

*Reading Trauma in Antonia White's Confessional Autobiographical Novels*

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**ABSTRACT:**

White presents a clear picture of a woman who suffers from a traumatic psychological state. During her childhood, she was continuously raped by her father. Such kind of anxiety and irritation White reveals in a series of her autobiographical writings. Due to Psychiatrists, it is a valid view that a significant part of White's mental breakdown is due to her unconscious sense of anxiety, which goes back to her childhood period. Psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Cathy Caruth are used to justify most of the odd situations White presents in her novels. The study aims at describing such anxiety in Antonia White's Quartet stories. It discusses the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Caruth's post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. In spite of being humiliated, sexually abused and treated badly, White aimed at creating a unified female self in her autobiographical novels. She has done so through her daring style and rebelling against the patriarchal system by suppressing her anxiety in writing.

**Keywords:** Antonia White, Trauma, psychoanalysis, autobiographical novel.

**Introduction**

Antonia White (1899- 1980) was the only child of Christine White and Cecil Botting. (Claridge and Barrantes-Vidal 2018; Honno et al. 2020). Marcus (1988), in a chapter entitled *Antonia White*, writes the four autobiographical novels of White, *Frost in May* (1933), *The Lost Traveller* (1950), *The Sugar House* (1952), and *Beyond the Glass* (1954), constitute a whole discourse on the writing woman's life in the twentieth century (Scott 1990, 597). In these novels, she writes, expresses and confesses the most sensitive aspect of herself. The moments of fear, embarrassment, agony, negligence, anxiety and irritation are felt clearly in the above-mentioned novels. In one of the biographical memoirs, White writes "I was obsessed with the idea that if I wrote anything of my own, something wicked and corrupt would creep into it and I would be faced again with horrifying disapprobation" (1). Such kind of confessional style in White's writing conveys truly that a traumatic thing happens when she was a child that affected her psychological state deeply.

Jane Marcus in her *Antonia White* which is published in Scott's *The Gender of Modernism* (597-598), claims that "The daughter of Christine White and Cecil Botting. Her father, a convert to Catholicism, sent her at

age nine to a Catholic school at Roehampton, the setting for *Frost in May* “(Scott 1990, 597-598). In Moran’s view, “the four autobiographical novels are about West’s relationship with her father and her fear of not being accepted by him” (2018,1). White in her novel *Frost in May* conveys the protagonist’s father’s speech when he states “I say that if a young girl’s mind is such a sink of filth and impurity, I wish to God I had never had a daughter” (*Frost in May*, 216). In this speech, the protagonist’s father has been disappointed for finding his daughter, who was supposed to be a good catholic girl, is busy with writing an erotic love story and hiding it from the nuns. when it is discovered, she has been punished severely by her father and the nuns. In the following page in the novel, she writes: “One sentence of her father had torn right through every protective covering and shamed her to the very marrow. If he had stripped her naked and beaten her, she would not have been more utterly humiliated. Never, never could things be the same” (*Frost in May*, 217).

White in her diary confesses that ‘So much of my “life” was crammed into the years between 21 and 31 – madness, three marriages, both children born’ (Diary 2, 39). White was not able to write for a long time. She felt compelled to relive this tragic occurrence in her first of a series of autobiographical novels only after her father’s death, *Frost in May* (1933), (Newton 2014, 12-13). She was married three times, two of the marriages were annulled. White’s profession was a lifetime endeavor to write her life as a woman, and her support to modernism is a chief redefinition of female autobiographical forms. Her particular contribution is the suppression of the I-narrative common to women diarists and the appropriation of the authoritative third person for the female voice.

According to Blodgett, “the novel of self-development’s passionate emphasis on the growth of the central figure and the events of female daily life consents for an inquisitive examination of the responses of the character to their roles, own ambitions, and endeavors” (1989,195). Due to this statement, if there is contradiction between what the character aims at in life and the dismal reality that is imposed on the character by the external circumstances, the result will be disappointing. McLean and Fournier believe that “the crises caused by a conflict between the inner self and the identity enacted by society are a prominent theme and despite the flat denial, often find steadfastness only in extraction or bitter submission, or more drastically, in madness or death” (2008). Moreover, the different reactions of women to specific experiences can radically affect their formative influence because of firmly set role expectations, when daughters do not receive enough passion and affection from their mothers, they become melancholy, and a chasm in their inner understanding threatens. Disappointment of this nature becomes a terrible occurrence in their lives. Concerning White’s personal life, she lacks her mother’s passion and father’s concern. Her disappointment and sadness result in mental breakdown.

