Defying the traditional stages of trauma healing in David Lindsay-Abaire's Rabbit Hole and David auburn's proof: A deconstructive analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze how Becca in David Lindsay-Abaire's Rabbit Hole and Catherine in David Auburn's Proof challenge traditional binaries of healing/trauma, safety/vulnerability, and reconnection/isolation. The research design involves a textual analysis and critical interpretation of selected quotations from both plays. This study dismantles the binary oppositions to reveal the fluid and unstable nature of these categories, disrupting conventional narratives of linear recovery by utilizing Derrida's deconstructive approach. The findings reveal that the protagonists in both plays occupy liminal spaces where healing and trauma coexist, creating a complex emotional landscape in which progress and regression are intertwined. Safety is inseparably tied to vulnerability, while reconnection remains entangled with isolation, demonstrating that these states are not mutually exclusive but rather interdependent. This study reveals the deep and multifaceted nature of trauma and healing through an in-depth examination of mourning, grief, and psychological resilience. Additionally, the findings suggest that these plays critique the limitations of binary frameworks in understanding recovery, advocating for more nuanced and flexible interpretations of the healing process. Ultimately, this study highlights how modern drama serves as a powerful tool for exploring the complexities of human emotion and the unpredictable nature of healing in times of intense loss.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is particularly significant as it offers a fresh perspective beyond established interpretations to uncover hidden layers of ideological and narrative complexity. It challenges the conventional frameworks that emphasize adherence to traditional structures and predefined narratives by applying Derridean deconstruction to dismantle traditional healing processes within contemporary dramatic works.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rabbit Hole by Lindsay-Abaire (2006) and *Proof* by Auburn (2001) were written and performed in the early 2000s. Both plays won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Proof also received the Tony Award for best play in 2001. These plays were written during a period characterized by the development of social and cultural perspectives on trauma, mental health, and personal relationships. During this era, there was a rise in public awareness regarding psychological well-being. This rise is shaped by global events, emphasizing collective trauma and the need for new ways to cope with grief on both personal and societal levels (Peckham, 2023). Moreover, mental health discussions started transitioning from the private sphere into mainstream media, aiming to combat stigmas and inviting greater

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empathy toward those struggling with loss or mental illness. This period also saw the rise of complex portrayals of trauma and healing in literature and film driven by an interest in character-focused storylines that deviated from the typical paths of resolution (Zhang & Firdaus, 2024).

Rabbit Hole and *Proof* are considered contemporary American plays that explore the complex nature of grief, loss, and healing, and they challenge traditional ideas of trauma recovery, reflecting the era's broader shift toward more authentic, individualized portrayals of emotional resilience (Gul, 2023). These themes are featured in similar recent plays. For instance, Karam (2015) examines generational and familial tensions (Abdelfadeel, 2024) echoing *Rabbit Hole*'s focus on grief and resilience. Stephens (2012) underlines trauma, personal growth, and familial bonds (Gilbert, 2005) much like the intellectual and emotional challenges depicted in *Proof*. Meanwhile, Neilson (2007) explores mental health and recovery (Biçer, 2018) offering a thematic parallel to both plays. These contemporary works illustrate the continued interest in exploring human relationships and struggles on stage.

Lindsay-Abaire (2010) and Auburn (2001) challenge conventional views on trauma and healing in their works. Traditional models of trauma healing often portray healing as linear with defined stages that lead to stability. For example, Judith Herman's recovery model suggests three stages of recovery: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection indicating a step-by-step progression from trauma to recovery (Zaleski, Johnson, & Klein, 2016). However, *Rabbit Hole* and *Proof* portray characters whose experiences of loss and trauma are far more complex and unpredictable which defies the traditional process of healing. This challenges the privileged insistence on healing as an endpoint of the traumatic process.

