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## Conceptualizing Trauma in Eric Walters' *We All Fall Down*: A Cognitive Approach to 9/11 Trauma Metaphor

### Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of September 11, 2001

#### *Abstract:*

There are many stylistic attempts to examine the trauma in 9/11 literature (Jaff and Al-Jumaili 2020; Al-Jumaili and Jaff 2020; Jaff 2020), however, no study attempted to discuss Eric Walters' *We All Fall Down* (2006) stylistically. Therefore, the main focus of the current paper is to investigate the metaphorical representation of trauma stress in Eric Walters' *We All Fall Down* (2006). The paper investigates the ways the experiences of traumatic stress are communicated via metaphors. The study adopts insights from the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) as a model of analysis on selected metaphors from the novel. The application of conceptual metaphor theory on literary texts helps in a better understanding of how different feelings are communicated through metaphors. In Walters' novel, many linguistic metaphors are used to communicate traumatic stress, such as "thunderous explosion", "flood", "ghosts", "bizarre movie", "wave", "drawing". In addition, in "*We All Fall Down*", the recurrent conceptual structures are NEGATIVE EMOTION IS NATURAL FORCE, EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE, NEGATIVE EMOTION IS DOWN and SADNESS IS A NATURAL FORCE. The paper also discusses the mapping process to examine the sources domains conceptual structures that are mapping onto the target domain to modify and clarify the meaning of traumatic stress in the novel.

Keywords: Keywords: Eric Walters, We All Fell Down, Source Domain, Target Domain, Cross-Domain Mapping, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, 9/11 Attacks Trauma Representation, 9/11 Literature.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

After September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks take place, many authors attempted to present a narration to reflect on what happened on that and to show how the comfort of American was disturbed. Eric Walters' *We All Fall Down* (2006) is among the first North American writers who attempt to tell the enormity of these attacks in literary form. The literary representation of 9/11 attacks sparked many debates, for instance, Don DeLillo, "in *The Ruin Of The future*" (2001), states it is the task of literary figures to shed light on evaluating, rather than responding, the 9/11 attacks in literature. In other words, DeLillo believes that fiction should concentrate on evaluating the psychological impact of the 9/11 attacks, rather than attempting to produce a jingoism or patriotic account (2001). Versluys is another researcher who studies the representation of 9/11 attacks in *Out of the Blue September 11 and the Novel* (2009). He believes that of the 9/11 fiction plot must be mechanical. He believes that, because the 9/11 fiction is narrating the shattered psyche of 9/11 victims, the narration should not be coherent, "linguistically diffident" (2009, 14). He thinks that the narration of 9/11 fiction should reflect the psyche of the worn-out traumatized mind. He also states that 9/11 fiction should compensate the symbolic value of the fallen towers. Moreover, Martin Randall and Richard Gray also discussed the stylistic and thematic aspects of the 9/11 fictions. Both agree, with slight variation, that the 9/11 fictions must avoid localization of the attacks and both refute the media patriotic rhetoric. Moreover, they state that the 9/11 fictions must reflect on the unspeakable and silent trauma that American's have to endure in the proposed fictional narration.

The previous attempts to study 9/11 fictions took different approaches; some scholars investigated the ethical and emotional impact of the 9/11 attacks (Versluys, 2009; Mauro, 2011; Gleich, 2014) in literature. Others took a psychological approach to examine the impact of the 9/11 attacks on the 9/11 trauma victims (Huehls, 2008; Pozorski, 2014). Moreover, some other researches are adopting cognitive poetics, Conceptual metaphor Theory, model, to investigate the metaphorical representation of trauma stress in 9/11 novels (Jaff and Al-Jumaili, 2020; Al-Jumaili and Jaff, 2020; Jaff, 2020; Jaff *et al.*, 2021). However, Eric Walters' *We All Fall Down* has not been tackled thematically, psychologically nor stylistically. Therefore, this paper is dedicated to studying trauma-related metaphors in Walters' novel.