Marcus (1988) in a chapter entitled as *Antonia White* writes that *Frost in May* and its sequels, *The Sugar House* and *Beyond the Glass*, are constructed autobiographically as participants in and subverts of the two overlapping discourses of “confession,” the Catholic church discourse, and the discourse of popular women’s magazine and fictional “confessions,” dismissed from the canon because they are “personal” ... White shows no narrative mercy. That is what this coldness and distance are all about (Scott 1990, 599). In these autobiographical novels, the female protagonist, on one hand, confesses her fear of sticking to Catholicism. Since, she has been converted because her father orders her and her mother to be converted. So she faces difficulty in accepting it. On the other hand, she is ambitious and wants to be free from rigidities, firmness and injustices of Catholicism. The female models in White’s *Quartet*, Nanda, Clara and other heroines aim at creating new female self away from the pressures of religion and the patriarchal system. Such kind of ironic situation irritates her and she searches for a means to suppress these disturbing moments. The following section is concerned with Cathy Caruth’s theory of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder supported by Freud’s theories (Caruth, 1991). The researcher finds answers to many odd conducts and behaviors by White’s female protagonists in her *Quartet*.

#### **Methodology and Analysis: Trauma in Antonia White’s Quartet**

In the case of analyzing autobiographical texts, it is inevitable to avoid the field of psychoanalysis. The *Quartet* of Antonia White can be better understood concerning the psychoanalytical theories of Cathy Caruth and Sigmund Freud. Caruth, a modern American theorist (b. 1955) whose studies or theories focus on the advent of trauma after some time a person (in our case Antonia White), undergoes a difficult stage in her life. These tragic moments can be understood depending on the above-mentioned theories. Trauma as Reisberg and Hortel (2004) indicated, means “a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed” (2). Antonia White’s childhood passed through a series of agonizing situations in Covent School, due to her father’s rigid instructions he told the nuns to oblige his daughter Nanda to take Latin classes alone and have cold baths every morning. She is shocked when she knew that these were her father’s instructions. She suffered from a block in writing for many years, then caught by Mother Frances by writing an erotic story which made the whole nuns get her out of the school. Moran (2018) mentioned that in one of her manuscripts White has written:

I could not say for myself where I first ‘went wrong’ and began that series of entanglements and sins and muddles and disasters which still affect my own and other people’s lives. How appalled my father would be if he knew the results of that fifteenth birthday. Yet I often feel as if I had never been a ‘whole’ person since that day. (Diary 1, 263)

When West was twenty-three years old, her psychological state declined. She could not control her behavior for she was continuously

depressed. Such state of depression affected her relationship with her family as well. Especially with her daughters who both criticize her for not fulfilling the duties of a mother. (Moran, 3).

Similarly, Vasile (2014) afforded several definitions of the notion, such as a fierce emotion heartrending people to the point of idiosyncrasy and an event in which a distressed victim produces an unbalance at the psychic level (Vasile 2014; Nepal 2020). However, Caruth (1995) in her introduction to *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* presented that emotional distress encompasses severe personal anguish. At this stage, individuals begin to encounter 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (henceforth PTSD) which comprises the signs of what was already called by Freud (1856-1939) as combat stress, shell shock, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis (Caruth 1995; Flood 1983; Sutterlin 2020). In her autobiographical writings, White was obliged to consider her personal, traumatic experiences and her trial to achieve literary, aesthetic aspects as well. White-faced difficulty in balancing her desire to show herself as a modernist artist and a catholic.

Cathy Caruth in her *Unclaimed Experience* (1996, 1) states that "In the third chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud portrays a pattern of suffering that is mysteriously determined in the lives of certain individuals. Caruth (1995,3 ) believed that in the years since Vietnam, the fields of Psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and sociology have taken a renewed interest in the problem of trauma. In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association finally officially acknowledged the long-recognized but frequently ignored phenomenon under the title "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD), which included the symptoms of what had previously been called shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis, and referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes...suddenly responses not only to combat and to natural catastrophes but also to rape, child abuse, and a number of other violent occurrences have been understood in terms of PTSD , and diagnoses of some dissociative disorders have also been switched to that of trauma.