This hints at a deconstructive agenda within the play that offers a unique experience of trauma. In his work, Derrida demonstrates that these opposing concepts are not fixed but rather dependent and flexible instead their meaning shifts and adapts based on the context. Derrida also emphasizes the evolving dynamics between these concepts and their internal contradictions. Therefore, this paper argues that Becca in *Rabbit Hole* and Catherine in *Proof* blur the traditional binaries of healing and trauma, safety and vulnerability, and reconnection and isolation, thus revealing the fluidity and instability of these categories and challenging conventional expectations of recovery.

Most of the existing studies focus on narratives that adhere to conventional, linear patterns of healing, emphasizing the stages of recovery that result in a final resolution despite the extensive research conducted on trauma and loss in contemporary drama. Nevertheless, plays such as *Rabbit Hole* and *Proof* defy these traditional structures by portraying complex characters whose trauma experiences hinder their ability to find resolution and stability. This departure indicates an absence in trauma studies within the literature where there is a lack of analysis on how certain works disrupt traditional healing models. The significance of this research is to enhance our understanding of trauma and recovery as explored in literature and drama. This research is relevant especially in the present day as the recognition of various trauma responses and mental health awareness has become increasingly significant. This study serves as a connection between trauma theory and literary analysis, providing a unique perspective on how artistic representations can enhance and expand our understanding of psychological incidents. We can explore how contemporary dramatists are contributing to more complex public discussions on trauma and recovery by focusing on these critically acclaimed plays.

This paper is divided into the following sections: a theoretical framework that demonstrates the approach used, a literature review of the relevant papers, an analysis of the plays and finally a conclusion that sums up the findings of the research paper.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, the researchers are employing a deconstructive framework. It is a critical approach that challenges traditional structures and binary oppositions. Binary opposition refers to contrasting concepts frequently employed in structuring language by highlighting hierarchy and differentiation. They "compromise the two opposite phases or sides" and can be "complex, more ambiguous and more controversial internal connections"

(Naumovska, Rudakova, & Naumovska, 2021). These categories reveal the fluidity and instability of the meaning in a text and suggest that categories are usually perceived as opposites that are not fixed but instead interconnected and constantly shifting. Figure 1 illustrates binary oppositions and how they are challenged through deconstruction.
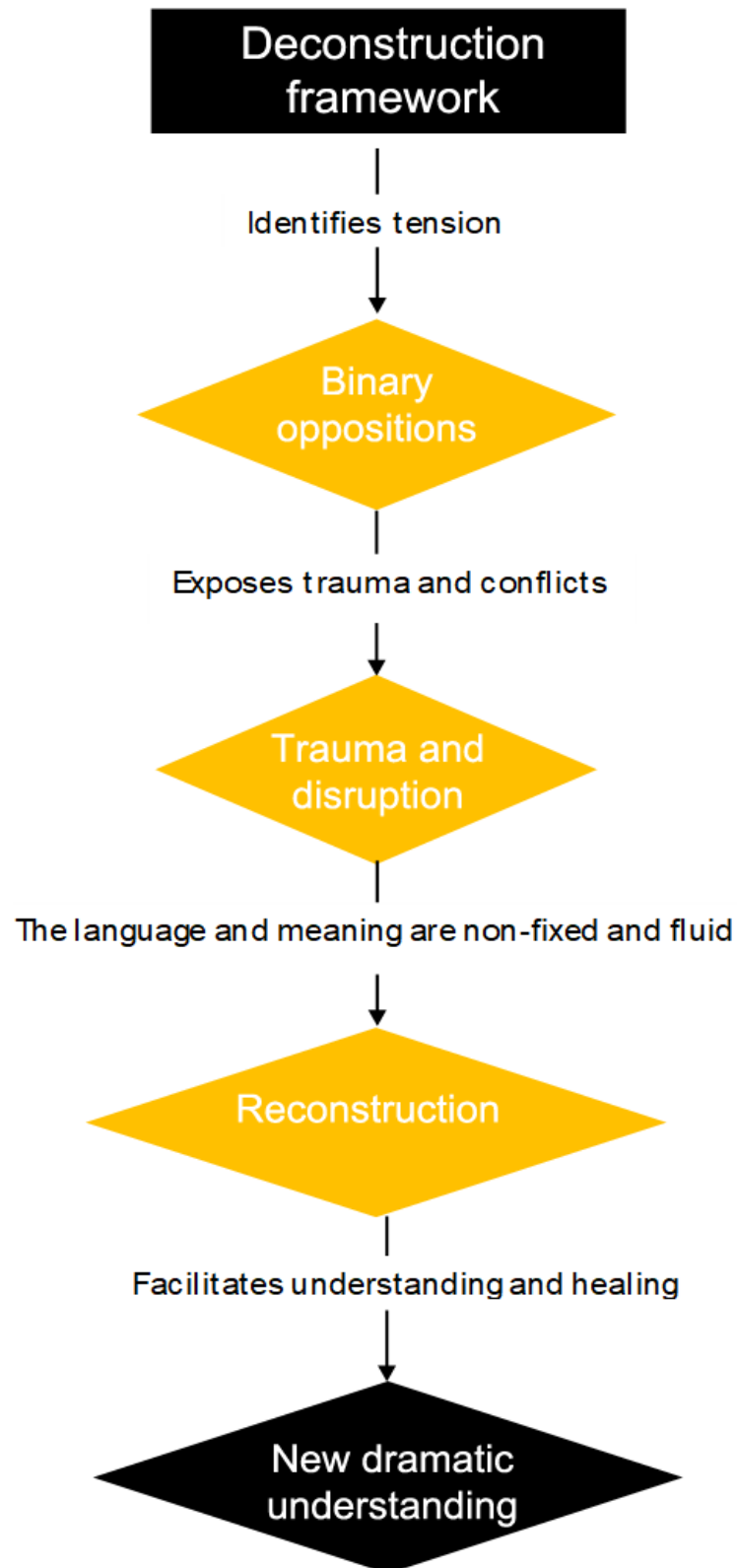