Walters' novel is one of the examples to understand the tremendous impact of the 9/11 attacks. The novel employs the first-person narrator to tell the story of a ninth-grade student, Will Fuller, whose father is an important executive officer working at the World Trade Towers. The course of the events is taking place in two days, starting on 9/11. The novel narrates the story of Will, who is a normal American kid who has a crush on a girl and dreams of joining a band. He is reluctant to spend a whole day at his father's, John Fuller, office in the South Tower. Will witnesses the attacks, during the attacks, Will will discover the second dimension of his much-busy father, a real compassionate father who

barely manages to show he could be a good caring father. Will is a first-hand witness of the 9/11 brutal attacks which generate traumatic emotions which prevail throughout the novel.

## 2.1 METHODOLOGY

The current paper examines the metaphorical representation of traumatic experiences in Walters' novel. As the model of analysis, the paper benefits from the current view— Conceptual metaphor Theory (CMT)— of metaphor which is popularized by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). In their seminal books, Lakoff and Johnson (1980), offer a new perspective to metaphors, they suggest that metaphor is a vehicle of understanding one type of experience in terms of another. They also argue that metaphor is a form of conceptual structure that involves “all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences” (Lokoff & Johnson, 1980: 235). They also argue that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action too. In other words, metaphors are manifestations of the way we are thinking and acting as well. Moreover, metaphor is a common way of dealing with “complex and mysterious phenomena” such as illness (Stibbe, 1998: 190). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also argue that metaphor can help us to explain what literally is unexplainable.

Lakoff and Johnson's theory holds that metaphors are central to thought and not merely linguistic ornamental rhetorical devices. The central claim of CMT is that the way we think is shaped and controlled by metaphors. CMT claims that metaphors are pervasive in human daily communication that almost becomes an unnoticed part of speech and metaphors grow out of human daily experience of objects (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The use of metaphor is viewed to be a cognitive process that the human brain performs naturally, unconsciously and systematically without any noticeable effort (Lakoff, 1980: 245). CMT refers to the conceptual system which is understanding of one idea or conceptual domain in terms of another, a domain is “the general field to which a category or frame belongs in a given situation” (Radden & Dirven, 2007: 11). CMT argues that a conceptual metaphor is a conceptual structure realized in language through linguistic metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson propose a dual system of “target domain” and “source domain” which is functioning as a tool to identify the two involving parts of a metaphor. The target domain is usually an abstract notion that is difficult to understand, while the source domain is concrete and easily understood. The mind works by transferring ideas from one conceptual domain (a source domain) onto another (a target domain) (Redling, 2017: 48).

The current study benefits from CMT to examine the metaphorical expressions of trauma stress which are used in Walters' novel by the main character. The proposed cognitive framework is helping in identifying and discussing the involved conceptual metaphors which contribute to

conceptualization of traumatic experiences of Walters' characters. Conceptual metaphors will be introduced in the text with SMALL CAPS; they always come with the order of "target domain is source domain". The following section examines selected metaphorical expressions of the main character of the novel who communicate his traumatic experiences metaphorically. The traumatized character is Will and he also reports the way his father communicates his traumatic experiences through his perception.

Before analyzing the metaphorical representation of trauma in Eric Walters' *We All Fall Down*, it is crucial to define trauma concept which is pervasively referred to in this study. Although trauma could entail physical and psychological injuries, in this paper only linguistic representation of mental state of trauma stress is studied. In other words, physical trauma is beyond the scope of this research. Here, Caruth's definition of literary representation of trauma is adopted. In *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth defines trauma as "a mind-boggling experience of unexpected or disastrous occasions wherein the reaction to the occasion happens in the regularly postponed, uncontrolled dull appearance of pipedreams and other meddling marvels" (1996: 11). In contrast to actual and physical injuries, which for the most part are healable, the psychological injury is very disturbing and for the most part not healable.

Throughout history, different terminologies are given to trauma: "shell shock, combat neurosis, or traumatic neurosis" (Caruth, 1996: 130). In the eighties of the previous century, American Psychiatric Association unifies these overwhelming terminologies to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). APA asserts that "directly experiencing the traumatic event(s), witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others, experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse)" are generating trauma stress (APA, 2013: 271).

