
**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in David Lindsay-Abaire's
Rabbit Hole : A Psychoanalytic Study**

Submitted by

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Abstract

This research will give an introduction to the history of the psychoanalysis theory , how it started and it's different definitions .It will also include the Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud's main ideas about the psychoanalysis theory as well as the ideas of other important psychoanalysts who contributed to the psychoanalysis theory , such as Carl Gustav Jung and Jacques Lacan theories . The goal of this research is to apply Glenn R. Schiraldi's theory about Post traumatic Stress Disorder ,which he discusses in his book *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook: A Guide to Healing, Recovery & Growth* on the pulitzer prize winning play *Rabbit hole* which is written by David Lindsay-Abaire in 2006 . The research will analyze all the different elements of the play such as the settings , plot , technique , characters , theme and dialogue using the psychoanalysis's theory approach .In order to explore the psychoanalyst elements in the play .

Key words : Psychoanalysis – PTSD – Pain – Trauma – Freud – *Rabbit Hole*.

Introduction

The psychoanalysis theory is definitely one of the most interesting theories ever used in literature . Since it probably has the deepest connection to the human's mind and heart . Psychoanalysis was first used as a method of psychological therapy in the early 20th century by its pioneer Sigmund Freud . After using it in the medical field for a long time , Freud found out that Psychoanalysis could be used and help in a lot of other fields related to the human's mind and activities such as mythology , religion , art and finally literature . However , the relationship between Psychoanalysis and Literature has been beneficial for both , as Psychoanalysis used Literature to explain complicated Psychological concepts while Literature used Psychoanalysis as a way of interpretation to its characters , themes and techniques and even sometimes the character of the author himself . Psychoanalytic criticism mainly deals with literature as an expression in a fictional form , an expression of the humans state of mind and structure of personality .The whole concept of Psychoanalysis is centered around the existence of something called "The Unconscious Mind " which determines people's actions directly or indirectly . According to Monte (1977), "Psychoanalytic theories assume the existence of unconscious internal states that motivate an individual's overt actions" (Beneath the Mask, 8) .

There are various definitions for the theory such as Deborah Posner's definition

"Psychoanalytic theory is an approach to understanding the human psyche, and the treatment of psychological disturbances." (Posner 117)

Which means that Psychoanalytic is unlike other theories of Literature which aims to explain the literary context only , Psychoanalytic aims to understand the human mind itself and help in treating it of all of its different illnesses .

And according to Michael Delahoyde :

" Psychoanalytic criticism adopts the methods of "reading" employed by Freud and later theorists to interpret texts. It argues that literary texts, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, that a literary

work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses. One may psychoanalyze a particular character within a literary work, but it is usually assumed that all such characters are projections of the author's psyche.”(*Psychoanalytic Criticism* , <https://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/psycho.crit.html>)

Delahoyde further explains Freud’s method of reading , which suggests that literary works aren’t just plain texts without any emotions or thoughts and unrelated to the author . In fact , it could be quite the opposite , it could be a reflection of author’s personality , mind , thoughts , hopes and emotions all manifested in the characters and events of the literary work . And that shows why Psychoanalysis criticism is one of the most unique and deep styles of criticism .

Another important definition is Mahroof Hossain’s definition :

“Psychoanalysis is one of the modern theories that are used in English literature. It is a theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality that guides psychoanalysis.”(Hossain 1) Which shows the importance of psychoanalysis on shaping the personality of the human . Hossain further explains the importance of Psychoanalysis by saying :

“ Psychoanalysis has been seen as a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders ‘by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the minds’. Psychoanalysis examines the articulation of our most private anxieties and meanings to culture and gives us a perspective on them as cultural formations.”(Hossain 3)

Psychoanalysis method of treating mental disorders is examining the connection between the unconscious part of the mind (the uncontrollable part) and the conscious part (the controllable one) , and by exploring this relationship and understanding it , the process of healing becomes stronger and more effective .

Another important aspect of Psychoanalysis is it’s relation to culture and society .

Psychoanalysis theorists argue that our culture and society play a crucial role in shaping our personality , mind and thoughts . In fact , the society and culture themselves sometimes can cause mental disorders by putting excessive pressure on the human being to be in a specific (usually ideal) shape or else the person will face cruel rejection . They also argue that understanding the different aspects of the society and culture of the patient helps a lot in the treatment .

The pioneer and most important character in the development of the psychoanalysis theory is Sigmund Freud . “Sigmund Freud, (born May 6, 1856, Freiberg, Moravia, Austrian Empire [now Příbor, Czech Republic]—died September 23, 1939, London, England), Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis.” (Sigmund Freud | Biography, Theories, Works, & Facts | Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sigmund-Freud>) Sigmund Freud changed the way the world sees the human psyche . “His creation of psychoanalysis was at once a theory of the human psyche, a therapy for the relief of its ills, and an optic for the interpretation of culture and society.” (Sigmund Freud | Biography, Theories, Works, & Facts | Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sigmund-Freud>)

Freud’s creating the Psychoanalysis theory was revolutionary , it helped the humans understand more about their mental health issues and realize that mental diseases are as important and necessary to treat as physical diseases . Freud started his career as a medical man in the field of psychotherapy .He loved his job , and he kept studying and treating patients in his clinic for a long time . The more time he spent in his medical career , the more interested he became in mental diseases and it’s causes and in the psychology of the human , specially the psychology of the unconscious human mind . Which later on , became the basis of his psychoanalytic theory . Freud presented his ideas about the unconscious mind for the first time in his famous book *The interpretation of dreams (1899)* . It is also suggested that Freud came up with his theory from studying the dreams of his patients , since the dreams are considered a manifestation of the humans deepest desires , whether

they are good ,bad , healthy , logical or illogical desires . The relation between the dreams and the unconscious mind is the fact that the dreams contain elements of the unconscious , elements that the normal conscious mind isn't aware of .