Figure 1. Binary oppositions and deconstruction.

This approach was developed by Jacques Derrida, a French philosopher and literary critic widely regarded as the father of deconstruction. Derrida (1967) significantly shaped the deconstructive critical theory through his influential works. The basis of his ideas is his critique of binary oppositions, suggesting that Western philosophy frequently emphasizes one word over another (for example, presence over absence) leading to a distorted understanding of the meaning (Stocker, 2006). Binary oppositions, as explained by Derrida (1967) are structures created by society to establish organization by fixing interpretations and limiting other possibilities. Derrida (1967) criticizes these contrasts as tools that favor one main element and suppress its opposite, a process he calls "the concept of centered structure." This contradiction shows that these structures are shaped by society rather than being natural which means texts and ideas can be interpreted in countless ways while also questioning prevailing beliefs (Stocker, 2006).

Binary oppositions are employed in different domains including philosophy, literature, and politics. In philosophy, deconstruction examines basic ideas and systems of authority, revealing their lack of stability. Derrida's criticism of logocentrism, which favors speech over writing, shows that speech, usually considered genuine and direct, relies on writing for its organization and significance. This challenges binary opposition like presence or absence and reason or emotion revealing that philosophical frameworks rely on uncertain foundations and questioning the concept of absolute truths (Norris, 2002). In addition, "the concept of binary oppositions finds application in the realm of language and literature" (Zidan, 2023). They highlight the interconnectedness of concepts like hero or villain or reality or fantasy, ultimately disrupting cohesive stories. Derrida's work redirects attention from the intentions of the author to the participatory role of readers in creating meaning. Royle (2017) describes how deconstruction reveals concealed hierarchies and contradictions, allowing for fresh perspectives in literary analysis, which is a dynamic and transformative process (Royle, 2017). In political analysis, Derrida's theory breaks down binaries like authority or resistance, revealing how efforts to challenge power can inadvertently mirror the systems they seek to dismantle. The recurring pattern of power mirrors Derrida's overall criticism of Western metaphysics which is heavily based on dualistic thought (Newman, 2001).