On the other hand, Dominick LaCapra (2001) studied the representation of trauma in literary texts. He describes trauma as a "disruptive experience that disarticulated the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered" (41). Moreover, LaCapra, coins "acting out" and "working through" to distinguish between two phases of experiencing the recurrent trauma stress and producing a memories of the traumatic incident. According to LaCapra, "acting out" is the phase when the trauma stress victims remember what happened, the losses he/she has to endure, and the amount of the destruction of traumatizing attacks. On the other hand, "working through", LaCapra stresses, is the phase in which trauma victims are able to produce a structured, or fragmentary or semi-structured memory in the form of narration (2014, 148). However, even in the second phase, trauma victims are reluctant to tell their stories (Caruth, 1995).

Even if traumatized people try to narrate their traumatizing stories, describing the trauma-related complex feelings and emotions literally is considered to be a daunting task, therefore, metaphors and symbols are considered good tools to

help traumatized people to narrate their fully-imbued traumatic memories (McLean and Woody, 2001: 215; Wilson and Lindy, 2013: 39; Fabrizio, 2020: 154). Therefore, scholars found that figurative language could be very helpful tools traumatized people to compare the enormity of their abstract state of traumatic stress to more familiar objects, in other words, metaphors could be very useful in expressing traumatic experiences of traumatized individuals (Junghaenel, Smyth and Santner, 2008: 51).

In this study, the above definitions and characteristics of the mental state of trauma are employed. This paper is dedicated to investigating the representation of traumatic experiences through metaphors in Walter's novel. The research investigates the donated structures of the source domain to elaborate the meaning and the scale of trauma experiences by different characters in the novel. For space and time limitations, only selected metaphors of the main character will be analyzed. The analysis starts with metaphors of Will Fuller, the main character and he also reports the experiences of his father from his perception.

### 3.1 ANALYSIS

The paper starts with the main character, Will Fuller. Will is a high school boy, he is living a normal and peaceful life. He recently moved to another town. Will does not have a good relationship with his father. Will feels lonely because his father is always busy with working and he does not have enough time for Will. Will's father, John Fuller, is in charge of warden in one of the South tower's offices. Will's mind is not able to make sense of what happened on that day, he states "I blinked my eyes, I rubbed them, trying to understand, trying to comprehend what I was seeing. I opened my eyes again. It was still there. This couldn't be real" (Walters, 2007: 73). This statement shows that Will's condition is indescribable no matter how much he tries to comprehend the circumstances. He still sees things with floating eyes and flashes which look like streaks of light. He is completely surprised, shocked, and in doubt. These symptoms are often normal responses to trauma, negative changes in temperament and cognition affect the psychological, mental conditions, violence, and behavior (Pearlman *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, the most prevalent metaphorical concepts found are related to shock and wound, to impart complex phenomena and mental state. Many studies found that trauma victims normally turn to utilizing figurative language, in particular metaphor and metonymy, to express mental conditions (Lakoff, 1999; Kövecses, 2000; Meier and Robinson, 2005; Demjén, 2010).

The first metaphorical representation of traumatic experiences occurs while Will and his father are in the south Tower's office and the attacks are taking place. To show the psychological condition of Will, Walters captures the scene through a metaphor. Will's traumatic experiences are communicated via "thunderous explosion", as he states "There was a thunderous explosion and my eyes widened as a brilliant flash of light burst outside the windows" (Walters,

2006: 71). In this extract, Will's trauma is conceptualized in terms of "thunderous". Although the captions of the 9/11 attacks show that the sky was almost clear and there were no sign of rain or thunder on that day, yet Will uses thunder to describe the way he experienced traumatizing attacks. According to the Oxford dictionary, thunder usually correlates with a very loud voice, very powerful or intense (Oxford online dictionary, 2021). The attacks accompanied by terrifying loud voice. Therefore, the "thunder" is used to talk about the impact of airpnales hitting towers, not actual thunder. Will is terrified due to being exposed to a very loud and powerful voice, his ears are not able to perceive the huge sound, he can not think superlatively, instead, he compared the unknown horrifying sound to "thunderous" which was used metaphorically rather than literally. Therefore, comparing the literal meaning with the contextual use suggests that the noun phrase "thunderous explosion" is a metaphorical expression used to stand for an abstract quality. The abstract quality is Will's mental state which affects his mental health and his psychological condition impedes him from being analytical in a rational way.

