Trauma: Research And Study Development

When we say trauma, we usually imagine some negative experience affecting a mental state. It is more or less an emotional response which usually occurs when people experienced violence, abuse, neglect, disaster, or any form of trauma, and what they had to go through has a strong effect on how they view the world, health, and behaviour. Each person has a different way of how to deal with the trauma. And if we want to help them as best we can, to move on with their lives, we should find out not what’s wrong, but what happened? Trauma can be considered a nearly versatile experience of people struggling with their health and mental conditions, because even when multiple people are affected by the same event, it has a dissimilar impact on each of them and each of them deals with it differently. Some try to understand their emotions and responses to help them cope, others choose to write about it, they seek a psychologist and so on. Throughout our history there were many cases causing trauma but among these also major events causing a great deal of trauma.

One of these major events when trauma was studied more deeply was during WWI, because till that time it was the most brutal and worldwide conflict in the history. Many people were affected by this event and events in between. One particular phenomenon occurred during this time. The doctors call it a shell shock. As the name suggests, it was concerning people who were exposed to a great amount of shells exploding around them. The consequence of this resulted in people being constantly afraid, terrified, not knowing whether the next explosion will be the mortal one. Everyone was affected no matter their nationality. Doctors believed at first, that these affected people were just crazy, fitted to be put in an asylum, but deeper studies showed they were not demented, but suffering from traumatic events caused by the war. Those who survived had it very hard to get back to the normal life they had before the war, often ending up in hospitals with special care, became homeless and so on.

Another big event where trauma has taken its toll was during the Vietnam war. This especially affected American soldiers returning from the war. The Vietnam war was one of the major defeats the U.S. suffered because they did not have entangled support, not much understanding of the invasion and battle, nor an unambiguous direction and auspicious outcome like in wars before. They were simply not prepared to wage a war there, marching into an unknown territory with different climate. Many soldiers were oblivious what and why they fight and in the end all these factors contributed to their downfall. Again when the war ended, just like any other war, the returning soldiers found themselves struggling to live a normal life after they arrival back to America.

Nowadays many people still suffer from trauma, just the causes are different such as difficult childhood, divorce, bulling, abuse, violence and more. These causes are not the trauma, they just create it inside us. We can observe this in books these days, people write more about today's problems as mentioned above. We will scarcely see people to write about war, its effects and such like in the past. Classic wars from the past are diminishing and in their stead there is a new type of warfare called terrorism, changing quite a few things including traumatic events. We could say that 11th September 2001 was the beginning of terrorism and an event that shook the world.

For people in New York, 9/11 was a potent experience affecting both their physical and mental state. They saw everything: people to die, their bodies falling down from the buildings, the buildings collapsing, chaos, fire and rubble everywhere. For the first time something like this happened on American soil, people did not know what to think, expect and do. It happened so fast and all on sudden. This event shook the entire nation - both people present in New York at that time and those watching or hearing about it in TV and radio.

Even in the following months, New Yorkers remained in a fear from another threats, attacks and the lingering trauma. People affected by this traumatic event sought all kinds of help to overcome this horrific experience they received that day and to self-heal.

We can understand the literature that deals with trauma as a means for people to recover from their trauma. As mentioned before each person has a different way of dealing with trauma. Some people manage to recover some not. Some of the books are addressing the subject either by a structure or story. These books examine how those who survived utilize and communicate a pain they have and how often their stories go unheard by others, or are conveniently forgotten. But trauma is pertinacious; it is anchored in our lives and in the structures of our society. It subsists everywhere and it does not relegate simply because we give way not to see it. Trauma affects everyone, both the offenders and the victims, the consciously blind or the ones seeing very veritable ghosts.

The two novels I have chosen both describe deal with trauma in their own special way. Wendell Berry describes his experience and thoughts in his book, which is divided into three essays, while Ken Kalfus expresses himself through fictional story and characters set during this event. To Berry the catastrophe of September 11th was kind of ultimate horror, the idea of people in a passenger plane being thrown into a building to destroy it was frightening. Berry wrote In the Presence of Fear in order to collect his thoughts and make as much sense as possible. That seems to be the proper antidote to fear, to dig in and make as much sense as possible, that was the reason for writing it, because Berry was badly scared for a good many reasons, chiefly scared about what people are doing to the country itself although what is happening to the nation seems sufficiently frightening. People believed in a homeland security but were proven wrong. There are quite a few books regarding 9/11, but not many are satiric like A Disorder Peculiar to the Country. It may seem bold to write about 9/11 few years after the event and especially when the book is also satiric, but in my opinion it was deliberate, because people need all kinds of literary approaches. Moreover, the novel is about a married couple and we would normally expect, Marshall and Joyce would be happy to see each other alive, but they are actually disappointed by the other one's survival. The couple experiences extravagant in curiously odd personal, and more and more derisory ways. We may see in their soaring conflict as a sort of metaphor for the worldwide political situation - Joyce fighting Marshall and America fighting terrorism.