Deconstructive theory questions traditional systems that sustain power, authority, or influence and provides an opportunity to reconsider these concepts in various fields. Derrida's ideas are still relevant as they allow us to challenge established hierarchies and consider different approaches to interpreting and structuring significance. Deconstruction opens avenues for diverse and continual interpretations that surpass established boundaries by challenging presumed stability.

Thus, this study focuses on the representation of binary oppositions in Lindsay-Abaire (2010) where things are blurry, revealing the fluidity and instability of these concepts. The *Rabbit Hole* and *Proof*, using Derrida's binary oppositions by employing the deconstructive theory on both dramatic works. We will examine how the protagonists' (Becca and Catherine) experiences of trauma blur the lines between healing or trauma, safety or vulnerability, and reconnection or isolation, defying conventional paths to recovery.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the research papers that addressed Proof analysed Catherine's character. For example, a research paper analyzed the character of Catharine by examining her psychological struggles with grief. The hallucinations of her dead father clearly reflect unresolved trauma and coping mechanisms that bridge her internal and external worlds. Catherine created a hallucinatory figure that serves as "a gateway into the psyche of the individual, a device that exposes the haunted mind and gives life to the inner workings of the character's troubled subconscious." This study employed a systematic exploration of hallucinatory figures and comparative theoretical analysis. The findings reveal that the interaction with these hallucinations is an indication of deep psychological trauma that may complicate the path to healing (El Shoura, 2022).

Another research paper examines Catherine's fear that she may inherit her father's mental illness, adding to her trauma as she wanted to prove that "she is still mentally in good health and not insane." This study investigates whether *proof* as a title reflects the central theme of the play by analyzing the character of Catharine using a character-analysis approach and a formalistic method. This study suggests that "the title is highly related to the central theme of this play" (Abbas & Abdullah, 2022).

Further exploration is undertaken by Henke, Schaffeld, and Voigt (2017) in examining Catherine's character utilizing the lenses of Freudian theories, particularly focusing on mental illness and Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia. Catherine's ambiguous mental state and lethargic withdrawal from reality suggest traits of melancholia, reflecting her unresolved grief and possible link to her father's mental illness. Freud's ideas on repression and unconscious conflict are also relevant as Catherine's mathematical brilliance among her instability may be viewed as sublimation.

Similar themes are echoed in the analysis of Becca's character in *Rabbit Hole* based on the exploration of grief and trauma in *Proof* through Catherine's experiences. Research was conducted to explore the psychological trauma experienced by Becca following her son's death. This study applies the psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on Freudian and Schiraldi's post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) theories which is a psychological condition triggered by experiencing a traumatic event. Symptoms include re-experiencing the trauma or its frightening aspects, avoidance of thoughts, memories, people and places associated with the event, emotional numbness and symptoms of elevated arousal (Foa, Keane, & Friedman, 2000). The finding indicates that Becca exhibits classic PTSD symptoms, including avoidance, guilt, and depression. Therefore, Becca's bad characteristics, which are caused by her trauma affect her relationship with everyone around her, especially the people who are closer to her the most (Binyamin Sobhy & Mark, 2023).

Another investigation is conducted on Becca's experience of loss and grief which illustrates how the death of a beloved family member can change relationships and roles not only for individuals but also for entire families in modern-day America. The analysis of *Rabbit Hole* shows that the family is forced to deal with their grief over their son and subsequently face off and learn ways of managing and coping with their suffering utilizing a trauma lens (Gul, 2023).