Psychologically, some clinical studies dedicated to understanding the way trauma stress victims are experiencing their traumatic stress report that individuals who are traumatized, think that they are hearing lightning and thunder (Addley, 1997: 192). Conceptually speaking, in the noun phrase "thunderous explosion" a cross-domain mapping is involved between source domain "thunderous" and target domain of trauma stress. Through the process of cross-domain mapping, many conceptual structures mapped from the source domain of "thunder" to modify the meaning of the abstract status of the target domain of Will's negative mental state of traumatic stress. As a result of the cross-domain mapping, conceptual structures such as destruction, disruptiveness, lighting, noise, and reverberant are mapped from the source domain of "thunderous explosion" onto the target domain of trauma. As a result of the cross-domain mapping, the abstract state of trauma stress receives a newly constructed meaning; Will's traumatic experience can be understood in terms of destruction, disruptiveness, noise, and reverberation. The analogy drawn by the cross-domain mapping is as the attacks take place, Will's mind prevents him from interpreting the events comprehensibly, understanding things coherently and prevents him from being able to speak for a while and making an enormous confusion about the situation. In other words, the trauma is given the destructive powers of thunder, when trauma victims remember the traumatized events, they are feeling that thunder is striking. This metaphorical expression, the "thunderous explosion", is the linguistic realization of the conceptual metaphors of A MENTAL STATE IS A NATURAL FORCE and SADNESS IS NATURAL FORCE (Beger, 2011: 339) EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE and EMOTION IS FIRE ( Kövecses, 2003: 64).

Another metaphorical representation of trauma occurs when Will states that "... choking my lungs as my ears were flooded with sounds so intense it felt as if my eardrums might burst" (Walters, 2006: 206). In this extract, "flood" is used

in a metaphorical sense. The metaphor occurs when Will reaches outside the building, he tries to call his mother but suddenly the building collapses, he is stuck under the smashed concrete. Although “flood” may be interpreted literally as describing a natural force of the floods, in the given context, the character is not talking about an actual flood. Therefore, comparing and contrasting the literal meaning with the contextual use suggests that “flood” is a metaphorical expression used to stand for an abstract quality. The lexical item “flood” is used metaphorically to refer to the crowds running, bumping into each other and the impact of fragments of collapsing towers hitting survivors. “Flood” is also used to describe the amount of fear Will is experiencing due to falling under the debris of the collapsing tower. The abstract quality referred to is Will’s traumatic experience which affects his mental health and somatic parts which impede him from thinking coherently and logically.

Conceptually, the verb “flood” provides the target domain of trauma with conceptual structures to describe the target domain of Will’s negative mental state of traumatic experience. Through the cross-domain mapping, conceptual structures of “flood” such as overflow, spate, stream, rush are mapped from the source domain of “flood” onto the target domain of trauma. Appropriately to the mapping process, the abstract state of trauma receives a newly constructed meaning; Will’s trauma can be understood as a destructive, overflowing, and impossible-to-stop force. Moreover, as “flood” comes from nowhere and occurs without a warning and leaves destructions behind, trauma stress acquires the same qualities and the metaphor reaffirms that trauma stress strikes spontaneously, intrusively, without warning and leaves devastating consequences on the mind of trauma victims (APA, 2013: 271). This metaphorical expression, “flooded” is the linguistic realization of the conceptual metaphors of EMOTION IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (Kövecses, 2010), SADNESS IS A PHYSICAL FORCE (Kövecses, 2000), and SAD IS DOWN (Kövecses, 2010).

Another metaphorical representation of Will’s trauma stress occurs when the attack takes place and all the people rush up towards the big windows and Will is frightened because he has never been that much close to the windows before. Will states expression “it felt like it was almost visible through my chest” (Walters, 2006: 74). This expression is used against its literal meaning because heart beating can not be visual. According to medical sources, people who are suffering from medical conditions of “heart palpitations”, their heart might be pondering, beating faster, and fluttering rapidly (Mayo Clinic, 2021), however, it is not possible to see the heart through the skin. Throughout the novel, Will is depicted as a healthy kid, at least physically, the narration does not show any details about the deterioration of Will’s health, especially his physical health. Therefore, it would be safe to argue that witnessing the horror of the attacks causes traumatic stress and Will prevails his stress through the involuntary, fast, and rapid heartbeat. In addition to that, Will has never been that close to the south tower windows, which also contributes to his fast heart beating.