Freud in his theory has divided the mind into three different regions , each of them represents a different part of the human . The first region is called the ID , ID is the primitive version of the human mind , it seeks pleasure and gratification from instinctual needs . Instinctual needs are natural needs such as thirst ,hunger and sex . ID is basically the unconscious part of the mind which acts based on instincts only , without considering what is right and what is wrong . The second region is the Super –Ego , The Super – Ego is basically the cultural and social values that the human learns throughout his life , It acts as an ethical constraint to keep the human's actions and thoughts on check .The third and probably most important region is the Ego , the Ego is the conscious and logical version of the mind , it acts as a mediator between the primitive instinctual part of the mind (The ID) and the civilized educated part of the mind (Super –Ego) .Which means it balances the demands of the ID and the Super –Ego in real life situations . Basically the Ego's job is to give the ID the pleasure it needs , in a proper and legal way so it doesn't break the rules implied by the Super – Ego .

Another important part of the Freudian theory is The Oedipus complex

Sigmund Freud first introduced this term in his famous book *The interpretation of dreams* according to Freud “the concept is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex, which produces a sense of competition with the parent of the same sex and a crucial stage in the normal developmental process” (Freud 1913) . To understand Freud's concept better , it is a must to know it's origin which is the Greek Myth of Oedipus .Oedipus was the son of King Liaus , King of Thebes but he has been sent to another country when he was a child and didn't get

to know his father and mother . After a long time , Oedipus became a strong warrior and lead an army against his home country Thebes , Oedipus not recognizing either of his parents defeated his father in battle and killed him , then married his mother .According to the myth and people of that time , what happened was a coincidence set up by fate . However Freud had another view of that story , he believed that the real cause of what happened is the sexual complexity between Oedipus and his mother . Based on that he invented the term “Oedipus Complex “ which he attributed to the children of age three to age five .Freud believes that the human behavior as a whole is motivated by sex or by instincts , which in his opinion represent the human’s physical needs . Freud referred to those instincts with another term which is life instincts , and he divided them into two , first the urge to find food and water and second the urge to have sex and the goal of those instincts is to ensure the survival of the human race . The clinical experience Freud gained , led him to view sex as a much more important instinct than the others .

The unconscious mind is definitely one of the most important parts of the Freudian theory , in fact it might be the base of the theory itself . “The unconscious is that part of the mind that lies outside the somewhat vague and porous boundaries of consciousness and is constructed in part by the repression of that which is too painful to remain in consciousness.” (Hossain 3)

Which means that the unconscious is the dark , unwanted and fearsome part of the mind which is caged or locked away in order to protect the human from what is inside it . Which most likely will cause pain ,suffering and troublesome behavior to the human . According to Freud , the unconscious mind is governed by a set of rules called “Laws of Transformation” , which are responsible for the process of repression and sublimation .Basically the unconscious mind’s job is to form a strong and clear relationship between the childhood experiences and the adult behavior . In order for the child to have that healthy relationship , both the child and his parents must be responsive to the interests and needs of each other .

Freud contributed to psychoanalysis with a lot of books expanding and explaining his ideas . Some of his important books are *The Interpretation of Dreams*(1899) , *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*(1904) , *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) , *The Ego and the Id* (1923) and finally *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940) .

After Freud a lot of new researchers came into the field of psychoanalysis , some of them supported Freud's ideas and theories and tried to further explain it , out of those researchers is the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan . On the other hand They were researchers who refused Freud's ideas and criticized it . Such as the famous psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung. Jacques Lacan supported Freud's theory about the Pre-Oedipal stage .The Pre-Oedipal stage , is the stage in which the child have no clear distinction between himself and the external world . According to Lacan , the child in this stage lives symbiotically with the mother's body and doesn't have any recognition of himself . Lacan refers to the stage that follows this stage as the "Mirror Stage " , it is the stage where the child begins to differentiate between himself and the external world , and where he starts to grow a sense of himself .It is also the stage where he starts his language acquisition and pronouncing his first words . Through out his life Lacan has published a lot of books , He was most known for his series of books "The Seminar" Which consists of 22 books , in addition to his famous book *Feminine Sexuality* (1983).

Carl Gustav Jung theories made a huge impact on the psychoanalysis field , specially his theory about the collective unconscious and the individuation process . According to Jung , all the human beings from all different eras and places are connected through what he calls " The collective unconscious" . Jung studies of mythology led him to believe that every human forms his own unconscious through the collective unconscious that all the humans share . And that is why , a lot of humans share the same fears from specific things such as heights and insects.

However Jung believes as well that , there is a way for every human to form his own unique conscious through what he calls “the individuation process” , which is the process of forming one’s own unconscious through comparing it to various archetypes . The first one is called The shadow which represents the unknown or unacceptable ,the second is the Persona which is the human’s public self image .The third and fourth are the Animus and Anima which are sexual counterparts that the human need to form a healthy gender identity .Jung suggests that the Ego should compare itself to those personalities , during the individuation process in order to attain it’s autonomy . The goal of this process is to integrate the different psychic parts into a total one called Self. Which means that by the end of this process , a grown and healthy unconscious will be formed .

Jung’s most important works are : *Psychology of the Unconscious*(1912) , *Psychological Types*(1921) and *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944) .

One of the most important branches of psychoanalysis is the Post Traumatic stress disorder . A lot of psychoanalysts studied PTSD and explained it in their own way , however this research will focus on one of the most outstanding psychoanalysts who fully explained PTSD , it’s symptoms and even it’s cure . This psychoanalyst is Glenn R. Schiraldi . “ he has served on the stress management faculties at the Pentagon, the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, and the University of Maryland, where he received the Outstanding Teaching Award and other teaching/service awards in the School of Public Health.” (BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, [Biography | Resilience Training International \(resiliencefirst.com\)](https://www.resiliencefirst.com/biography))

Through out his life ,Glenn wrote a lot of books and articles on various topics .But the most important ones are his 14 books on stress-related topics which have been translated into sixteen foreign languages . One of those books is *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook: A Guide to Healing, Recovery & Growth*

Which fully explain everything about PTSD and helps people with PTSD specifically and it also teaches people who have PTSD patients (like their family

and friends) how to deal properly with them . According to Glenn the cause of PTSD is : “Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) results from exposure to an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, such as war, rape, or abuse. It is a normal response by normal people to an abnormal situation.” (Schiraldi 3)