The following section is a direct hint that White tried a lot through her autobiographical novels to get rid of self-disturbances felt through narrating her own experiences in her different ages and tried to suppress the 'I' she uses to get to a more relied upon the confidential style of third-person narrative mode.

#### **Antonia White's search for her selfhood in the Quartet**

Antonia White portrays a girl, named Nanda in her novel, *Frost in May*. Nanda is a young, romantic convert. She is educated at Lippington Convent School from nine to Fourteen years old. Nanda tries to behave in a good way but the nuns at the Catholic school were very firm with her. On the other hand, Nanda's father, Mr. Grey was also firm with her (Newton, 2014, 35). This firmness had affected her and made her rebel. White's rebellion is a means for constructing a new identity of herself while in the Convent School. White faces difficulties through her school time at Convent. She and her mother were converted to Catholics as an order

should be obeyed by her father. She was fond of writing and decided to write a novel but the world White (Nanda) had created was forbidden in Convent School where the nuns watched the students conducts closely. The nuns didn't accept Nanda's story, portraying a catholic girl's affair with a hedonist admirer. Wilkinson (1998) believed that in *Frost in May*, White is considering back at the period when she was an adolescent. It is about White's school when she was sent there, it was so enclosed that it portrays White's child, adolescence and young womanhood. It is about her life before having a traumatic experience with White when she couldn't write a novel due to a traumatic experience. The first embarrassing situation Nanda faces is when she presents a book for her friend as a birthday present. Mother Frances punishes her, "first remember, will you, that at Lippington, we do not give presents, even birthday presents, except to relatives. We do not encourage particular friendships among little girls" (*Frost in May*,36). Nanda feels Mother Franc's injustice when she leaves Nanda taking the book under her arm. After two days, she tells Nanda: "This book will remain in your trunk till you go home for Christmas. But I think you ought to know that the tone of this book is not at all the kind of thing we like at Lippington. Apart from its being by a non-Catholic writer, it is morbid, rather unwholesome and just a little vulgar". Mother Frances gave her a chilling smile. 'That is all, dear child' Nanda turned to fly. Her ears were red-hot" (*Frost in May*, 36-37).

These orders have affected Nanda deeply for Mother France has underestimated her, this feeling created an agonic sense that disturbed her continuously. She even couldn't suppress the feeling and it is more complicated and becomes traumatic. Mother France's insult for Nanda continues and like a camera, she was trying to record all her movements and behavior.

In an essay published in *The Guardian*, Tessa Hadley (2018) writes on the cruel system of the Convent School life portrayed in Whit's *Frost in May* (1933). Hadley criticizes the cruel system of the Catholic Convent School. Nanda's father, Mr. Grey likes such formalities of the system in the school. Newton (2014) believes that, "Whilst the discovery of her novel is a traumatic event for White, I propose that it is no accident that it remains unfinished in *Frost in May* because it reflects White's own assertion of the right to express herself sexually and autonomously in her writing in a culture in which sexual expression is suppressed" (27). White's trial for behaving naturally and expressing her views is a bold step in women's literature. This is the essence of modernity, to be yourself and express your feeling without hypocrisy or exaggeration. Here Nanda presents a desperate kind of life full of pressures and a rigid system of the Convent School at Lippington. *The Lost Traveller* portrays tentative moves of young girls to create her identity and way of her life. White changes her name from Nanda to Clara. Clara's life is portrayed through her childhood's emotional ramifications, as well as the first job and personal relationship mistakes that will haunt her in the future. Nanda of a *Frost in May* has been changed to Clara Batchelor in *The Lost Traveller*. White confesses in her introductory



