

## Psychoanalytic Perspective of Trauma in John Barth's *The Development: Nine Stories*

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to investigate John Barth's *The Development* in the light of trauma theory. Traumatic events were firstly discussed in Freud's *Studies in Hysteria*, and then were revisited in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. They can have happened in the past life of a subject, can be unacceptable to their consciousness, and yet they can return in the form of compulsive and repetitive behaviors. Possible symptoms may be more the result of the subject's repressed desires than traumatic events. Moreover, traumas are not only the result of the subject's personal experience but the ramifications of the historical context and past environment to which the subject is bound. In Barth's *The Development: Nine Stories* the tales are narrated by aging people who struggle with forces around them which affect their lives. These forces compel a couple to a pact of spontaneous suicide. Loss, family, and social dysfunction are among the other outcomes of trauma which are satirised in a conspiratorial tone. Symbolised in *Heron Bay Estates*, the American society is depicted as a gated community that must come to terms with the illusions of safety and conspiracy, for they are not walled off traumas that lurk in their most private moments. Barth demonstrates that a gated community can never protect its members from possible traumas. An analysis of traumatic experiences should be considered along with the linguistic and non-linguistic means of representation through which an event is recollected because the event is reconstructed to reach equilibrium to comprehend the occurrence of the trauma. In the stories of *The Development* such verbal representations of temporality are enslaved to traumatic events. And this will explore how the narrative of a past history and temporality through traumatised subjects enable the representation of the hidden aspects both of history and the subconscious.*

*Keywords: inability to recall; detachment; betrayal; sense of loss; fear of loss*

### INTRODUCTION

Some unpleasant and violent parts of the human experience can be analysed in the light of trauma theory. Feeling the gravity of some historically disastrous events like the Holocaust and the two World Wars, many philosophers, psychologists, and medical doctors still find themselves concerned with trauma theory which is recently even more developed. The ramifications of these traumatic events (whether historical or the everyday-life ones) and the effects which they leave on the psyche have concerned even clinicians. Suleiman affirms that in the field of psychoanalysis the definitions of traumas are of great importance as well as their effects on memory (2008).

As a forbearer in this field, Herman defines trauma as an event which “overwhelm[s] the ordinary human adaptations to life ... Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death” (1992, p. 33). However, a more advanced stage of trauma would affect external stimuli also which in turn causes brain excitation. According to Suleiman,

When attacked in this way, the brain is not able to fully assimilate or "process" the event, and responds through various mechanisms such as psychological numbing, or shutting down of normal emotional responses. Some theorists also claim that in situations of extreme stress, a dissociation takes place: the subject "splits" off part of itself from the experience, producing "multiple personalities" in the process (2008, p. 276).

Following Suleiman's argument, we hypothesise that multiple personality disorder (MPD) indicated traumatic events even if the individual did not remember it. There are two tendencies among theoreticians of trauma theory. The first tendency includes the theories of pivotal figures like Herman and Bessel van der Kolk. It advocates that long-lasting and horrifying traumas leave the patients, both children and the adults, more willing not to remember the traumatic situations unless they consult therapists. For these theoreticians, for the patient to control the syndrome and then to recover from it, calling it back is essential. According to Herman,

the patient may not have full recall of the traumatic history and may initially deny such a history, ... If the therapist believes the patient is suffering from a traumatic syndrome, she should share this information fully with the patient. Knowledge is power. The traumatised person is often relieved simply to learn the true name of her condition. By ascertaining her diagnosis, she begins the process of mastery ... A conceptual framework that relates the patient's problems with identity and relationships to the trauma history provides a useful basis for formation of a therapeutic alliance. This framework both recognises the harmful nature of the abuse and provides a reasonable explanation for the patient's persistent difficulties (1997, pp. 157-158).