Glenn believes that the traumatic events people face are extraordinary or severe to the point that it will break almost any human . and therefore , people should never undermine the pain people with PTSD have , because only people who have experienced the trauma itself or a similar one can get a taste of that intense pain . There are a lot of different causes for trauma such as Intentional human actions like robbery , rape and torture ,Unintentional human actions like car accidents and nuclear disasters and finally Acts of nature like Hurricanes , Earth quakes and the sudden death of a loved one . There are a lot of symptoms for PTSD such as Anxiety ,Dissociation and finally Avoidance and Numbing . According to Glenn “anxiety is essentially worrisome thoughts plus excessive emotional and physical arousal.”(Schiraldi 13) Which is a completely reasonable symptom to have , since the traumatic person lives in constant fear and worry , he/she will always be afraid of the repetition of the traumatic event . Dissociation is one of the most dangerous symptoms of PTSD , since it can lead to a number of different mental illnesses , it is basically what happens when the traumatic memory separates itself from other memories and creates a space of it’s own called “Dissociated Traumatic Memory Material” . The dissociated memory will always be a nuisance to the patient, since it will keep causing pain ,fear and anxiety over time, unless it is processed and reintegrated into the normal memory .One of the most important and noticeable symptoms of PTSD is Avoidance and Numbing , Glenn states that : “people with PTSD desperately try to avoid all reminders of the trauma. They might refuse to talk about it. They might block from their mind thoughts, images, or feelings about the event. They might avoid activities, places, people, or keepsakes that arouse recollections.” (Schiraldi 10) which is a completely understandable symptom , as people with PTSD will always try to run away from the traumatic memory to avoid their pain.

Some of them turn to drugs and overwork , others try to pretend that the trauma never happened and live in a fantasy world and there are even people who shutdown their feelings completely ! The focus of this research will be on applying Glenn R. Schiraldi' s PTSD theory and ideas on the award winning play *Rabbit's hole* which is written by the famous playwright David Lindsay-Abaire .

David Lindsay-Abaire is an American screenwriter, playwright and lyricist . He was born on 30th of November 1969 in Boston ,Massachusetts ,United states of America . He earned his first degree on Drama from Sarah Lawrence College in 1992 . Later on , he was accepted into the famous American Playwrights program Lila Acheson Wallace at the Juilliard School . David Lindsay-Abaire is considered one of the most successful American playwrights in the modern age . Because of the huge number of prizes and nominations his plays and musical books have earned . Lindsay-Abaire's play *Good people* was awarded The Horton Foote Prize, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play , The Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award and finally Two Tony nominations . Lindsay-Abaire was also named by TCG as the most produced playwright in America for the 2012/2013 season and his play *Good people* as the most produced play . Lindsay-Abaire also wrote the lyrics for the famous musical book *Shrek the musical* which was nominated for A Grammy , Four Oliviers and Eight Tonys , it was also the reason Lindsay-Abaire won the Ed Kleban award as America's most promising musical theatre lyricist. *Rabbit Hole* is considered one of the most important plays Lindsay-Abaire has ever written , as not only it has been nominated to five Tony awards including the Best play award , but it won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama , which is considered one of the most important awards in literature . The play also won the Spirit of America award . and later on it was adapted into a movie with the same name which was nominated for the Oscar award . Lindsay-Abaire also wrote other plays such as A Devil Inside ,Fuddy Meers , Kimberly Akimbo and Wonder of the World .

Rabbit Hole is a play written by David Lindsay-Abaire , it was first published in 2006 .

The settings of the play are taking place in Larchmont , New York . The events of the play are in the present time (specifically in the period between 2000 to 2006 in which the play was written) .

Exposition : It tells the story of Becca and Howie Corbet who had a perfect family life in New York , until one day while their son Danny (who was four years old at the time) was chasing his dog Taz , a Seventeen years old boy Jason accidentally hit Danny with his car causing his death . The settings of the play is set eight months after Danny's death . Eight months has passed , but Becca the main character of the play still can't deal with the grief and sadness caused by the traumatic experience of losing her son . Becca's grief turns her into a rude , judgmental and depressed person . Which ruins Becca's relationship with the other family members such as her mother , her sister and even her husband Howie who is supposedly having the same traumatic experience as her. Becca has found out that the only way to lighten her grief is by trying to stay away from Danny's memories as much as possible , that is why she donates his clothes to the charity , tries to hide his pictures and art books and she even asked Howie to sell the house and move out to a new city with new people to avoid Danny's memory for good . One day , Howie tried to play an old video tape of Danny , only to find out that the tape's content has been replaced with a TV program . Howie accuses Becca of getting rid of it in purpose and they get into a huge argument because of that , then Becca realizes that getting rid of Danny's stuff will never solve anything , because no matter what she does she can never erase Danny's memories and she doesn't really want to erase it , she just can't handle it right now . In one of the scenes it is narrated that Becca argues with her sister Izzy She accuses her of being drunk

after Izzy got into a bar fight with another woman and punched her . She thinks that Izzy is a careless person who always gets into trouble . Later on in the scene , Izzy tells Becca that she is pregnant . Which comes as a shock to Becca , As she has to face a reality in which her irresponsible sister will get a new baby meanwhile , she has lost her son few months ago . Becca feels the need to talk to someone , so she tells her husband Howie , who unfortunately doesn't have the same reaction as Becca and he doesn't agree with her opinion about Izzy . They get into another argument and then Howie talks about how their sexual life became loose after Danny's death and how they have grown apart from each other since that incident . As if Danny's death is ruining their marriage .

Climax : One day , Jason the young driver who killed Danny by accident , shows up and tries to speak to Becca . He tells her that he has dedicated a fictional story to Danny's memory and asks permission to put Danny's name on it . Then he apologizes and shows deep regret for what he did to Danny , saying that he thinks about it every day and blames himself for what he did . Becca tries to relief his pain , saying that it wasn't any body's fault and then she talks about the story he wrote and rabbit hole fiction in general . Becca is delighted to know about the theory of the parallel universes , as she believe that there might be versions of herself who are now happy . This thought and the whole conversation with Jason , gives Becca the motivation to get up from her traumatic experience and start living normally again . She starts by building good relationships with the people around her such as her sister and mother , she even stops arguing with Howie and asks him to keep the house , saying that she loves it .