preface that everything happened to Clara is true. ‘Of course Clara is a continuation of Nanda. Nanda became Clara because my father had a great passion for Meredith and a particular passion for Clara Middleton (heroine of *The Egoist*). Everything that happened to Clara in *The Lost Traveller* is the sort of thing that happened to me. *The Lost Traveller* is about Clara while growing to Maturity, it is about the mutual relationships of father, mother and daughter. (Callili ,1979). Moran (2018, p.75) believes that White’s desire to construct a coherent narrative of self, one that would serve as a ‘kind of testimony’, resonates with contemporary scholarship of life-writing in general and on illness narratives or ‘pathographies’ in particular. Jerome Bruner (1994, p.53) writes that ‘self is a perpetually rewritten story; a sense of self, he argues, develops out of stories that ‘impose a structure, a compelling reality in what we experience, (Bruner,2002, p.89): Self is story, ‘a product of our telling and not some essence’ (2002, p. 85). Psychoanalysis and Catholicism function as such structures in White’s life-writing, for these discourses provide narrative models that organize white’s feelings (moods) a long a striking number of parallels. There are many points that indicate Clara’s desperate psychological state. Newton (2014) states that readers are presented with a Freudian Oedipal drama that sends the main protagonist spiraling into psychosis and then back into her father’s arms upon recovery (P.3). Literary critics and biographers on White have suggested that she was a victim of father-daughter incest (Newton, p.3). These all cause Clara to have a dismal psychological state. The first point is related to Clara’s love and fear of her father, Claude Batchelor. Antonia White focuses on two aspects of Claude’s personality in *The Lost Traveller*. Claude shows himself as a man of principle sticking to rules of patriarchy, Catholicism and obliging both his daughter and Wife (Isabel) to follow his rules. Clara becomes angry when once after her grandfather’s death, some of their relatives come to the funeral. Her father, the school master, has been criticized by a group of the rich, vulgar relatives and Clara defends her father telling them: ‘You are always sneering at my father, it’s simply beastly, I wish You’d stop’ (*The Lost Traveller*, p.83). Her father told her; ‘Clara Apologize at once or leave the room’. Then the relatives criticize Clara’s manner: Aunt Louie cut across her, ‘Nice manners, I must say. Is that what you learn from your princesses and duchesses at your Roman Catholic school? On page (90), Claude tells her ‘You’d better go in through the back door and do something to your hair before you go into the sitting room. You’re not fit to be seen.’ She burst out: ‘please, please, Daddy, don’t be so angry, I am sorry, truly I am.’ But he neglected her. Rigidity and firmness is obligatory in Claude’s law.

After a period of time, they have sent Clara to Maryhall which was a small manor house due to Lady Cresset’s message to work as a governess for her son Charles. Her parents accept. Once lady Cresset travels to London for receiving a telegram from her husband and she requires from Clara to take care of her son but unfortunately Charles had an accident and dies. Clara is shocked and has sent to Crickleham park. Her father, Claude becomes really angry and says that ‘she fails in her duty’ (p.285). Clara

faces difficult situations and didn't feel well and terribly frightened from her father's punishment. She had written letters to her father and her friend Patsy 'but couldn't remember a single sentence of either' (p. 311). These incidents affect Clara and has not got any strength for returning back home after such accident. She was busy thinking:

The thought of home was like going back to prison. Never again would he trust her, never again would she be allowed to escape. And she would be utterly alone. There would be no one who knew what she had felt and lived through the last two days. She wandered aimlessly along the misty alleys, losing herself, finding herself back at the tree or the stone bench, she had passed a few minutes before. Soon she found she was completely lost. She stood hesitating, not knowing which direction to take. (*The Lost Traveller*, p.311)

It is really a dangerous and embarrassing situation for a girl about seventeen years old to face such a problem. Only when her mother (Isabel) had written a letter for her, telling her 'Daddy sends you all his love and sympathy in your trouble. He will be writing himself tonight' (P.314). This was a message of rescue for Clara. Once when Clara had been told by her father to leave the room, she takes the nearest door to the garden. After few moments one of their young relatives named Blaze followed her and tried to sooth her but he kisses her and her father had seen them. Clara swears that it was sudden thing and he didn't mean ...it wasn't his fault,' she muttered, hardly knowing what she was saying' (p.91). At that very moment, her father tells her 'I've no right to blame Blaze Hoadley. You were fair game: She burst into tears' (p.91). The other accident when Charles has been killed, Clara was accompanying Archie and Charles, again her father had blamed Clara for being busy with the young Catholic man, Archie and neglects Charles. Clara believes that her father 'would suppose that they had been too occupied with each other to notice what Charles was doing' (p. 315). Actually, rigidity and firmness appeared on the surface but the hidden aspect of Claude's personality is revealed through White's narration to show the real face of Claude.