The second group of trauma theoreticians, who themselves comprise two parties, stress the concept of 'repressed memory'. One party goes against Freud's 1890s work on the abuses of sexuality specifically *The Aetiology of Hysteria*. These guys claim that in *The Aetiology* and elsewhere Freud has tried to impose on the reader his theory of repressed sexual abuse in children. "They not only blame Freud for imposing his own unjustified constructions on his early hysteric patients, but blame him for wanting to "cover up" his "crime" and inventing the Oedipus complex in the process" (Suleiman 2008, p. 279). The other party, who relies on thousands of empirical investigations, has done their experiments on animals and human subjects. Elizabeth Loftus and Richard McNally are pioneers of this tendency. Loftus has shown that people are prone to have the memories of events implanted in them (Suleiman 2008). This is much like the analysis Jonathan Culler (2001) provides on Freud's observation of *Oedipus the King*. Culler presents logic of signification that would force the subject to construct a certain manifestation of events of the past to meet the demands of a present meaning in a narrative (2001). This is to say that a trauma in a literary work could be considered a cause of narrative, and the subject might be prone to the implantation of memories that would show it in a post-traumatic state. Loftus and McNally suggest that people who believe that they are abducted by aliens are good examples of this delusional functioning, which is firmly held by subjects to be memories (Suleiman 2008). Though Culler and these two clinicians apply this concept in different ways, examining such delusional or meaning-producing functions can be fortuitous in a text. This is like the case of Wolfman that has been analyzed by Freud and revisited by Culler.

McNally believes that the memories of trauma cannot be easily dissociated or repressed (2005). This could mean that the victims might build and pile on memories that in reality had not happened in the traumatic experience, but it is the demand and the force of the trauma's violence that would force the victims to create those memories. Another possibility is that "victims can be entirely oblivious to the fact that they suffered extreme trauma, yet their bodies will keep the score... The body remembers even if the mind cannot" (McNally

2005, p. 818). Yet again, while the mind is oblivious and the body is not, the mind might create its own narrative of the traumatic experience. In case of sexual abuse (of which there is little represented in Barth's text) the victim might remember the Trauma horror if they were to happen after the age two. Additionally, the possibility that some victims would fabricate horrible memories can never be dismissed. Take the following statement from Suleiman,

I think it is important to understand that trauma is not only a drama of a past event, but also, even primarily, a drama of survival. This is emphasised in Robert Jay Lifton's works on survivors of Hiroshima, Vietnam, and the Holocaust. The survivor, Lifton writes, is "one who has encountered death but remained alive," and it is this remaining alive that leads to "psychological themes" that he associates with survival: the inability to move beyond indelible images of death, guilt about having survived while others died, psychic numbing, lack of trust in the world, and struggle for meaning (2008, p. 280).

In the postmodern era, trauma studies have to be continued even in more embracing ways. This is while the experience of our so far undertaken trauma studies, those conducted in the twentieth century in particular, will enhance the value of our studies. James Berger argues that trauma analysis "pays the closest attention to the representational means through which an event is remembered and yet retains the importance of the event itself, the thing that did happen. Thus, a concept of trauma can be of great value in the study of history and historical narrative, and also of narrative in general, as the verbal representation of temporality" (1997, p. 572). So, cultural and social impacts of an event can be investigated through this sort of narrative analysis. Traumatic events can also appear in everyday life of individuals and leave impact on their psychological condition. The present scholars guess that the increasing emphasis which the postmodern culture typically puts on decentering, fragmentation, alienation, the sublime, and the apocalyptic, makes this claim proper. In the current life, the psyche is exposed even to more traumatic events, while its complexity can lead to its additional fragmentation and alienation.

The Psyche may also feel being under control and observation by and external gaze. Before proceeding with the application of trauma theory in Barth's work, we will take time to explicate a Foucauldian notion in the light of which our article would become more elaborate and clear. Foucault argues that through a process of hailing or objectification, that is, on a social hierarchy of power, a set of norms and rules are encoded, internalised in the subject's consciousness (Bertens 2001). When subjectivity feels being under surveillance and hailed/objectified by authority, the security and order is supposed to be maintained. However, Barth tends to mock this sort of security and order; this also will be clarified in the present study.

### NARRATIVE THERAPEUTICS IN BARTH

Scholars often start reading John Barth with his short story collection *Lost in the Funhouse* that "contains a medley of postmodernist themes and techniques craftily designed and employed to address certain postmodernist issues" (Madahiian 2015, p. 225). Moreover, *The Floating Opera* (1956) is a major work in his oeuvre. Since his retirement (as a professor of creative writing) from Johns Hopkins University in the early 1990s, he published works such as: *Once Upon a Time: A Floating Opera* (1994) -- a "semi-novel semi-reminiscence", *Further Fridays: Essays, Lectures, and Other Nonfiction* (1995) -- a collection of essays, and *On with the Story: Stories* (1996). In addition, in his two seminal theoretical essays [*The Literature of Exhaustion* (1967), and *The Literature of Replenishment* (1984)], he clarified

the state of modern fiction in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as in a dead-end position and suggested new ways for its survival in the form of the postmodernist metafiction.