Conclusion : The play ends happily with all conflicts resolved and Howie comforting Becca , saying that they will figure it out .

The technique in the play is realism . As all the characters in the play are perfectly drawn from real life characters .For example , there is Becca the emotional traumatized mother who can't get over losing her son , as it is mostly known a mother's love is the strongest and as strong as the love for someone is , the stronger the pain someone's feel when they lose that person .And that is why Becca is the most traumatized character in the play . There is also Howie her husband , the traumatized father who can't let go of his sons memories and he is also a perfect example of how men sometimes bottle their emotions in order to look strong in front of other people .And the play also shows how it affected him and why it isn't healthy . Izzy the silly ,irresponsible and funny sister who tries to lighten up the situation regardless of how serious it is and sometimes gets in trouble because of that . Nat is an example of the loving religious mother , who still cares about her daughters and tries to assist them in any possible way , regardless of their age . There is also Debbie , the kind of friend who loves staying in good times but abandons you in the bad ones , specially when you need him the most. Finally there is Jason , the kind hearted sensitive person ,who blames himself and keeps regretting things that he had no control over .The plot in the play might have already happened millions of times in real life , as every day there are parents losing children everywhere in the world , and people in general losing loved ones . Even the causes and symptoms of PTSD that Glenn R. Schiraldi mentioned are all real , such as anxiety , Avoidance and numbling ,depression and regret . And those symptoms are clear in the characters of Becca , Howie and Jason . Who got greatly affected by their traumatic experience which sabotaged their entire lives and altered their personality completely .

Due to the tragic accident of losing Danny , Almost all the characters in the play are traumatized by one way or another .However , as Glenn R. Schiraldi mentioned , every person deals with the trauma in their own way , some of them tend to try to run away from it such as the protagonist of the story and Danny's mother Becca(a

major character) , others try to live in it and pretend that things are still the same Such as Howie (a major character) , Danny's father and finally some people feel trapped ,guilty and depressed like Jason (a minor character) , who is ironically the one who hit Danny and caused his death .

The traumatic experience affects the person greatly , it completely alters his / her personality . According to Prastikasari “ In this story , the painful experience of losing her only child makes Becca become a traumatic person , she is being judgmental , rude ,egoistic, and depressed person .She is also no longer believes in God , those traits appear because she still cannot bear her great sadness after knowing the fact that her little son died because of an accident . “ (Prastikasari 25)

Becca who was once a happy mother , a great friend , a good wife , a loving sister and a religious person turned into a depressed ,judgmental , egoistic , rude and atheist person ! Which shows how great the impact of a trauma can be . Through out the play , Becca's bad characteristics , which are caused by her trauma , affects her relationship with everyone around her , specially the people who are closer to her the most , such as her friend Debbie , her sister Izzy ,her mother Nat and even her traumatized husband Howie . Debbie is an old friend of Becca and the wife of Rick Howie's friend . So the friendship is between two families . However , after Danny died Debbie vanished from Becca's life , she didn't call or visit her even once . Howie justified that by saying : “Rick didn't say anything. But obviously if she hasn't called you it's because she doesn't know what to say.” (Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 44) , however Becca doesn't accept that justification and believes that Debbie has deliberately abandoned her when she needed her the most and that Becca wouldn't have done the same as her and Becca's quotation : “I would've been there for her if god forbid something had ever happened to Robbie or Em. I wouldn't have vanished the way she did.” (Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 44) thus Becca refuses to make any contact with Debbie and has completely cut ties with her . One day Izzy visits Becca in a Saturday night to spend sometime with her sister . She tells her a story about a women who kept yelling at her for no reason , and then

Izzy in order to save herself from the situation punched the woman in the face and knocked her down . When Becca heard the story , she felt disgusted from Izzy and accused her of being drunk . As Becca believes that Izzy must have somehow deserved what the women did to her , because the woman won't do such a thing for no reason . Then Becca became judgmental towards his sister to the point that it annoyed her , and this can be seen in the following conversation between Izzy and Becca :

“ BECCA : Were you drunk?

IZZY : No

BECCA : I thought you were getting it together.

IZZY : Don't judge me.

BECCA : You said you were gonna take it easy.

IZZY : Man, Becca. Why do you have to—?

BECCA : You can't be doing this kinda stuff, Izzy. You're not a kid anymore.

IZZY : I didn't realize there was a cut-off date.

BECCA : Well there should be. For acting like a jackass there should be a cut-off date. Were you on anything?” (Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 17-18)

Becca doesn't just judge her sister but she also insults her calling her “a jackass”

And later on in the conversation Becca gets even ruder than she already is ,when Izzy says that she is still coping from Danny's death , Becca's reply was :

“You're not allowed to use him to justify your own shit” (Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 20) Which is absolutely a very cruel reply , and by him of course she meant Danny.

During Izzy birthday Nat , Becca's mother , told a story about Aristotle Onassis

A man who couldn't accept that the death of his son was only an accident to the point that , he put up a prize on whoever can prove that his son's plane was sabotaged and he was assassinated .Later on , Onassis died because of his grief over his son . Becca felt like Nat was telling the story intentionally in order to refer to Danny's death and the fact that Becca can't accept it , just like Onassis . So Becca felt offended and what even made her more mad is Howie telling Nat that Becca doesn't like support groups . She feels as if her mother is intervening and she doesn't like it . Becca's quotation : "You never just talk. It sounds like you're just talking but it's always so much more, isn't it."(Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 82) reveals how annoyed Becca is from her mother's story and the whole conversation about Danny in general .Another thing that made Becca become angrier is the mention of God . After Danny died , Becca has lost all of her faith in God , in fact she might be blaming him for not preventing Danny from dying . She doesn't believe that he exists anymore and if he does , she thinks that he is cruel . Becca's reply to her mother about God : "Worship me and I'll treat you like shit." No wonder you like him, he sounds just like Dad." Proves that Becca has completely abandoned any religious thoughts and she doesn't want anything to do with God or the people who believe in God .