Clara is not allowed to choose what she wears due to her wish only once when her grandfather passed away, the only black dress suits her wish and was happy to wear it: 'The black velvet dress meant a great deal to her; it was the first she had ever been allowed to choose for herself (p.48). Being in a catholic school, she is not allowed to use a lotion for her hands. Isabel, her mother becomes angry because of all these restrictions imposed on students. She responds angrily: 'Oh, these nuns...these nuns...'wailed Isabel, rolling her splendid eyes. And look at the dreadful way they do your hair. A noble brow is all very well but there are limits, Your hair's easily your best point.' (*The Lost Traveller*, p.50). Clara is terribly terrified from her father's coming home, White narrates metaphorically the way Clara feels when seeing her father: 'From downstairs came the faint crash of the front door. Clara froze like a sacred rabbit. 'It's Daddy', she said. All the

life and colour had gone out of her face. She made for the door. 'I must fly. He might be coming up here' (p.51).

The reader is surprised to find another portrait of Claude. He is fond of music and likes to attend Opera, he likes to listen to Beethoven and Mozart. He invites Clara to the Opera one night. But while reading the lines, it is as if it is written for two lovers not a father and his daughter. In page 116, White narrates: "She went downstairs, feeling obscurely angry with her mother as if, in some way, she had spoilt the evening. But when she saw her father standing in the hall and looking up at her with an almost mischievous smile, as if they were fellow conspirators, all her sense of freshness and gaiety came back. There is an atmosphere of Cinderella and the prince, lovely speech between them. He offered his arm. 'Your carriage is waiting' (*The Lost Traveller*, p.117). Claude confesses to his daughter that when he was nineteen years old, he was a 'cynical young atheist' (p.129). In the same page and against the reader's expectations, Claude tells his daughter: 'I try to fancy how it would be if you and I were not father and daughter! She took it up eagerly' Oh I've often thought that too'. The evil sense of Claude arises when he wishes to take her to a lonely tower and he wishes that they have forgotten their own identities. He says: 'We talk without any self-consciousness". Antonia White confesses in her diary that she has been treated as her father's wife whereas, her mother has been treated as his child. At the same time, he urges her to read *The Egoist* to know how he sees her in his imagination. All what is mentioned by Claude indicates nonsense and absurd. Another proof of Claude's evil aspect is when Patsy, Clara's friend comes to inform Claude Batchelor about last accident happens to her, ironic to the readers expectations, Claude approaches Patsy and kisses her: 'You're made to attract, aren't you? Made to make people forget? He fell on his knees and leant over her, his face close to hers. 'please don't-please. You're not frightened of me now, are you, Patsy?' (p.303). Claude's immoral behavior is scandalizing him, he couldn't control himself and pulled her fur coat open and kissed her neck, almost groaning: 'so white, so soft.' Then he dropped on one knee and kissed her shoe. This is the reality of a man who abused his own daughter during early ages of her childhood and is so weak in front of his lust. Once, Claude was in the church, a young girl was standing beside him, 'suddenly, without warning, the demons of his imagination leapt on her, stripping her, using her with a cold brutality of lust' (*The Lost Traveller*, p.36). He was conscious of something corrupt in the depths of his nature; something at once frigid, impure and violent. He buried his face in his hands muttering over and over again, 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief' (p.36).

Claude was one of the points that abused Clara and caused her mental breakdown due to her early sexual abuse. White's sexually abused by her father in the early age of childhood can be understood clearly through the works of Sigmund Freud. Freud (1895), wrote *Studies On Hysteria*, and *The Aetiology of Hysteria* in (1896), he describes the devastating impact sexual abuse has on a child's mental and emotional development. He makes the claim that patients who suffer from hysteria



may do so as a result of an earlier sexually traumatic experience in childhood by persons who are ‘debauched’ and ‘impotent’ (p.214). what Freud plainly states is that because the relationship between victim and aggressor is founded on love, it is a seductive means used by the aggressor that enables the sexual relationship to develop (See Newton, p.20). Another point that hurt Clara and shocked her is the feeling of disappointment and alienation. There are moments that Clara has felt alienated from everybody. Jeanne Flood (1983) suggests that this trajectory is disrupted in *The Lost Traveller* by Clara’s father’s own incestuous desires in his inability to release his daughter into another man’s arms. However, Clara’s resistances to his seductions have a way of breaking down, to the point that she fails to navigate the Oedipus complex in womanhood; as a result, she subsequently engages in unhealthy sexual relations with men whose impotence sends her back into her father’s arms.