According to Klinkowitz, “having been told that because of realism’s eclipse the novel was dead, he felt compelled to challenge and hopefully reinvent conventions of fiction which in terms of the mainstream had been fairly stable since the days of Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Faulkner” (1991, p. 426). This concise yet to the point remark shows the pivotal role that Barth has come to assume in the canon of the postmodern fiction. In *The Literature of Exhaustion* he has attempted to articulate “an aesthetic for the making of new and valid work that is yet responsible to the exhaustive, even apocalyptic vastness of what has been done before” (1995, p. 169). Barth has maintained that “ultimacies in an artistic or cultural generation can become a considerable cultural-historical datum in themselves by a virtuoso to generate lively new work” (1995, p. 178). In *The Literature of Replenishment*, he argues that as a “true postmodernist” he has to keep “one foot... in the narrative past... and one foot in, one might say, the Parisian structuralist present” (1984, p. 204). His iconic style of writing metafiction has established him as a unique authorial figure in the realm of fiction. As Douglas (2012) observes, “...themes of lost innocence, belatedness, and the recycling of language are found in abundance in John Barth’s works” (p. 42). His playing/writing off the limits of language and the way it represents the distortions of a traumatised subjectivity would prove his style greatly significant. Barth is also loyal to a vogue that would allow him to consider the traditions of the past and include them in his style while having his innovative style vigorous and alive.

In *Postmodernism Revisited*, he claims that an “ideal Postmodernist author neither merely repudiates nor merely imitates either his twentieth-century Modernist parents or his nineteenth-century premodernist grandparents. He has the first half of our century under his belt, but not on his back” (1995, p. 120). This shows that Barth was concerned with the production of a new mode of fiction which would take root in the disadvantages of both the modernist and the Victorian story. So he came to take the notions of “exhaustion” and “ultimacies” not for the death of the modern fiction but for the starting-point of a renewed type of narrative which he called “metafiction”. For this purpose, he started to revise or synthesise the modern fiction into a new way of writing.

By developing a mode of writing which was highly introspective and self-referential, which would use, Klinkowitz says, “literary exhaustion as a device against itself” (1991, p. 428), Barth positions himself as a postmodernist of the center. He advocates a sort of ending or demise for fiction; and maintains a style of writing which is, according to a rudiment definition of metafiction, aware of its own fictionality. So, one can compare his standpoint with that of Jacques Derrida regarding literature. Derrida (1992) provokes a way of writing on fiction as a discourse which is capable of lending itself to almost all discourses without letting them appropriate its own liberality and freedom. Barth also maintains that Samuel Becket’s prose style is in close affinity with his own, since like his own style, Becket’s style challenges the limits of language. So far, both Barth and Derrida deem a degree of limitations for language and its problematic definition regarding the discourse of fiction. However, while Derridean views call for a great freedom, Barth writes in a way that emphasises the limits of language, shakes its foundation, and blurs its borders. Nonetheless, even at this seemingly contradictory point, one can realise that in the hand of Barth fiction is so highly free that it challenges even its own existence. As Derrida observes, if fiction is to acknowledge a total and utmost self-referentiality lending itself to other discourses, then the story would annul itself. This is where Barth could be seen as a distinctive postmodernist for his self-aware fiction maintains a denial of lending itself to other discourses but to its very own discourse; the storytelling’s discourse.