Later on , the conversation escalates and Becca becomes so angry when her mother mentions how she dealt with her grief when her son and Becca's brother Arthur died . Becca storms at her mother saying

"You know what I wish?! I wish you would stop comparing Danny to Arthur! Danny was a four-year-old boy who chased his dog into the street! Arthur was a thirty-year-old heroin addict who hung himself! Frankly I resent how you keep lumping them together."(Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 89) which comes as a great shock for everyone in the room , specially Nat . What Becca said was so heartless and rude , she didn't care about her mother's feeling at all .and what is even more shocking is the fact that the person she was talking about isn't a stranger , it is her own brother.

Becca's relationship with Howie was absolutely ruined after Danny died . They were constantly getting into arguments , sometimes due to the silliest reasons . such as the argument they had about Izzy's fight at the bar because Howie didn't agree with her on the fact it was a bar fight , instead he said that Izzy had the right to defend herself .And the argument they had about what they should buy for Izzy's birthday ,As Becca wanted to buy a bathroom set since it is a practical gift , but Howie felt like this gift was weird and it shouldn't be given as a birthday gift , in the end Howie agreed on Becca's opinion just to end the argument . Their sexual life became a mess , as they have never had sex once since Danny died . Howie however , tried to get Becca into a romantic mode hoping that she might feel better. But then she got mad and left the couch they were sitting in . Then she Accused Howie of being inconsiderate to the situation they are in , and that he was being selfish , the following quote supports that : "Well considering everything else—the fact that Danny died for example—don't you think maybe it is a little crass and selfish? For you to be roping me into sex when I don't wanna have it?" (Act I ,Lindsay-Abaire 54) What Howie was really trying to do is fixing their broken relationship , but instead Becca's judgmental characteristic made her believe that her husband is just a pervert who only cares about sex .

Another important incident between Becca and Howie is the video tape incident . The video tape included videos about Danny's childhood , very touching ones in fact , that is why Howie used to like that tape a lot because it reminded him of a lot of things about Danny , he used to watch it almost every night before he sleeps . However one day , he puts the tape and starts it , only to find out that it has been replaced by an educational program about tornados . Howie immediately becomes furious and calls Becca to ask her about the tape , turns out Becca is the one who recorded over it , because she thought that the tape inside the Video player is the *Pride and prejudice* tape not Danny's tape , and she didn't know that Howie switched them after she went to sleep . This incident gives Howie the chance to reveal his true frustration with Becca's behavior about Danny's stuff . Howie

accuses Becca of recording over the tape in purpose , just like she was trying to get rid of the rest of Danny's stuff . "You're trying to get rid of him. I'm sorry, but that's how it feels to me sometimes. Every day, it's something else. It feels like you're trying to get rid of any evidence he was ever here." (Act II, Lindsay-Abaire 99)

Howie's accusation is probably true , since ever since the first scene of the story , Becca is trying to get rid of all of Danny's stuff , as she was planning to give his clothes to the charity , she removed all of his paintings from the fridge , she took his photos down and put them in a box , she even sent Taz their dog to her mother's house because it reminded her of the accident . Howie's quotation : "It's not just the tape! I'm not talking about the tape, Becca! It's Taz, and the paintings, and the clothes, and it's everything ! You have to stop erasing him! You have to stop it! You HAVE TO STOP!" (Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 102) reveals how hurt he is by Becca's actions . Unlike Becca , Howie wants to hold on into Danny's memory , because according to him , it is all what he has left of him , but Becca is being egoistic by trying to erase Danny's memory just to feel a little bit better and that is actually one of the symptoms of PTSD as Glenn calls it "Avoidance and numbling" However that incident made Becca realize something important which is the fact that , she can never erase Danny's memory , and that she doesn't want that in the first place . Becca's quotation : "Do you really not know me, Howie? Do you really not know how utterly impossible that would be? To erase him? No matter how many things I give to charity, or how many art projects I box up, do you really think I don't see him every second of every day? And okay, I'm trying to make things a little easier on myself by hiding some of the photos, and giving away the clothes, but that does not mean I'm trying to erase him. That tape was an accident. And believe me, I will beat myself up about it forever, I'm sure. Like everything else that I could've prevented but didn't." (Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 102) proves that Danny's memory is carved into Becca's head regardless of what she

does to ease her pain . This important realization will actually be an important factor in Becca's healing .

Another important factor in Becca's healing is taking the drama class in another town . "Did Izzy tell you I was taking a continuing ed. class? We're reading Bleak House. Isn't that hilarious? He handed out the syllabus and I just laughed. Bleak House. Of course no one knew what I was laughing at, which was great. (Nat looks up at her) It's in Bronxville so no one knows me. I'm normal there. That's what I like best about it. I don't get "the face" every time someone looks at me." (Act II ,Lindsay-Abaire 139) According to Becca the people of her town showed exaggerated sympathy towards her , that sympathy made Becca feel more irritated than delighted . Also the fact that she left the house and started going out more is another important factor , since the house with all what it includes was a constant reminder of Danny , so getting out of it and spending time doing something else helped Becca feel better .However , the most important factor in Becca's healing is meeting Jason the boy who accidentally killed Danny . Jason wanted to talk to both Becca and Howie , in order to apologize to them for what he has done .Even though it was unintentional , Jason felt a huge amount of guilt and wanted to make up for it in anyway possible . "It's a thirty zone. And I might've been going thirty-three. Or thirty-two. I would usually look down, to checkw, and if I was a little over, then I'd slow down obviously. But I don't remember checking on your block, so it's possible I was going a little too fast. And then the dog came out, really quick, and so I swerved a little to avoid him, not knowing, obviously ... (Beat.) So that's something I thought you should know. I might've been going a little over the limit. I can't be positive either way though."(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 159) this quote shows the tremendous amount of regret Jason is feeling . That is why he dedicated a short story to Danny's memory and wanted Becca and Howie's permission to put Danny's name in it . Becca met Jason with delight , she wasn't mad at him nor did she show any sign of anger or hatred or even blame . They talked about a lot of things such as books , the prom , the date and then the short story he wrote . Which is about a son who loses his father and tries to find him

through something called “rabbit holes “ which are basically portals to parallel universes .