This study examines how the characters in *Rabbit Hole*, particularly Becca, cope with grief through the lenses of psychoanalytic theory focusing on Freudian and post-Freudian ideas as well as trauma theory principles by Glenn Schiraldi's breakdown of PTSD symptoms such as anxiety, dissociation, and avoidance delving deeper into Becca's coping mechanisms. The research paper employs detailed examination and textual interpretation to investigate how grief is expressed and changes within the characters. The findings reveal that the characters display symptoms of PTSD in response to loss by using coping strategies such as avoidance and anxiety or by finding comfort through relationships and creative activities or spirituality to deal with their grief effectively. It also emphasizes how acceptance plays a crucial role in moving forward in life after experiencing loss as shown by some of the characters' choices to continue with their lives despite facing significant hardships (Hamza & Rasha, 2022).

There has been limited research on deconstructive theory regarding the plays of Lindsay-Abaire (2006) by Lindsay-Abaire (2010). Most studies concentrate on character psychology or thematic aspects like grief, identity, and personal change without exploring the layers of significance within these plays. Instead, they rely on traditional methods, missing how deconstructive analysis could shed light on how these plays challenge conventional binary distinctions. This study expands the theoretical applications in drama studies and enriches literary criticism by demonstrating that more work could be done to explore these plays through a deconstructive lens and providing new perspectives on the texts' complexities by challenging traditional interpretations.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Entrapment in a Healing/Trauma Vicious Circle

According to Lindsay-Abaire (2006) and Auburn (2001) Becca and Catherine's journeys toward healing are profoundly influenced and complicated by the coexistence and overlapping of binaries such as healing or trauma, safety or vulnerability, and reconnection or isolation, revealing the fluidity of opposite forces. Firstly, trauma creates a cycle of entrapment, where healing and pain coexist in both plays. Becca and Catherine face unresolved memories, repression, and identity crises that trap them in a relentless cycle of grief.

In *Rabbit Hole*, Becca's grief creates a constant state of entrapment between healing and trauma as she struggles with memory, repression, and rebuilding her post-loss identity. Her grief over the loss of her son Danny creates an in-between state where healing seems simultaneously necessary yet impossible. Her relationship with memory is fraught as she feels trapped by the physical reminders of Danny in their home. She tries to remove objects associated with him, like his drawings on the fridge, to cope and to lessen the pain. Yet, as she says, "Things aren't… tidy. You know that. They're just… different" (Lindsay-Abaire, 2006) (act 1, scene 3), revealing that her attempts to distance herself from painful memories do not bring her closer to healing. Instead, this act of repression only intensifies her feelings of isolation and deepens her internal conflict. On the other hand, her husband Howie holds onto these memories to keep Danny's presence alive, watching old videos of him and expressing frustration when Becca tries to discard Danny's belongings. He sees it as an erasure of their son's memory, saying, "You're trying to make things easier on yourself… like Danny never existed" (act 1, scene 3). Howie also confronts Becca about her feelings towards Danny and says, "I miss him. Why can't you just say that? Why can't you say you miss him too?" (act 1, scene 3). She responded, "I'm not having this conversation. I can't do this. I'm sorry" (act 1, scene 3). Her attempts to suppress painful reminders create a sense of tension where memory serves as a connection keeping her in a loop, and forcing her to continuously revisit her loss.

Becca's failed attempts to rebuild her identity outside her role as a mother further exacerbate this entrapment. Becca is stuck between wanting to reclaim her individuality and feeling guilty about moving on. Her interactions with her sister Izzy reflect this struggle. Izzy is progressing with her own life. Becca feels stuck unable to redefine herself beyond her loss. She confesses, "I don't even know who I am anymore, I used to be a mother, now I'm not. What does that make me" (act 2, scene 2), highlighting her struggle to rebuild her identity outside of her grief. Becca also tries to reinvent herself by considering a return to work or planning to move, but these efforts often fall flat as she remains tied up to her grief. An example is when Becca says, "Something's always going to be missing now. It is always going to be there" (act 1, scene 4). This quote encapsulates the lasting impact of her loss and the difficulty in escaping the cycle of trauma. Another example of the failed attempts at rebuilding identity is this evident scene when Becca attempts to return to the support group. Her sardonic response to another mother's religious consolation reveals her inability to accept conventional healing narratives: "God needs another angel? Why didn't he just make one? Another angel? He's God, after all. Why didn't he just make another angel?" (act1, scene 2). This bitter rejection of comfort demonstrates how each attempt to "move forward" only reinforces her trapped state. Becca's fractured identity, coupled with Howie's insistence on holding onto their memories, creates tension and reinforces the cycle, making it clear that Becca's fractured identity and her inability to move forward are deeply intertwined with her unresolved grief.