Examining Barth's texts, one realises that (his) language does not refer to the outside world, for it often refers to the world in the inside of language (this does not mean that his works are deprived of allegories of our world but is more of a hint to the language as a source of realities). Barth's characters, such as those in *Lost in the Funhouse*, try to build identities for themselves, but when they finally die in the dark, they find out that those identities are only metalingual mutterings (Barth 1968). Therefore, in his fiction the idea of language for the representation of the concrete reality outside language is radically dismissed for the production of a kind of literary language which is at the same time overtly self-referencing and purposefully metaphorical, enigmatic. Additionally, he often portrays worlds of narrative mimesis, not far from the worlds of Scheherazade, Odysseus, Nausicaa, Don Quixote, and Huckleberry Finn (Loes 1999). However, it seems that Barth's conception of 'post-modernism' is "awkward and faintly epigonic" also, because it suggests "less of a vigorous or even interesting new direction in the old art of storytelling than of something anticlimactic" (Barth 1984, p. 66). Yet we often see him searching for the inauguration of a fiction which mixes, in original ways, the elements of the modern and traditional literature. In Barth's fiction originality is a way to guarantee 'fictional vitality' an outcome of which is the reader's mental equipoise. Scholes (1970) says,

Originality in fiction, rightly understood, is the successful attempt to find new forms that are capable of tapping once again the sources of fictional vitality. Because, [...], both time and history "apparently" are real, it is only by being original that we can establish a harmonious relationship with the origins of our being (p. 101).

A collection of nine short stories, *The Development* portrays the life of a community of American elderlies most of whom are retired. These fellows, who come from different sects of the society, have so far challenged numerous adversities in their lives. To dramatise the interconnection of the lives of these fellows, we believe Barth has created a proper storyworld. Ergo, while in many occasions the author admits that his present work is only fiction, his text offers many allegorical references to the contemporary history of the United States. For example, take "Assisted Living" in which there is an allusion to the Great Depression, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, and to the contemporary catastrophes. In the stories of this collection, Barth's style is proper to his narrative purpose which is the portraiture of a psychologically disturbed mind. In his hands, various verbal structures (words, phrases, and sentences for example) automatically fall in their proper places and are categorically well productive. He also takes use of further techniques in his prose which makes it into a proper space for the illustration of a complex yet troubled mentality like that of Tim Manning. Among these techniques are dashing, hyphenation, the far-fetched expression, and the periodic and parenthetical sentence structure. Notwithstanding, it seems that a more befitting technique in Barth's hand to represent Tim Manning's mental world is indirection a model of which is the stream of consciousness. In a big portion of his text, he takes use of no linguistic sign to indicate a borderline between a narrative block including a stream of consciousness and other blocks including no stream. Take the example below.

Don't ask T. M. how things went from there. Death is, after all, a not-unusual event in elder-care establishments, whose staff will likely be more familiar with His visitations than will the visited. As it happens, neither Tim nor for that matter Margie had had any prior Death Management experience: Their respective parents' last days, funeral arrangements, and estate disposition had been handled by older siblings, whose own life closures were then overseen by competent grown offspring who lived nearby and shared their parents' lives (Barth, p. 138).

Over all, Barth's prose style shows perhaps a radical deviation from what was normal in his life period, and his style proves very challenging for the reader. However, his style is

proper for the representation of his characters that are typically collapsed and troubled in mind. The structure and composition of Barth's stories serve for Tim Manning to be portrayed as a forgetful, traumatised, retired teacher. Barth's descriptions show the halves of Tim's self so deeply split that it is far from obvious that they are the sections of a same man.

#### DARK HUMOR VS TRAUMA IN *THE DEVELOPMENT*

*The Development* is the story of a closed-gate residential complex (Oyster Cove community) in a time period roughly from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the initial years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The residents of this complex, majorly middle-aged and retired, have been facing various conflicts for some years. It opens with *Peeping Tom*, which from the very beginning, the reader may realise as a clever yet gloomy witticism.

Barth's collection begins with "DON'T ASK ME..." (Barth 2008, p. 1). This sort of addressing is not just an initial showing up. In a narrative, which sometimes emphasises different aspects of a real-state business, the reader may witness several subjects dealing with unpleasant events. Such events may culminate in their sense of loneliness, helplessness, violation, death, frustration, etc. Victims of traumatic events may try to muster all their faculties to make new accounts of those events. However, it is possible that some of these accounts, like the case of the Wolf Man in Culler's *The Pursuit of Signs* (1981), take no root in their past lives. Nonetheless, these accounts can give us a close understanding of Barth's stories in *The Development*. The fragmentation of subjectivity might be reflected in such accounts.