“So even the most unlikely events have to take place somewhere, including other universes with versions of us leading different lives, or maybe the same lives with a couple things changed.”(Act II ,Lindsay-Abaire 166) This quotation from Jason makes Becca feel a lot better , as she realizes that somewhere in the universe there are versions of her who are leading a happy life , and that makes her want to be one of those versions , it gives her hope that life can get better and helps her in getting out of her traumatic experience . After that incident , Becca starts fixing all of her relationships , she starts with her mother Nat , while they were arranging Danny’s stuff , Nat almost mentioned Arthur but then she got scared because she thought Becca will get mad at her , but instead Becca said it is okay to mention him , because after all he was her brother .

“This feeling. Does it ever go away?”(Act II ,Lindsay-Abaire 150) This quote shows how Becca starts opening up about her pain to her mother , which is something that she isn’t used to , since she is usually irritated by those kind of conversations . Becca also called Debbie , and fixed her relationship with her and she even accepted an invitation to a barbecue party in order to make things between them normal again . In the last scene of the play , she stopped arguing with Howie and she was talking with him peacefully , she even asked him to reconsider selling the house and said that she loves it . Which means that she made peace with Danny’s memory . The play ends with Howie comforting Becca saying that they will figure things out .

The second important character in the play is Howie . Howie is another example of how people deal with their traumatic experiences . Howie is the complete opposite of Becca , instead of shutting himself down from everyone around him , he actually tries to cope with his trauma by socializing . It is narrated in the play that

Howie goes to support groups in order to help him deal with his trauma ,unlike Becca who completely rejected the idea and called them “God-Freaks” . In the first scene of the play , Howie is seen trying to spend a romantic time with Becca by massaging her back and then playing a song they used to love and dimming the lights . Becca gets quite angry at him ,and accuses him of trying to lure her into having sex with him . However , what Howie really wants is for things to go back to normal between him and Becca and he wants to save his marriage and his relationship with her , which has only been detouring since Danny’s tragic death .

“I think you should see someone. I know you’re not one for therapists, but I think you should. We could go together if that’d help. Or maybe you could try the group again.” (Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 55) that is why he suggests that Becca should go back to the group or seeks the help of a therapist in order to help her deal with her trauma .

However , Becca refuses all those attempts and instead suggests selling the house in order to get rid of Danny’s memory . Earlier in the same scene , Becca asks Howie how was his day in playing squash with his friend Rick. Which means that he still has good relationship with his friends and still doing activities that he used to do . Unlike Becca who has completely cut ties with Debbie for months because she didn’t call her . Even though it might seem that Howie has already gotten over his trauma , there are number of situations that prove he definitely didn’t .In the ending of the first scene , it is narrated that Howie is watching a video tape of Danny just like he did for hundreds of times . And it is also narrated that he isn’t getting emotional or crying , he is just watching . Unlike Becca , Howie wants to keep everything about Danny , for him that is all what is left of him and he wants to keep every single bit of it . He wants to keep living in his memories and act as if Danny never died because part of him still can’t process the fact that he died .And that is why Howie became furious when he realized that Becca recorded over the tape , as that tape was so precious to him because it contained a lot of different records about Danny . He also reveals how upset he is with how Becca is trying to

hide every mention of Danny in the house , as if she is trying to erase his existence in their life . “Howie : His stuff is all we have left. That’s all I’m saying. And every bit of it you get rid of—

BECCA : I understand that. You don’t wanna let go of it. I understand,
Howie.

HOWIE : Do you? Do you? This isn’t ...—Something has to change here. Because I can’t do this ... like this. It’s too hard. It’s too hard. And I want that dog back. Your mother’s making him fat. ”(Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 103)

This conversation is a further proof of that , even Becca herself confronts him with the fact that he doesn’t want to let go of it and Howie doesn’t deny it either ,instead he asks Becca if she really understand , because he feels like she completely doesn’t because what she is trying to do is quite the opposite . Howie’s words reveals the amount of pain he is truly in , as it has been bottling up for so long while he was trying to ignore it and pretend that everything is fine . Specially with the repetition of the phrase “it’s too hard” , and also the fact that he wants his dog back means that he needs more emotional support , since dogs are known to be loyal companions who are sensitive to the human feelings and they can provide great emotional support . After seeing how persistent Becca is on selling the house , Howie finally agrees and holds an open house event for potential buyers to examine the house and Izzy helps him with that . “Uh-uh, you’re not pulling me into that conversation. You wanna tell total strangers all about Danny and how he died, it’s none of my business. God knows it’s something you enjoy doing, so you go ahead. But don’t be surprised if nobody wants to buy your house.”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 109) According Izzy , Howie is freaking buyers out by telling them the full story of how Danny died and she even says that “it’s something you enjoy doing” which is a further proof that Howie is still attached to Danny’s memory and he can’t forget about this traumatic experience , even though 10 months has already passed , he still remembers every detail about it as if it

happened recently .Later in that scene , Jason entered the house because he wanted to talk to Howie and Becca , but as soon as Howie sees him , he becomes furious and starts acting rudely and cruelly to the point that everyone in the room was surprised to see him this angry and they all tried to calm him down . “You don’t just walk into someone’s home like that. Especially given the circumstances. You should show a little respect. ”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 133) “You believe that? The balls on that kid? Walking in here?” (Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 133) Those two quotes prove that deep inside Howie blames Jason for what happened , even though he knows very well that it was just an accident and that almost everyone in the family could have done something different to prevent it but they didn’t . Howie is probably deep inside looking for an explanation to what happened or why did it happen , and the fact that he can’t find one escalates his trauma ,as instead of trying to move on , he clings so hard into Danny’s memory . However this incident with Jason , doesn’t mean that Howie is a bad person because even though he is in so much pain during his argument with Izzy , he explains that he was comforting a friend from the support group , which means that despite how much pain he is in , he is still trying to be there for others and help them cope as well .