In *Proof,* Catherine's entrapment in a healing or trauma cycle is deeply connected to her repressed fears, haunting memories of her father and unsuccessful attempts to establish her own identity apart from him. After her father Robert's death, Catherine remains tied to his memory and legacy struggling to distance herself from the traumatic years spent caring for him during his mental decline. Her identity is so closely bound to her role as Robert's caretaker that she finds it difficult to envision a life beyond it revealing her internal conflict when she says, "I can't take care of you forever. I can't stay here forever" ((Auburn, 2001) act 1, scene 1). These words emphasize both her dedication and her resentment showcasing how her caretaker role became a form of self-repression. Even

after his death, she remains tied to his memory and struggles to trust her stability, frequently questioning, "I'm not… like him" (act1, scene 2).

Catherine's struggle with entrapment is deeply tied to her fear of inheriting her father's madness. This fear accelerated until she repressed her mathematical abilities. She uses repression as a form of self-protection and this becomes evident when Catherine denies authorship of the groundbreaking proof, saying, "I didn't write it!" (act 2, scene 2). Her hesitation to claim the proof reflects her struggle to separate herself from her father's legacy and establish herself as a mathematician in her way. Similarly, when Hal discovers the proof, he questions its authenticity, which further destabilizes Catherine's confidence and her mental stability. This skepticism from others and her own self traps her in a traumatic loop, as every step toward self-affirmation is met with fear and scrutiny. The play explores how Catherine's fear of confronting her own potential leaves her paralyzed. She cannot fully claim either her father's legacy or forge her path. This is highly illustrated when she says, "I'm afraid I'm like my dad… I'm afraid I'll end up like him" (act 1, scene 2), when she also says, "I'm just afraid I'll wake up and not know who I am anymore" (act 1, scene 4). These excerpts illustrate how her efforts to escape her father's destiny could ironically steer her towards it, perpetuating the in-between state where she is caught between healing and the lingering effects of trauma.

4.2. Self-Destructiveness in the Context of Safety /Vulnerability

Secondly, as for self-destructiveness in the context of safety/vulnerability, both Becca in *Rabbit Hole* and Catherine in *Proof* frequently show self-destructive behaviors that challenge the conventional understanding of safety and vulnerability by illustrating how these concepts collapse into one another, exposing the complexities of human emotion and the impossibility of categorizing experience into rigid oppositions. An analysis of their grief, guilt, and search for meaning reveals the fragility of these oppositional categories.

In *Rabbit Hole*, Becca's grief over losing her son, Danny, highlights the fluidity of safety and vulnerability, where attempts to preserve one often intensify the other. Her obsession with erasing Danny's presence from her home such as when she removes his drawings from the fridge and packs away his belongings, reflects her desire to establish safety by avoiding painful memories. Then she justified her action to her husband, Howie by saying, "I just don't need to be reminded every day" (Lindsay-Abaire, 2006) (act 1, scene 3). Yet this act of clearing Danny's room heightens her vulnerability, separating her from Howie and deepening her emotional isolation. Also, her denial of safety within shared grief is shown when she rejects Howie's video of Danny, snapping, "You're not in a better place than I am; you're just handling it differently" (act 1,   scene 4). Here, Becca's vulnerability emerges as a confrontation with her inability to manage her pain, unraveling the illusion of safety in avoidance.