Psychologically speaking, panic and fear affect personal satisfaction of life and at times it can be significantly incapacitating. People with panic issues have high paces of depression and other mental problems. Moreover, panic and fear are considered pervasive symptoms of trauma stress. Therefore, what makes Will state that “My heart was pounding so hard it felt like it was almost visible through my chest” is a manifestation of trauma stress which is caused by being a direct witness of the attacks. Conceptually, “visible” contributes to the modification of the meaning of the target domain of traumatic stress. A mapping process is involved between the source domain and the target domain of trauma. Through the process of cross-domain mapping, trauma is depicted as force, this is activated by the semantic interpretation of the metaphor, that pushes on the internal organs of the Will against the skin. As Will watches through the window and observes what is happening to North tower, a powerful scary feeling is sparked, trauma stress, which pushes on his body and mind. As the human body is not transparent and the internal organs could not have any sort of visualization, however in the metaphorical sense, Will’s body is depicted as an entity that could be transparent under trauma stress. In other words, the trauma stress is causing Will’s body to go transparent. This metaphorical expression is the linguistic comprehension of the conceptual metaphors of EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE IS PHYSICAL AGITATION (Kövecses, 2005: 81) and THE BODY IS CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS (Kövecses, 2003: 170).

Another metaphorical representation of Will’s trauma stress occurs when the buildings are collapsing, a thick layer of dust covers around the location of the towers, Will does not see anything. The ground is littered with pieces of concrete and broken metal and thick dust in the air, Will compares his traumatic state to darkness, he expresses his feeling in that moment in “I became aware of people all around me, running, screaming. They looked more like ghosts, faces, and clothes covered with the thick white powder” (Walters, 2006: 208). In this extract, the lexical item “ghosts” is used metaphorically. In its literal sense, there is no ghost around him but Will sees some figures which he is not able to identify their shapes.

Psychologically, some field studies dedicated to recording the way traumatized people talk about their feelings and experiences when trauma wave strikes report that traumatized people list blurry vision as one of the symptoms of trauma (Symons, 2009: 61; Trachtman, 2010: 240). In addition, trauma scholars also believe that blurry vision is one of the recurrent symptoms of trauma (Allen, 1995: 173). Therefore, it is trauma that disturbs the proper function of Will’s cognitive faculty. Trauma blocks Will’s mind to recognize the shapes of the entities he is perceiving. In addition, at this point, Will is realizing that he lost his father. Despite the fact that John Fuller did not have much time for his child, he was not a caring father and he was a business-oriented man, yet witnessing the collapse of the south tower means the ultimate death of his father. Therefore, in addition to being traumatized by the enormity of the attacks, Will’s psyche also suffers from survivor guilt, a guilt that will haunt its victim forever.

Conceptually, The noun “ghosts” is a source domain that provides the target domain of trauma stress with conceptual structures to express Will’s stressful condition of traumatic experience. Through the cross-domain mapping, qualities of source domain “ghost” are mapped onto the target domain of mental state of trauma stress. This process is activated by donating conceptual structures such as scary, dark, shadow, and wraith are mapped. As a result of the cross-domain mapping, the abstract experience of trauma receives a newly constructed meaning. Will’s trauma can be recognized in terms of the scary features of ghosts. Via the metaphor, Will’s mind is experiencing a negative dark emotion. Through the analogy, trauma stress is depicted as a ghost that stalks its victims and could strike in any moment. This metaphorical expression, “ghosts”, is the linguistic realization of the conceptual metaphors of NEGATIVE EMOTION IS DARK (Barcelona, 2012: 47). EVIL IS DOWN and EVIL IS DARK (Winter, 2014: 151) and FEAR IS A SUPERNATURAL BEING (Kövecses, 2013: 23).

Another metaphorical representation of trauma stress occurs when Will describes his traumatic stress in terms of a “bizarre movie”. After the south tower is hit, Will and his father are stuck inside the South Tower. While the two are trying to escape the flames, and smoke because elevators are jammed, they try to use stairs to get to lower floors. Will and his father are discussing the next step, after arguing whether to go up or down, they agree that they need to go to his father’s office to call Will’s mother and confirm that they are safe. Will’s father asks Will to go and find a phone machine to call his mother and he resorts to his personal office to grab something which leaves Will in astonishment, thinking that even when they are in danger and people are dying, yet his father is still thinking about business. When Will goes to an office to find a phone machine, he involuntarily stops in front of a screen, the channel was broadcasting what was happening to the towers and they were confirming that thousands are killed and missing. Will is not able to believe his eyes and he is terrorized by the amount of destruction that occurred. He describes what he sees on TV as “It wasn’t real. None of this could be real. It was like some bizarre movie, the product of some writer and Hollywood producer.” (Walters, 2006: 111).