“HOWIE : I think I might be done. With the group. I don’t think I’m gonna go back.

BECCA : Why, what happened?

HOWIE: Nothing. I just don’t think it’s as helpful to me anymore. I wanna try it on my own for a while. I mean, not on my own, obviously, but ... without the group.”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 175) and this is when Howie realizes that he has been dealing with his trauma in the wrong way all along . Howie realized that the person who needed his support the most is his wife Becca , and before trying to seek comfort from strangers , they should comfort each others first and deal with their trauma . That is why Howie quits the support group and will now attempt to

deal with his trauma alongside his traumatic wife Becca . The play ends with both of them holding hands together and Howie saying “I don’t know. Something though. We’ll figure it out. And then Becca replying “Will we?” and the last sentence said by Howie is “I think so. I think we will.”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire ,182)

Which is a sign that they will begin their journey together against the trauma and more importantly , they will begin working on their marriage issues , which seems to have been already starting to get resolved because in the last scene Becca and Howie didn’t have any arguments .

The third important character is Jason , even though Jason is the one who hit Danny with his car , he seems to be one of the most affected characters in the play by the trauma , in fact he might be more affected than other family members such as Nat and Izzy .However his trauma is from a different type ,Unlike Becca and Howie whose trauma are caused by their feelings of loss , Jason’s trauma is out of guilt .Even though it was an accident Jason completely blames himself for the death of Danny .And that can be first seen in the letter he sent to Becca and Howie

“I wanted to send you my condolences on the death of your son, Danny. I know it’s been eight months since the accident, but I’m sure it’s probably still hard for you to be reminded of that day. I think about what happened a lot, as I’m sure you do, too. I’ve been having some troubles at home, and at school, and a couple people here thought it might be a good idea to write to you. I’m sorry if this letter upsets you. That’s obviously not my intention.”(Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 92)

It shows the amount of regret and pain Jason is really in , he is tormented by the thought that he killed an innocent child , even if it was by accident . Jason just like Becca and Howie ,he couldn’t move on . He is still thinking about that accident every day , probably seeing the same scene of him hitting Danny with his car over and over . And what is even worse is that his trauma is sabotaging his life , as he

mentions that “I’ve been having some troubles at home, and at school” . This letter is one of the first steps Jason took in order to start dealing with his trauma .And as a form of a small apology Jason dedicated a science fiction short story to Danny’s memory , he tried to write something that a small kid like Danny who was obsessed with robots would love to read , for him that is some kind of atonement . Later on , Jason tries taking another step towards curing his trauma which is meeting Becca and Howie in person and apologize to them . However Howie got furious as soon as Jason entered the house and he kicked him out eventually . But Jason didn’t give up and reached out to Becca again and Becca agreed to meet him . Becca and Jason talked about a lot of different things but then out of the blue Jason mentions the accident . “It’s a thirty zone. And I might’ve been going thirty-three. Or thirty-two. I would usually look down, to check, and if I was a little over, then I’d slow down obviously. But I don’t remember checking on your block, so it’s possible I was going a little too fast. And then the dog came out, really quick, and so I swerved a little to avoid him, not knowing, obviously ... (Beat.) So that’s something I thought you should know. I might’ve been going a little over the limit. I can’t be positive either way though.”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 159) This thought is exactly what is tormenting Jason and causing his trauma , he feels as if he might have done something wrong and that is what caused Danny’s death . Even though Becca and Howie feel the same way , they are grown up enough to realize that it was an accident and there is no way they could have prevented it .Jason on the other hand , is still a teenager growing mentally and physically , and the idea that he might have killed someone is terrifying him . Jason mentions during his conversation with Becca about the prom party that he broke up with his girlfriend a while ago , which could possibly mean this is another side effect of his trauma , as he couldn’t maintain a healthy relationship with his girlfriend . Even though Jason went there so he can seek forgiveness and feel a little bit better , he helped Becca feel better through telling her about the concept of parallel universes and the idea that somewhere out there are versions of her who are leading happy lives . The

scene ends with Jason asking Becca to tell Howie about the speed limit that he might have exceeded .Jason feels delighted with Becca's kind and thoughtful reaction , and the fact that he finally confessed and apologized as he wanted to do for the past 10 months . Jason is definitely a good and kind character , because only a good person will have that much regret and pain towards what might seem like a normal accident . Specially in a time , where some people who are involved in similar accidents tend to run away from the scene to escape punishment and leave the injured or dead person they hit lying in the floor .

The dominant theme in the play is the theme of loss .Death is the natural ending for every human being , and even though human beings know that fact , they still hate it and fear it so much . Specially when it happens to someone they care about and love . The whole idea of not being able to see your loved one again , terrifies human beings and causes them tremendous amount of pain and suffering . According to Glenn R. Schiraldi the natural death of a loved one is one of the most traumatic experiences a person can face . And it completely alters their personality . Every human being deals with the loss of a loved one in their own way , some of them try to run away from their memories with those loved ones , others hold on tight to those thoughts . Some people move on and continue their lives normally , while others get stuck in their traumatic experience . In the play there are 3 characters which are affected by loss of a loved one and those are Becca ,Howie and Nat . Becca is probably the most common case of dealing with the trauma of losing a loved . Danny's death completely altered her personality turning her into a depressed , sad , rude , egoistic , judgmental and atheist person . Which is probably the complete opposite of her character before the tragic accident happened . In order to ease her pain a little , Becca decides to get rid of everything related to Danny's memory . She decides to donate his clothes to the charity , took down his paintings from the fridge and took down his photos from the wall . She even asks Howie to consider selling the house because everything inside it reminds her of