However, the dark humor of *The Development* does not cause its author to neglect the American culture. For example, his text shows the horror the 9/11 attack has left on the American society. Since the attack, American life and culture have been observed more closely, and the people have been under covert surveillance. In this story collection, a number of families live in a closed community to remain safe from the usual threats of the world outside it. But it is perceptible that the residents of this community feel insecurity in their own ways. They face problems like financial concerns, health quandaries, sense of loneliness, and no belongingness. While we cannot affirm that they are the immediate ramifications of the 9/11 catastrophe, we believe that their bitter memories could boost the state of traumatic experiences in the reading of Barth's metafictional text. As Barth (2008) observes, the bloody war and events do impact the lives of the ordinary people in America even if they are far from it, and yet the 9/11 attack brought the war to their doorsteps,

And some fifteen years later here they are, happy with each other and grateful to have been spared not only direct involvement in the nation's several bloody wars during their life-decades, but also such personal catastrophes as loss of children, untimely death of parents or siblings, and devastating accident, disease, or other extraordinary misfortune. [...] and their leisure activities: hiking, wintertime workouts in the Heron Bay Club's well-equipped fitness center and summertime swimming in its Olympic-size pool, vacation travel to other countries back in more U.S.-friendly times, and here and there in North America since 9/11 and (in Gerald Frank's Frank Opinion) the Bush administration's Iraq War fiasco (U.S./"Them"?). Also their, uh ... friends? (p. 118).

Barth's own commentaries on exhaustion and the consequential idea of replenishment, make his writings almost untouched by postmodernist critical apparatuses. The way he has depicted and portrayed the catastrophic events of 9/11 and its subsequent wars and violent events, however, can make a link between his elusive metafiction and the history/ideology of his time. Once promising and triumphant liberal nation at the threshold of a new millennium, suddenly would face a set of cataclysmic attacks that could set it on a track of war and violence. The consistent prosperity and triumph (or allusions of such things) are questioned by

subjectivities of Barth's narrative in his novella. The gated community in *The Development* and its residents could symbolise the insecurity and distress that the American nation has suffered during and since the events of 2001.

Sielke (2010) avers that "The term trauma thus offered one meaning to the events of 11 September 2001 while at the same time resisting closure and suggesting that we will have to repeatedly return to the ruins of Ground Zero" (p. 404). Return to Ground Zero is perhaps the main phase of the 9/11 attack interpretations. "Speaking on behalf of the classic ontology, an event is what exists out of the text giving the text its sense of historicity" (Hooti & Ghaderi 2015, p. 86). Derrida revisits the notion of event as something that eludes to be captured by media and thus escapes the rigidity of historicity (Wortham 2010). However, creating a narrative discourse to represent the impact of such massive catastrophes could result in new interpretive horizons. Instead of disclosing an event or reducing it to a mere statement, we will revisit the event and its ramifications to learn about subjecthood. At the end of Barth's *The Development*, we realise that the story faces a 'Rebeginning'. This could metaphorise a constant flow of narrative that does not easily give itself to a certain closure or reference.

Barth's aforementioned statements also imply that his characters' transformations during their lifetimes are significant too. He portrays their transformations in a narrative mode which is threatened by traumatic experiences of loss, death, violation of privacy, etc. Commenting on Lorde's poetry, Obourn (2005) agrees that,

Lorde can produce "transformational" or at least alternative language, particularly in the midst of an ever-strengthening hegemonic discourse of US liberal multiculturalism, I argue that it is the formal qualities of Lorde's poems and their use of what I define below as a "traumatic" aesthetics that can be truly transformational by allowing readers to become aware of the limitations of dominant liberal multicultural discourse and its ways of representing identity and subjecthood (p. 220).

It is a commentary on the aesthetics of an alternative language of transformation. However, Barth's text often renders narrative capacities to develop a transformational mode of communication that can challenge the so called unities in the history of the American society as a liberal multiculturalism. He is "able to linguistically represent something which can no longer or not yet be contained within the historical unities or narrative continuities through which [US] society proposes to define itself" (Obourn 2005, p. 220).

The technique of unreliable narrator(s) which Barth uses for storytelling in *The Development* is in harmony with his characters that are often inconsistent in their identities and communications. However, his narrator's unreliability does not necessarily mean that his text is unreliable also. (In Ian McEwan's *Attonement*, Briony Tallis's narrative is unreliable, but McEwan's text is surely clean of unreliability). On the other hand, the unreliability of Barth's narrator(s) could result in an unreliable work that would not disclose its secrets and ambiguities, while it also could render the inconsistencies of self and identity (particularly of those characters that have been exposed to traumatic events).