Sometimes she feels that lack of faith in Catholicism is the reason of her terror. On page 154, Clara kisses the ground, whispering ‘still, you know I am grateful’. She remembers Blessed Lady, then Christ himself. She continues in her thinking:

For better or worse, without having sought for it like her father, she ‘saw’. She was a baptized Catholic; she could plead neither blindness nor ‘invincible ignorance’. Unfaithfulness might be pardoned in others; it was unforgivable in herself. The problem came down to one thing. Was she prepared to put her whole self at God’s disposal? (*The Lost Traveller*, p.157).

Clara while feeling desperate and alone, used to walk towards the hills, but sometimes she wished to have a lover and talk to him like any other girl. ‘Suddenly and absurdly, she began to long for that unimaginable lover to appear...hand in hand’ (*The Lost Traveller*, p.158). Clara used to visit Mother Lovell at Mount Hilary. She confesses that her present life is different when she was in the School. She tells Mother Lovell that she goes to Mass, but this was not right. These situations reveal Clara’s contradictory way of living that leads her to psychotic state. Clara confesses to her that ‘I’m just vaguely dissatisfied with the present’ (p.221). White writes that ‘When the bolts had grated behind her, Clara remained standing on the steps, hesitating. Was it relief she felt or a sense of banishment? For no reason, her eyes filled with tears. She blew her nose violently. Then, tightening her lips and fishing out her puff, she defiantly powdered her face on the very threshold of the convent’ (p.223). Clara is hopeless. She is not able to imagine herself as being in love or even married. In reality also, White was not successful in her married life. Clara, the mouth speech of White says ‘I can’t imagine marrying anyone’ said Clara rather gloomily. ‘I expect I’ll be an old maid: I can’t imagine even being in love’ (p.245). White’s creativity lies in her utter authentic, confessional style for she transforms what happened in her life in these series of autobiographical novels and Diaries.

Another crucial point in *The Lost Traveller*, is the call for defending women's voices against patriarchal world. Isabel, Clara's mother is very sick and she tells her that 'Doctors don't know everything' (p.115). She is glad to see her daughter happy and young, 'The great dark eyes stared hungrily, still, it does me good to see you. I have always loved everything young and gay and pretty. Oh why is life so cruel to women. Isabel tells her daughter that if a woman is romantic, she is going to be disappointed after marriage because marriage destroys romantic moments in women and here she means the negligence of her husband, Claude, to her. The relationship between Isabel and Clara was not good due to many reasons. She didn't love her mother, she was not close to her, her father, on the other hand, did not pay attention to his wife. Jane Dunn (2000, p.20), observes that when White was a young girl, she and her mother seemed to behave more like peers by playing games and giggling. Christine neglected to be a responsible mother in favor of identifying and competing with her daughter instead. In page (90) of *The Lost Traveller*, Clara sees her sick mother in bed, but instead of love, she only pities her. This stage in the novel, is linked with White when she has been neglected through childhood by her mother. Newton (2014, p.14), states that White's relationship with her two daughters continued the pattern of maternal neglect that White experienced in her childhood. Susan Chitty and Lynda's childhood was one of abandonment and cruelty. In *Now to my mother* (1985), Susan Chitty describes how her nurse (Nanny) administered frequent spankings and took one of the daughters out of the nursery whilst leaving the other in it. In her desperate need for maternal attention, Susan habitually and ferociously sucked her thumb (p.47).

In a low, troubled voice Isabel said: 'I, The Catholic church is terribly unfair in some ways. Especially to women. Oh darling, I often think for your sake it would have been a good thing if Daddy had had his way and you'd been a boy' (p.135). This makes Clara angry. Though the relationship between Clara and her mother is not close, but the reader notices a defense for women's voices. As an example, there is a wonderful description of Mrs. Cohen, who was a faithful mother to her house in page 177, she is described:

She was never idle but she did everything with a fairy-Like quickness and ease. She would dart from the drawing-room to the kitchen and cook an admirable meal in less time than it would take the average person to assemble the ingredients. She would leave the sewing-machine where she was 'flying up' a dress for one of her daughters to sight-read a difficult accompaniment for Vera without a trace of nervous flurry. Unlike most efficient people, she never made others feel guilty about their laziness; in fact, she had an enchanting gift of managing to appear lazy herself-when her fingers were flying over the keyboard or sewing so fast that the needle seemed to move in a continuous streak, she seemed to watch them with amused detachment as if they

were working without any effort of hers (*The Lost Traveller*, p.177).