Conversely, Becca's decision to meet Jason, the teenage driver who is responsible for Danny's death highlights how vulnerability can create pathways to safety. Jason's letter to Becca where he expresses guilt and shares a story about a parallel universe where Danny is alive sparks a moment of connection. As she says, embracing vulnerability by engaging with Jason, "I can't stop thinking about that other version of us" (act 2,   scene 3). This act of confronting her grief allows Becca to acknowledge her pain rather than suppress it, which inexplicably leads to emotional stability. Initially, Becca's grief shows how the denial of vulnerability amplifies instability, and how her vulnerability is perceived as a source of destruction, which becomes a means of finding a new form of safety, blurring the boundaries between the two binaries.

As in *Proof,* Catherine's struggle with her father's death and her own mathematical potential illustrates the fluidity of safety and vulnerability. Her supposed safety in the familiarity of her father's home and her routine becomes a place of destruction. Her caretaking role, which she claims with "I lived with him. I spent my life with him" ((Auburn, 2001)   act 1,   scene 2), highlights her perception of safety within this relationship, yet it simultaneously destroys her self-determination and isolates her from the world outside. This isolation is mirrored in her refusal to engage with Hal, who represents validation but also the risk of exploitation. When she tells Hal, "I

trusted you… I could never really trust you again" (act 2, scene 2), her vulnerability is evident, and her rejection of Hal reinforces her self-destructive isolation.

Additionally, Catherine's mathematical genius complicates this dynamic further. Her father's madness is intertwined with his genius which makes her intelligence a double-edged sword, offering safety through intellectual validation yet threatening her with the vulnerability of inheriting his mental instability. Her repeated assertion, "I'm not crazy" (act 2, scene 1), reflects her desperate resistance to this association. Yet her self-doubt prevents her from fully embracing her abilities, as seen in her reluctance to claim ownership of the proof she authored. This hesitation reveals the instability of the safety or vulnerability binary as her intellectual gifts, meant to offer stability, signify her fear of losing herself to madness. Thus, Catherine's genius and isolation demonstrate how safety collapses into vulnerability while vulnerability shields her from further emotional risk.

4.3. The Dual Effect of Interactions Both Isolating and Connecting Both Becca and Catherine

Thirdly, this journey towards healing also involves the intertwining of reconnection/isolation that emerged through self-protection and confrontation. Both Becca and Catherine defend themselves from emotional pain by isolating themselves, however, this isolation often allows for moments of reconnection. In addition, reconnecting moments with people around them could involve feeling distress and reminding them of their loss which eventually leads to isolation.

In *Rabbit Hole*, Becca distances herself from her husband, Howie, to protect herself from the unbearable pain of her son's death as Howie deals with his emotions by engaging in sentimental practices. These include viewing videos of Danny or keeping his belongings while Becca finds these memories too distressing. When Howie proposes watching the videos as a group, Becca rejects the idea by suggesting, "Why don't you tape over them?" (Lindsay-Abaire, 2006) (act 1, scene 3). Her response indicates her unease in revisiting memories that magnify her suffering. As in the safety/vulnerability context, Becca chooses to take away Danny's possessions, stating, "It's not about him. It's about me. I'm just trying to make things a little easier for myself" (act 1, scene 2). Becca creates an emotional separation from her sadness that causes arguments with Howie by getting rid of these items. Howie blames her for erasing Danny's memory, saying, "I'm trying to hang on to a little bit of him, and you're trying to get rid of him" (act 1, scene 2). Thus, Becca is certainly making connections with Howie, yet her protective withdrawal often complicates these interactions that show the blurred boundaries between isolation and connection. Becca's efforts to engage with him are mixed with her need to preserve her emotional boundaries. This dynamic illustrates the complexity of the healing process, where isolation and connection coexist and influence one another.