The semantic item “bizarre movie” is used against its prototypical use, the movie that Will is talking about is not streaming literally; it is the destruction, fire, smoking, and emergency vehicles of the situation which make this scene to be like a movie because Will has only seen these circumstances in movies not in reality like he is experiencing it personally. Therefore, the adjective phrase “bizarre movie” is used metaphorically. In this context, the adjective phrase “bizarre movie” is used metaphorically rather than literally to stand for the way Will is feeling about what is happening.

According to the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*(2013) “Recurrent, involuntary and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s)” (271) are considered symptoms of trauma stress. When Will is watching the screen,

traumatizing images of the destroyed towers are reported. Images and captions of victims of the attacks are also traumatizing and terrorizing Will. In addition, LaCapra states that victims of trauma in the first phase of their experience of trauma are living in denial, they are not able to absorb what just happened to them (2014). When Will says that “It was like some bizarre movie, the product of some writer and Hollywood producer” (Walters, 2006: 111), he is confessing that he is in denial, he is not able to understand the sudden and rapid occurrence of 9/11 attacks. Will thinks that what is happening is just like Hollywood fantasized and dramatizing movies, he thinks 9/11 is a disassociation of reality, a reality that is alienating.

Conceptually, the adjective phrase “bizarre movie” is the source domain that provides a target domain of trauma with conceptual structures to modify Will’s feeling of traumatic stress. A conceptual mapping in this metaphor is performed between the source domain of a bizarre movie and the target domain of trauma. In this expression, the source domain of bizarre movies provides conceptual structures such as horror, fantasy, far-fetch scenarios, and terror onto the target domain of traumatic stress. As a result of the cross-domain mapping, the target domain of the trauma acquires new conceptual structures. Will’s trauma can now be understood in terms of Hollywood’s bizarre, sci-fi, horror, and terrorizing movies. The metaphor depicts Will’s mind as not comprehending and digesting what is happening; Will’s mind is in denial status. The linguistic metaphor “bizarre movie” is inspired by the conceptual NEGATIVE FEELING IS MOVIE.

In another context, another metaphorical representation of trauma occurs when Will and his father trying to head down to the lower floors of the tower, but on their way down they face a lot of difficulties because the stairwells are so hot because of the fire, Will states “I felt a wave of disappointment wash over me, and my knees felt tired and weak” (Walters, 2006: 131). In this context, the lexical item “wave” is used metaphorically. Literally speaking, a wave is a series raising water across the surface of the liquid, usually, it refers to ocean waves, but in this context is used disappointingly and hopelessly, additionally, it is an anticipation of worse to come. Will is disappointed and depressed by seeing more smoke traveling so fast on the stairs, he thinks they are not going to make it.

When Will and his father are starting the journey from his father’s office to climb down in a helpless attempt to escape the ultimate death, Will’s father is determined and optimistic. Will’s father does his best to consolidate his son. He successfully convinces his son that they can make it to safety. Will’s trust prevailed in many contexts; “He was right to keep moving”(Walters, 2006: 135); “I knew my father well enough to know that he wasn’t just saying empty words.” (Walters, 2006: 140); “he wasn’t nearly as big as I once thought he was” (Walters, 2006: 151). However, when Will reaches the lower floors, he realizes that he lost his battle and he is not going to make it, therefore he compares the gravity of his disappointment to a “wave”. Countless studies assert that

traumatized people also suffer from disappointment (APA, 2013: 361). Therefore, in “I felt a wave of disappointment wash over me, and my knees felt tired and weak.” (Walters, 2006: 131), Will’s traumatic symptom of disappointment is prevailing.

