride, deceit, openness, falsehood, truth, and truth leave their place of understanding, deceit, and the air of peace and freedom? Will there ever be a time when your mother's embrace will be equally warm for all your citizens!?" ... He began to speak again. Asefa, (2012E.C:96)

Post-traumatic stress disorder is the emotional, physical and mental changes that arouse long after having experienced or witnessed one single horrible event, being war combat, rape or natural

disaster. The symptoms that accompany the event are varied, but the suffering is the same. Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis. The damage to relational life is not a secondary effect of trauma. Herman (1992, 51)

Tafessu was treated at Dilla Hospital for two weeks, and she recovered from her depression. But she is lonely with psychological problems. She is crying. Asefa, (2012 E.C:278)

According to Bergson (2004, p. 129), Flashbacks are noisy, dangerous, painful intrusions from the past that arise from the tension between the desire to forget and the necessity of remembering. Time, 'homogenous time'- as prescribed by the linearity of which naturally erodes memory, is interrupted by the traumatic event, disturbing the integration of the past into a narrative, its assimilation into memory systems. Out of this conflict, of the body's re-ordering of time, the past returns repeatedly and intrusively through flashbacks in the form of auditory, visual and sensory hallucinations or dreams, sometimes precise, intensely clear and lifelike accompanied by a full spectrum of sensory and emotional associations, at other times fragmented and cloudy.

Each time the two met, the subject of their conversation was a broken love affair. They cry out in remembrance. They always tear. Their constant prayers are: May this land, may this land, may this Ethiopia, raise its hands to God so that He may declare His mercy to all the mourners, all the oppressed, the afflicted and the afflicted!! Asefa, (2012 E.C:278)

In the novel the consequences of war and exploitation leave a never ending pathos in the minds of the characters and an indelible mark of futility and meaninglessness which they would never be able to wash off. According to Caruth (1996:11) the scenes of savagery left the minds in a state of continuous shock, overwhelming individuals' ability to fully recover.

I came to this country under the same circumstances as you. What I did when I arrived was to kill people. I was also given the title of Fifty Chiefs for killing a man. I have killed many of my relatives. I'm sorry. I was rewarded with this prize. So, when I come to this country with such a heavy conscience, you have come to be healed, you have been wounded, you have come to help, you have been wounded, you have

come to heal, you have broken your conscience. Asefa, (2012 E.C:205)

As Caruth (1996) explains, the experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him, for example, who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares, is a central and recurring image of trauma in our century. Based on her explanation, as a consequence of the increasing occurrence of such perplexing war experiences and other catastrophic responses during the last twenty years, physicians and psychiatrists have begun to reshape their thinking about physical and mental experience, including most recently the responses to a wide variety of other experiences, such as rape, child abuse, auto and industrial accidents, and so on, that are now often understood in terms of the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. The conflict continues to have an impact on the characters' lives, both during the war and when the war was over. During the war, characters face death, hunger, pain and suffering. Even at the end of the conflict fears and memories linked to it return, forcing the characters to reflect upon what has happened.

4. Conclusion

Though the causes of their trauma vary characters in the novel *Unresolved Tears* are undergone in heartbreaking traumatic incidents. Especially, the mass atrocities due to famine and civil war are so horrifying. Unfortunately, people in this area are suffering from manmade starvation and war in this time too. In addition to this, accidents like car crash and burn accident are other traumatic events which cause collective trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder on many survivors and witnesses. In this novel, witnessing the trauma is other way of experiencing trauma which caused even death. As discussed in this article, Hewan lost her life witnessing the death of her fiancé, and her mother becomes paralyze after she saw the death of her daughter. In addition to these, substantial number of characters faced post-traumatic stress disorder in the aftermath of their traumatic experiences. Generally, the novel is so traumatic which reflected the life of considerable number of Ethiopians' experiences.

References

1. Abubakar, Sadiya. 2017. "Art as Narrative: Recounting Trauma through Literature." *IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences* (ISSN 2455-2267), 8(1), 118-123. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jmss.v8.n1.p13>
2. Alexander, Jeffrey. 2004. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." Pp. 1-30 in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by J. C. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. J. Smelser, and P. Sztopka. Berkeley: University of California Press.
3. Assefa, Bekele. 2012. "Unresolved Tears." Addis Ababa.
4. Caruth, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
5. Herman, Judith. 1992. "Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror." Basic Books.
6. Herman, Judith. 2014. "Trauma and Recovery". London: retrieved from <http://www.amazon.ca/Trauma-Recovery-AftermathViolencePolitical/>/: Accessed on 5th of February.
7. Rodi-Risberg, Marinella . 2010. "Writing Trauma, Writing Time and Space: Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres and the Lear Group of Father-Incest Narratives". (PhD dissertation), University of Vaasa.
8. Schönfelder, C. 2013 "Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic Fiction". Verlag, Bielefeld.
9. Ullah, Inayat. 2001. "War Trauma, History And Narrative: Analysis Of Selected Afghan Fiction In English." Air University, Islamabad .
10. Walker, Anna. 2014. *The Trauma of the flashback: Memory and its suffering negotiated through 'September', painting by Gerhard Richter*. Research Arts and Media, Plymouth University, UK.
11. Weine, M. 1996 "The Witnessing Imagination: Social Trauma Creative Artists. and Witnessing Professionalism." *Literature and Medicine* 15.2. pp. 167-182