White, while narrating these views about women, she reveals the greatness and power women owe in their lives. At the same time, she mocks Claude's role revealing his injustice in treating both his wife and daughter. White at the beginning of the novel makes us uneasy about Isabel but at the end of the story, Isabel succeeds in convincing her daughter to have wise decision concerning her marriage. At last, we admire Isabel for keeping an eye on her daughter and being honest with her. Clara didn't care about her mother and always admires her Dad. When in misery, Clara send a letter for Patsy, her friend and her father. 'Isabel had read Clara's letter again. It was addressed to Claude alone; there was not a single mention of herself in it. A keen pain ran through her. She thought how many times Clara had shut her out like this' (p.286). But at the end of the novel, Isabel succeeds in showing her daughter, Clara the right way and the right step towards happiness and success.

This topic is further addressed in *The Sugar House* which follows her through a tragic marriage and in *Beyond the Glass*, where we see her personality gradually disintegrate as she has a total collapse.

*The sugar House* (1952) delivers a comprehensive semi-autobiographical account of White's marriage to Reggie, this can be seen in Clara's words, "I don't deserve to be loved.... I really believe I'm a kind of monster, not a real person at all, Norman et al (2018) reported that current young girls who suffer the same illness as Clara say exact words.

Newton (2014) claims that "in these narratives, White's alter-egos, Helen and Clara, respectively, are haunted by psychotic delusions and hallucinations that infiltrate their waking lives. At the core of Clara's delusions, in particular, are allusions to a father who seems to be a barrier to her engaging in healthy romantic relationships with possible suitors. This barrier suggests deep Oedipal ties between father and daughter" (17).

White in her first novel *Frost in May* narrates and states about Nanda that "she was one of those children who cannot help behaving well" (*Frost in May*, 17). Nanda, the heroine of *Frost in May* feels that the nuns in this Catholic school discriminate her because she is not from upper class. This act of humiliation affects Nanda and disturbs her. Brown (1992, 125-125) Claims that "Nanda also learns early on the eternal watchfulness of the community for occasions of sin for her plea to be spared a particularly sickening concoction on her plate is greeted with a prim lecture on: 'all the awful consequences, temporal and eternal, which might result from Nanda's allowing herself to become self-indulgent in the matter of food' (27). Brown adds that nevertheless, it is made clear that 'her rebelliousness, such as it was, was directed entirely against the Lippington methods' (*Frost in May*, 157) and her faith remains unshaken, despite moments of doubt and fear. Her struggle with the application of her faith in everyday life is different from that of her friends for whom 'Catholicism isn't a religion, it's a nationality' (122).

In spite of the fact that Nanda tries to preserve her faith, but there was another inner force that pushed her away. She is often assailed by emotional and intellectual doubts, and patches where ‘the whole of religious life seemed a monstrous and meaningless complication’ (135). White in her Quartet aims at achieving female self-development; neither her family, especially her father, nor the circumstances around, give her a chance to reach such a state. Her anger is clear when in *Frost in May*, her protagonist states, “Why can’t we for once do something for its own sake, instead of tacking everything on to our eternal salvation .... It’s impossible to think about God and religion every minute of one’s day .... I don’t want poetry and pictures and things to be messages from God. I don’t mind their being that as well, if you like, but not only that. ... I want them to be complete in themselves” (*Frost in May*, 169-70).

After this stage, her inner self started to rebel and after writing an erotic novel, she was discovered by the nuns and she was expelled out of the Convent School. Clara in *The Lost Traveller*, moves to the outside world, due to these pressures, Clara has to fight to settle her character. There is a kind of loneliness due to Clara’s disturbing feelings and fear towards her parents which led her to be alienated and she faces distasteful loneliness:

There seemed to be a new creature growing up inside her, something still unformed and skinless that could not bear to be exposed to the light. The thoughts that nourished this inner self were too sacred or too silly to be told to her father or mother and the mysterious creature was insistent, resenting interruptions and demanding constant attention (*The Lost Traveller*, 35).