Conceptually, “wave” is a source domain that provides the target domain of trauma stress with conceptual structures to elaborate Will’s traumatic experiences. The conceptual mapping in this metaphor is executed between the source domain of the “wave” and the target domain of trauma. Through the cross-domain mapping, conceptual structures such as motion, flow, stream, and destruction are mapped from the source domain of “wave” onto the target domain of traumatic stress. As a result of the cross-domain mapping, the target domain of the trauma acquires new conceptual structures. Will’s trauma can now be understood in terms of motion, flow, stream, and destruction. Trauma stress is destroying the functionality of Will’s mind and prevents him from continuing on in the journey to escape death under the collapsing towers and ultimately he feels “disappointed”. The “wave” is a linguistic manifestation of the conceptual metaphor EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE, NEGATIVE EMOTION IS DOWN (Forcevila, 2008: 476) and SADNESS IS A NATURAL FORCE (Kövecses, 2000: 25).

Towards the end of the novel, another metaphorical representation of trauma occurs when Will describes his traumatic experience in terms of “drowning”. When Will miraculously manages to escape the collapsing tower, he finds himself in mid of a thick hot cloud of dust. At this point, Will is certain that he lost his father and barely made it to safety. In that context, Will states “the harder I tried[to breathe], the more the dust was drawn into my lungs. I felt as if I were drowning in the air.” (Walters, 2006: 206). In this excerpt, “drowning” is used metaphorically to refer to the fact that Will was not able to breathe properly. Despite the fact the hot cloud of dust was engulfing Will and people around the location of collapsing towers, the 9/11 Commission Report does not report any death cases because of suffocation outside the location of the towers(Kean and Hamilton, 2004). Moreover, the lexical meaning of “drowning” is “death caused by being underwater and not being able to breathe, or a case when this happens” (Cambridge online dictionary, 2021). Therefore, “drawing” is used metaphorically to refer to Will’s mental condition of traumatic stress. Because Will is traumatized by the attacks and losing his father, he is imagining that he is in the middle of an ocean and gradually drowning.

In this excerpt, “drowning in the air” is used metaphorically rather than literally to stand for an abstract quality. The abstract quality is Will’s traumatic experience. “Drowning” is a source domain that provides the target domain of trauma with conceptual structures to express Will’s negative experience. The conceptual mapping in this metaphor is executed between the source domain of the “drowning” and the target domain of trauma. Throughout the cross-domain mapping, conceptual structures such as sinking, suffocating, and darkness are mapped from the source domain of “drowning” onto the target domain of

trauma. As a result of the cross-domain mapping, the target domain of the trauma acquires new conceptual structures. Will's trauma can now be understood in terms of sinking, suffocating, and darkness. Via the metaphor, we understand that when trauma stress is experienced by the victim of trauma, they feel they are suffocating or sinking into darkness. There are countless psychological studies about the experiences of traumatized people that report when victims of trauma experience trauma they feel that they are sinking or suffocating (Leys, 2000: 134). The linguistic expression "I felt as if I were drowning in the air" is based on the Conceptual REPRESSION IS SINKING (Philip, 2009: 102), NEGATIVE EMOTION IS DOWN (Richardt, 2003: 284) and DEPRESSION IS DESCENT (McMullen and Conway, 2002: 167).

## 4.1 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current paper has discussed some trauma-related metaphorical expressions in Walters' *We All Fall Down* which are stated by Will, the narrator. The paper briefly examined the way metaphorical expressions can communicate an abstract state of traumatic stress. The analysis found that since communicating an abstract mental state is difficult to express literally, metaphors are an effective linguistic and cognitive vehicle to aid characters to communicate their negative mental state of traumatic stress. In Walters' novel, various conceptual domains are involved in the creation of the discourse of trauma. The analysis also found that the cognitive approach adopted by this study has proven to be a useful tool to understand the metaphorical representation of trauma stress in *We All Fall Down*. Since the novel is narrated in the first-person narrator, almost all metaphorical representation of trauma has been stated to represent Will's disturbed psyche. In addition to that, because Will is a child, the linguistic metaphors he is using are conventional metaphors. The analysis found that different scenarios are activated by different concrete and physical source domains to discuss traumatic feelings. Through conceptual mapping, the speaker was able to represent abstract qualities in terms of concrete objects such as "wave", "bizarre movie", "ghost", "drowning" and "thunder". As a result of applying CMT, it becomes possible to see such abstract notions like trauma in a more concrete, tangible way.

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