Danny . Becca's quotation : "Do you really not know me, Howie? Do you really not know how utterly impossible that would be? To erase him? No matter how many things I give to charity, or how many art projects I box up, do you really think I don't see him every second of every day? And okay, I'm trying to make things a little easier on myself by hiding some of the photos, and giving away the clothes, but that does not mean I'm trying to erase him. That tape was an accident. And believe me, I will beat myself up about it forever, I'm sure. Like everything else that I could've prevented but didn't." (Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 102) reveals the amount of pain she is in because of Danny's memory , and how utterly useless her attempts to erase him , since she can never forget him no matter what she does . As if he is carved into her memory and will be forever . The second character is Howie , Howie doesn't want to let go of Danny's memory at all and that can be seen from even the first scene of the play in which Howie is seen watching an old video tape of Danny , and it is mentioned that he has already done that so many times . Losing that tape is what made Howie burst into anger and reveals how upset he is with what Becca has been doing which looked like as if she is trying to erase his memory . Howie can't accept the loss of his son , and that is why he chooses to live with what is left of him , as if this will be enough to compensate his loss . As a way of dealing with his trauma , Howie goes to support groups , however at the end of the play Howie finds out that he doesn't want to do that anymore and doing that hasn't really been so helpful for him .At first he says that he will try to deal with it alone but then he says , he can't do it alone which might mean that he is planning to deal with it alongside his wife . As only the both of them know how tragic and painful there loss is , and how hard it is to deal with it , that is why it would make perfect sense for them to deal with it together . However this might haven't been possible at the start of the trauma due to the intensity of their feelings of loss at that time , but now that they are feeling a little bit better , they will try to do it . Nat Becca's mother is another example of people dealing with the trauma of their loss , specifically the type of people who never moves on .

Nat has also had a bit of similar situation when she lost her son Arthur , who according to Becca was a heroine addict who committed suicide by hanging himself .

“BECCA : This feeling. Does it ever go away?

NAT : No. I don't think it does. Not for me it hasn't. And that's goin' on eleven years. It changes though.

BECCA : How?

NAT : I don't know. The weight of it, I guess. At some point it becomes bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under. And carry around—like a brick in your pocket. And you forget it every once in a while, but then you reach in for whatever reason and there it is: “Oh right. That.” Which can be awful. But not all the time. Sometimes it's kinda ... Not that you like it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't wanna let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away.”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 150 -151)

This quotation shows even though eleven years has passed Nat hasn't completely moved on , she still remembers Arthur perfectly and remembers the feelings she had when she lost him . According to her carrying that pain around is like carrying a brick in your pocket which can be quite annoying and that the pain she feels might disappear for a while but never completely . As this pain is all what remains of her son Arthur and that is why she can't give it up , because if she does that means she will lose him forever . Which is quite sad and painful at the same time . The play embodies the theme of loss perfectly , as it shows the pain and suffering each character had due to their traumatic experience of loss , and their attempts to deal with that trauma .

One of the unique things about this play is the dialogue , as it is quite sincere . The characters words and expressions reveals their true nature . As if they are real

people talking not just characters in a play . There are even real life insults such jackass and the F word .Since the play is all about the traumatic experience of the characters caused by the tragedy of loss , the dialogue of the play is full of feelings of depression , sadness , frustration and guilt . For example , Howie’s quotation “ I can’t do this ... like this. It’s too hard. It’s too hard. ”(Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 103) Reveals the amount of pain and sadness he is in and even shows signs of depression . Becca’s quotation : “ He’s everywhere, Howie. Everywhere I look, I still see Danny.” (Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 54) Shows how Becca can’t get over Danny’s memory and how depressed that made her feel , as she feels trapped in her own house and that is why she suggests selling it , so she can get rid of those memories . “ I wanted to shake her: “Look at him. Don’t pretend he isn’t there!””(Act I , Lindsay-Abaire 126) This quote from Becca shows the amount of frustration Becca is feeling when she sees a women in the supermarket treating her son badly and doesn’t want to buy him the fruit rollups he wants . Becca’s frustration is caused by jealousy , as she sees this women as ungrateful person who doesn’t appreciate the gift of having a son .This quote from Jason “It’s a thirty zone. And I might’ve been going thirty-three. Or thirty-two. I would usually look down, to check, and if I was a little over, then I’d slow down obviously. But I don’t remember checking on your block, so it’s possible I was going a little too fast. And then the dog came out, really quick, and so I swerved a little to avoid him, not knowing, obviously ... (Beat.) So that’s something I thought you should know. I might’ve been going a little over the limit. I can’t be positive either way though.”(Act II , Lindsay-Abaire 159) shows the amount of guilt Jason is feeling , as he can’t get over the idea that it wasn’t just an accident and that he might have made a mistake that caused Danny’s death .Overall the dialogue in the play is a perfect description of the general tone of the play and a great embodiment of the feelings of the characters and their nature .

Conclusion

Finally, after applying the psychoanalytic theory on the play , specifically the Post Traumatic Stress Order concept discussed by Glenn R. Schiraldi in his book *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook: A Guide to Healing, Recovery & Growth* , in which he explains all the different symptoms , causes and cures for trauma .It is clear that PTSD is a dangerous kind of trauma , in fact it might be one of the worst ones , if not the worst . It completely alters your personality , just like what happened with Becca , she turned into a rude , judgmental , egoistic , depressed person who have completely lost faith in God .The symptoms of PTSD remain in the person's conscious for a long time , as it continues to sabotage their lives ,causing pain and suffering and abnormal behavior sometimes . Just like what happened with Jason , who said that he was having troubles at school and at home after the incident , and just like Becca whose relations with other people have been totally ruined , including her relations with her own family and husband .Another important result is that the people around the traumatized person should be fully aware of how to deal with him or her , because certain words or actions can trigger the PTSD symptoms and cause pain , just like how Nat caused Becca's anger by talking about the death of Aristo Onassis's son . All the elements of the play support those results , As the plot is about a family who got traumatized after losing their only son in a tragic accident. The technique is realism , as the whole story of the play is very likely to occur in real life and all the people in the play resemble real life characters .The theme and characterization describe the effects of the trauma on all the characters and how it completely altered their personality and made them depressed , sad and angry , which are all symptoms of PTSD , it also shows those characters attempts on dealing with the trauma. The dialogue is a great representation of the character's inner feelings , specially their pain and depression .In conclusion, The play is a great embodiment of the psychoanalysis theory in general , and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in particular .

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