Furthermore, Becca can reconnect with others through confrontation. However, confronting her feelings and anxieties usually reinforces her sense of isolation and pulls her deeper into her internal struggles. This highlights the overlapping nature of these feelings, which illustrates how reconnection and isolation can coexist. For instance, when she reconnects with Jason to discuss her son's tragic accident, it forces her to confront her unresolved grief and further isolates her. This interaction between them blurs the clear distinctions between coming together and being isolated since this involvement increases her suffering instead of easing it. Moreover, during the conversation, Becca frequently shifts the topic with Jason to avoid facing the full extent of their collective grief. She places importance on casual conversations, such as providing drinks "Can I get you milk or something? I don't have any soda," (act 2, scene 1) to delay dealing with Danny's death. When Jason brings up the accident, Becca changes the subject to things not related, like their upcoming move, "we're thinking about it. If we can find a buyer" (act 2, scene1). Her efforts to direct the discussion indicate her unease and desire to safeguard her emotions. Becca's attempts to connect with Jason while also maintaining emotional boundaries blur the line between isolation and reconnection, highlighting the sophisticated nature of her healing journey.

In a similar manner, Catherine isolates herself to be protected from criticism and being misunderstood. However, this isolation often leads to weak connections with the people around her. For instance, when she decided

to stay alone in the family house after her father's death, she had an opportunity to reconnect with her sister Claire. This connection involves moments of isolation as seen in Clair's suggestion asking Catharine to relocate to New York, saying," I think it would be easier for you. A change. A fresh start" (Auburn, 2001) (act 1, scene 4). Claire's gesture shows her dedication to backing Catherine and assisting her in progress, resulting in a moment of connection.

Nevertheless, Catherine views this as manipulative and condescending, perceiving that Claire diminishes her personal freedom and the sentimental value of their familial residence. This enhances Catherine's feelings of loneliness as she believes she is not understood and is being denied acceptance. Simultaneously, the proposal exposes Claire's wish to reestablish a connection, despite her imperfect method. This tension demonstrates how caring can both bring people together and push them apart. Nevertheless, Catherine's reaction to Claire's idea of relocating to New York is one of sarcasm and defensiveness, showing her annoyance and lack of trust. Catherine asks, "you want to help now? Where have you been?" (act 1, scene 4). She views the suggestion to manipulate her life instead of real help, intensifying her feelings of loneliness. Catherine voices her anger and opposition to Claire's plans by saying, "I'm not going to New York. I don't need a change, and I don't need a fresh start" (act1, scene4). All these acts indicate that their relationship is a mix of reconnection and isolation, where their efforts to connect sometimes actually push them apart.

Additionally, Catherine's confrontation with Hal shows how her effort to bond with him also pushes her away, making it difficult to differentiate between reconnecting and isolating. When Catherine presents her evidence, it is a major display of trust, however, Hal's quick doubt "I'm just trying to determine what we're looking at" (act 2, scene1) shows skepticism that left her feeling disregarded and not properly understood. This uncertainty causes Catherine to retreat emotionally, saying, "You don't think I could have done this" (act 2, scene1) expressing her frustration and pain. Her statement, "I wrote it. It's mine" (act 2, scene1) emphasizes the conflict between her eagerness for connection and her feeling of being undervalued, leading to her increased detachment. Hal's failure to confirm the accuracy of her work makes Catherine feel more isolated. This interaction shows how Catherine's attempts to fix her relationship with Hal do nothing but increase her sense of loneliness. This binary emphasizes the unpredictable nature of healing.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored how Becca in *Rabbit Hole* and Catherine in *Proof* challenge the traditional healing process, breaking the boundaries between healing/trauma safety/vulnerability, and reconnection/isolation. These categories are not fixed or separate but rather fluid and interconnected through a deconstructive approach. Becca's character and her attempts to deal with her loss and the need to move on with her life and Catherine's struggle to accept her father's death show that healing and trauma can coexist; vulnerability can be a source of strength and connection can both be a source of strength and a barrier. Ultimately, this study highlights the effectiveness of the deconstructive theory in understanding the recovery process as a multifaceted and incremental process that does not necessarily follow a linear course and, thus, provides a richer understanding of how people deal with the lasting impact of trauma.

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