Clara couldn’t have a unified self, her parents led her to such a chaotic sense. Her father had completely disturbed her even in her behavior with people around. Her father did not accept that anybody kissed her. At that moment, Clara looked at her reflection in the mirror finding a different person:

She tried to make up to her father for all the dissatisfaction she sensed him. So her father obliges her to marry their neighbor, Archie. But she completely had a mental breakdown. She believed how keenly Claud desired a son; how ardently she wanted a brother’ (*The Lost Traveller*, 129). Actually nothing happened, their marriage has not been effectuated, vaguely supports her upset mind. Clara couldn’t have her identity completed, and the image of the lost traveler refers to Clara as if she is searching for her lover (here her own identity) but in vain. Self-delusion is one of the features of the modern individual.

White describes all of her female heroines as self-deluded and terribly disappointed when facing reality. Clara feels disappointed and says “all my life you’ve wanted me to think as you thought and do what you wanted and made me feel guilty if I didn’t. Why shouldn’t I live as I want to?” (*The Sugar House*, 169). In *The Sugar House*, Clara loves a young man called Stephen but they could not have a real union, very soon again her marriage ends with disaster. The last part of *Beyond the glass* is about

Clara, White's mental breakdown. Along with her marriages, White had two daughters. Her daughters did not love her. In addition to such abnormal state that White had complained about with her father, is her miserable state because of her mother's negligence.

### Conclusion

Freud has a major impact on White's psychological analysis in her confessional writings. It is clear that White relied on Freud's psychoanalytic genre to analyze and experiment on her own miseries, agonies, dreams and neuroses. Unfortunately, her father had sown doubt in her psychological state that the absence of trust emerged as a sole feature out of early sexual abuse. White's literary achievements rise when she tries to publish her *Quartet* and a part of her diaries. She called for unifying women's agonies and resisting everybody who abuse them and sowing doubt instead of love in their identities. White maintained a necessity to establish a unified female self against a passive self. White was a protagonist of her own stories who live in a patriarchal society, living through traditional narratives of a daughter, married woman and a mother with accompanying qualities such as obedience, passivity, and femininity. Freud and Caruth's theories of PTSD present justifications and answers to the reason behind her traumatic situation. Being sexually abused by her father, humiliated at Convent School, criticized by the nuns and her father, lead her to mental breakdown. White had written about her confrontation of incest, and in her diaries, one can feel how passion and repulsion are depicted in her sexual dreams. The whole of her life, White aimed at having a safe place in her nursery, secure and protected by her parent's love. Her father had destroyed every joyful moment of her life. But her mental breakdown and insanity left her alone in a terrifying world. In spite of her anxieties and miseries, she continued in expressing these miserable moments through her novels to create a unified female self against all suppressions of the patriarchal society.

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### قراءة الصدمة في روايات أنتونيا وايت الاعترافية للسيرة الذاتية

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الملخص:

تقدم الكاتبة الأنكليزية (أنتونيا وايت) صورة واضحة عن امرأة عانت من صدمة الحالة النفسية. خلال طفولتها ، كانت تتعرض الى الأغتصاب المستمر من قبل والدها. هذه الحالة من التوتر و القلق تضرها (وايت) في سلسلة من كتاباتها الروائية عن سيرتها الذاتية. بالنسبة لعلماء النفس، أن الراى ألسديد هو أن الجزء الأهم فى أصابة وايت بالانهيار العصبى يعود الى لاوعيتها من القهر الذى يعود الى فترة طفولتها .

تم استخدام نظريات علم النفس لكل من فرويد و كائى كاروث لتبرير المواقف الغريبة التى تعرضت لها الكاتبة.تهدف الدراسة الى وصف حالة ألقلق فى روايات أنتونيا وايت. أنها تناقش هذه النظريات المذكورة و حالة ألكرب التالى للرضح. بالرغم من ان الكاتبة تعرضت للأذلال الجنسى و المعاملة ألقاسية ، سعت لخلق نفسية أنثوية موحدة فى رواياتها للسيرة الذاتية. قامت بهذا خلال أسلوبها الجرىء وتمردها ضد نضام الأبوى عن طريق السيطرة على قلقها من خلال ألكتابه عن حالتها.

**ألكلمات ألمفتاحية:** أنتونيا وايت، صدمة ، علم النفس ، رواية ألسيرة الذاتية.