In his work, Barth cunningly refers to the idea of surveillance in a society which is already facing many violent events. *Peeping Tom* reads,

Maybe our CIA/FBI types have found ways to eavesdrop on any citizen's scribbling? Or maybe some supershrewd hacker has turned himself into a Listening Tom, the electronic equivalent of Oyster Cove's peeper, even when I'm talking to myself (Barth 2008, p. 1).

The idea of being under covert surveillance pervades Barth's story. For example, to reserve the complex from probable crimes and the experience of their traumatic outcomes, they have arranged for it to be gated and closed. However, the possibility of crime, including

even the pervert and sexual crime is serious in the complex. So, the people there want it really closed to the outside world.

Politically, we're split about evenly between the two major parties. No Asian or African American among us yet—not because they're officially excluded (as they would have been fifty years ago, and popular though the adjective "exclusive" remains with outfits like TCI); perhaps because any in those categories with both the means and the inclination to buy into a gated community prefer not to be ethnic-diversity pioneers on the mostly rural and not-all-that-cosmopolitan Eastern Shore (Barth 2008, p. 4).

Although the residents take up an exhaustive care for their security, they are invaded perhaps by a perversely sexual predator that would peep through their windows and demolishes their privacy. It will be revealed that peeping Tom is for a high possibility a member of the community itself. However, a more significant idea is that the first horrifying encounter of this Peeping Tom is the outcome of a repetitious latent fear which appears again and again in the text even though only its first encounter is real but its further encounters are reconstructions of an experience which does not really happen. The fear of losing control over their privacy is the reason for the recurrent Peeping Tom's incidents. They make such great provisions for the impenetrability of their residence, so if their security fails, they will be frustrated. A supposition is often encoded in the subjects that if a system of surveillance should ever fail, they will be in greeting peril. On the other hand, this Peeping Tom's deeds are represented as a latent desire existing in certain subjects in the complex. Berger observes that in Freud's studies such repressed desires and repetitious behaviors are fully functional: "This initial theory of trauma and symptom became problematic for Freud when he concluded that neurotic symptoms were more often the result of repressed drives and desires than of traumatic events (1997, p. 572).

Returning to Culler's "logic of signification," it is noteworthy to claim that the subjects in Barth's text are the self-alleged victims of an absurd sexual crime. So, his clever humor lies in the choice of a low and absurd crime as the concern of the members of this gated community where we see them attempting to reconstruct a set of experiences for meeting the demands of their narratives as to the crime. Even Tim Manning, the story's narrator, whose wife is the victim of Peeping Tom's penetrative conducts, constantly questions the past to reconstruct an acceptable account of the event. However, the other fellows in his neighborhood feel that a sensation is being imported to their mind which makes them react to the fear that the real event has caused.

Fear acts out in the other pieces of Barth's collection as well. Perhaps the best example for it comes in *Toga Party* where fear is that of loss. Dick and Susan Felton, the couple we see in a party, realise the aftermath of the loss of another guest, Sam, as he has lost his wife and is dealing with a psychotic upheaval in his personal life. Investigating a sense of loss and absence in large-scale traumas, Dominick LaCapra (1999) says:

I would situate the type of absence in which I am especially (but not exclusively) interested on a transhistorical level, while situating loss on a historical level. In this transhistorical sense absence is not an event and does not imply tenses (past, present, or future). By contrast, the historical past is the scene of losses that may be narrated as well as of specific possibilities that may conceivably be reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed in the present or future. The past is misperceived in terms of sheer absence or utter annihilation. Something of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence or revenant (p. 700).

This is an observation on the scale of a vast magnitude. However, the substantial consequences (of sense and fear of loss and absence) are fairly applicable to personal and everyday lives of individuals. Sue and Dick see how Sam copes with his loss through reactivation and representation of the event.

"You're excused. But *go*, for Christ's sake. Or Jove's sake, whoever's." Thumbing his shrunken chest, "I'm going, goddamn it, even though the twenty-fourth is the first anniversary of Ethel's death. I promised her and the kids that I'd try to maintain the status quo as best I could for at least a year—no major changes, one foot in front of the other, et cetera—and then we'd see what we'd see. So I'm going for her sake as much as mine. There're two more passwords for you, by the way: *status quo* and *et cetera*" (Barth, 2008, pp. 33-34).

This compelling situation of Sam forces Dick to find a way to prevent it from becoming a misery or pain for himself or Sue. As a fear of loss, it is latent in the couple, and Sam's behavior just triggers its activation. Their spontaneous decision to commit self-destruction is their way out of a future predicament that is the loss of their beloved. In Barth's narrative, this sort of death creates a certain logic of signification. Death is the factor that can meet the demands of Barth's characters to avoid a sense of loss in the future.

Tim Manning is the narrator of *Peeping Tom* as well as *Assisted Living*. In the latter case, we see him dealing with a situation that Dick and Sue would have had had they not committed suicide. Margie, Tim's "better two-third," is dead, and the narrator is left behind to cope with it. Both the narrative's stylistics and its plot's confusing progression support the inference that the trauma has caused Tim's consciousness to become fragmented. Thus, in the recent years of his life we see him having undergone many troubles. For example, as to cooperation with his wife, his experiences are inconvenient.

"Well, for starters: In a way, he supposes, "T.M." is replacing (as best he can't) irreplaceable Margie as Tim Manning's living-assistant. In the forty-nine and eleven-twelfths years of their married life, she and he constantly assisted each other with everything from changing their babies' diapers to changing jobs, habitations, outworn habits, and ill-considered opinions as their time went by" (Barth 2008, p. 132).

After Margie's death, T. M. becomes Tim Manning's life assistant. So, it gets obvious that Tim Manning's self is split in two: T. M. and "I". The latter composes a story that finally indicates Tim Manning's death. In the closing lines of it, he desperately tries to find a way to kill himself or become free from the awful post-traumatic consequences. In a dark humor, he searches for his salvation on the keyboard of his computer. This commentary can support a previous claim also: that the sense of loss may appear in the past, present, and future of a subject when he tries to reconstruct the event, counterfeit memories that explain it, and question him/herself to get a psychical balance.

The last sort of traumatic mark in Barth's text which the present paper takes to analyze is betrayal. According to Herman (1997), when a traumatic event involves the betrayal of a relationship, the survivor's faith and sense of community are severely damaged. The manifestation of such an event often crystallises around a moment of betrayal. This breach of trust gives the intrusive images their intense emotional power. Joe Barnes in *Teardown* holds a secret relationship with his office colleague Jean Weston while his wife Judy is totally unaware of the betrayal. Around the end of the story, the narrator considers several possibilities of how the story can end regarding the matter of betrayal. Joe can return to his family relationship or succumb to his desires. The latter will bring about a secret betrayal relationship with Jean, a confession of the crime to Judy by Joe, and the disastrous ending that would bring a break in Judy's faith (Barth 2008).

## CONCLUSION

In *The Development: Nine Stories*, John Barth provides a delicately arranged taxonomy of the traumatic experiences of the modern life in an American gated community. The

individuals the author has represented in his stories, have undergone different sorts of awful experiences in their lives including a fear of sexual abuse, a sense of loss, and a betrayal. Moreover, Barth's socio-politico-financial contexts, which he describes in details, serve to elaborate the relationship between his characters and their surroundings.

However, for laying the origins of the modern man's psychological disturbance, Barth needs no supernatural or meta-human reasons, for he uses the contemporary life contexts and problems to represent how the American individual is traumatised in the clutches of modernity. In addition, although his deviation from the conventions of the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century prose fiction like plotting, characterization, and mind representation proves radically challenging, but it is closer to the state of the modern troubled mind collapsing in trauma.

Violent events are among the sources of the symptoms in the modern society, while the impact of such events is often tangible in man's personal life also. On the psyche of the modern man, trauma leaves marks of unbearable misery. Through the use of well-wrought descriptions, Barth's fiction examines the causes and consequences of such traumatic events like a sense of loss and a betrayal. His creative and theoretical works on metafiction are part of the postmodern literature both in knowledge and aesthetics. He not only investigates to offer new ways of writing fiction in the postmodern era, he also dramatises the perils of the postmodern consciousness under the impact of the modern maladies.

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