

Original Research Article

Outline of a thesis on Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone from the perspective of trauma theory

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Abstract: As the opening work of Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is set in Hogwarts School, with Harry Potter's childhood trauma as its central narrative thread, laying the foundation for the trauma narrative of the entire series. Drawing on post-traumatic theory as its core analytical framework, this paper focuses on the single work *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and explores in depth the manifestations, origins and initial healing pathways of childhood trauma in the text. This paper takes Harry Potter as the primary research subject, with Neville Longbottom and Severus Snape as the secondary subjects. It analyzes the overt and covert manifestations of trauma, explores the impacts of personal psychological limitations, family emotional deprivation, and dual contextual oppression (the Muggle world and the magic world) on the formation of trauma, and elucidates the roles of friendship, acceptance, encouragement and understanding in trauma healing. The paper aims to deepen the academic interpretation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, reveal the correlation between childhood trauma and individual growth in the text, and provide certain theoretical guidance and practical insights for the formation and healing of trauma among contemporary young people. Meanwhile, it verifies the applicability of trauma theory to fantasy works and enriches the research perspectives on *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

Keywords: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*; trauma theory; childhood trauma; trauma manifestations; germination of trauma healing

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and significance

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is the series' opening work, in which J.K. Rowling integrated her insights of suffering and growth. The novel tells Harry's story: losing parents in infancy, being neglected by the Dursleys, discovering magical identity, entering Hogwarts, gaining friendship and fighting Voldemort with Ron and Hermione to protect the Philosopher's Stone. The work sows the seeds of the series' trauma narrative in Harry's childhood sufferings and his first confrontation with the Dark Forces, with Neville and Snape's traumatic undertones emerging initially.

Interpreting the work via Trauma Theory has academic and practical significance. Academically, existing studies mostly focus on the whole series, with scarce single-work research; this perspective explores childhood trauma's initial presentation and recovery germination, filling gaps and verifying trauma theory's adaptability to single fantasy works. In reality, the trauma causes in the work resonate with contemporary adolescents, providing reference for adolescent trauma guidance and intervention.

1.2. Research status at home and abroad

Trauma refers to "encountering a sudden, terrifying event that cannot be assimilated in the existing recognizing framework", with three characteristics: belatedness, involuntary reenactment and narrow working-through^[1]. Based on the Narrative Reconstruction Theory, trauma recovery follows three steps: construction of safe relationship, Non-verbal Narrative and Linear Narrative Reconstruction^[1]. Existing research on the work mostly focuses on fantastic narratives and moral dichotomy, with scarce systematic trauma theory studies.

1.3. Research ideas and methods

This paper takes trauma theory as the core framework, strictly focusing on *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, with Harry's childhood trauma as the core and Snape, Neville's initial trauma as supplement. It deconstructs trauma's presentation forms and formative origins, interprets trauma's effects on characters' initial psychology

and behaviors, explores trauma recovery pathways and discusses the connection between trauma, growth and courage, adopting literature research, close textual analysis and case study methods.

1.4. Research key and difficult points as well as innovation points

Key and difficult points: Accurately combine trauma theory with the work's narrative, avoid later plot introduction; excavate implicit trauma such as Harry's fragmented parental memories and Neville's self-ability denial; focus on trauma recovery without exaggerating effects, fitting the opening work's logic.

Innovation points: Take Trauma Theory as the only core and focus on the single work, breaking the extensiveness of multi-perspective and series research; refine childhood trauma's initial presentation and explore the significance of "magical world acceptance" in recovery; interpret trauma narrative's starting value based on the single work.

2. Interpretation of the core connotation of trauma theory and its adaptability to the philosopher's stone

2.1. Core definition of trauma theory

Trauma theory originated in psychology and extended to the literary field. Trauma refers to "encountering a sudden, terrifying event that cannot be assimilated in the existing recognizing framework"^[1]. Harry's primary trauma is his parents being killed by Voldemort in infancy; the Dursleys' long-term abuse left deep psychological scars. The fragmentation of Harry's memories makes his trauma show belatedness in Hogwarts life. Freud's theory shows Harry's childhood trauma destroyed the harmonious interaction of the id, ego and superego, shaping his personality development and behavioral choices^[3].

2.2. Adaptability between the philosopher's stone and trauma theory

The work takes Harry's childhood trauma as the narrative starting point; the Dursleys' abuse, parental death and external strange gaze all fit childhood trauma's core definition. Harry's fragmented parental memories, desire for family affection and initial self-denial conform to trauma's "unpredictability" and "psychological distortion" characteristics. His post-trauma psychological state is consistent with trauma theory: forbearing, alienated, self-doubting and hesitant to accept magical talent, a typical long-term trauma response. Harry's forehead scar is a physical mark of Voldemort and a psychological symbol of unresolved trauma—Any stimulation triggers emotional fluctuations and fear, consistent with the view that "trauma will leave indelible marks and affect life"^[4]. Hogwarts' acceptance, friendship and affirmation from Hagrid and Dumbledore form the germination of trauma recovery, echoing the viewpoint that "trauma can be initially alleviated through external support". Snape and Neville's initial trauma further verifies the rationality of applying trauma theory to the work.

3. The presentation form and specific representation of trauma in the philosopher's stone

3.1. Harry Potter: The explicit and implicit presentation of core childhood trauma

Harry's trauma shows explicit and implicit characteristics. Explicit trauma: parental sudden death left indelible pain; the Dursleys' abuse—Being locked in the cupboard, deprived of basic needs and verbally humiliated—Made him form a deep sense of inferiority, typical of trauma theory. Implicit trauma: self-identity dislocation under the Dursleys' indoctrination, self-doubting his magical identity; instinctive fear of death erupting when facing Voldemort; strong desire for family affection, clinging to opportunities to understand parents and cherishing their remains.

These traumas shaped Harry's psychology and behaviors: sensitive and taciturn in early years, inferior in the face of difficulties, but courageous to protect friends and beliefs. He cherished others' kindness and accepted Ron, Hermione and Hagrid's friendship, which became key emotional support for trauma alleviation and growth.

3.2. Secondary characters: The initial germination and concise representation of trauma

Neville Longbottom: suffers from childhood neglect and ability denial trauma—Witnessing parents being tortured by the Cruciatus Curse, raised by a strict grandmother dissatisfied with his weak magic. Long-term denial made him inferior and cowardly, making mistakes in magic classes and showing withdrawal when scolded.

Severus Snape: has residual childhood trauma—His obsession with Lily and sensitivity to mixed origin are reflected in his contradictory attitude towards Harry: strict to Harry and Gryffindor, but secretly concerned and helpful, rooted in unresolved childhood emotional trauma and origin sensitivity.

3.3. Imagery carriers of trauma: Implicit expression of trauma in the philosopher's stone

Harry's forehead scar is the core trauma symbol, a physical residue of parental death and a mark of his connection with Voldemort, carrying his trauma memories and pain. Formed when Voldemort killed his parents, it is a witness to the traumatic event; the Dursleys regarded it as an abnormal symbol, aggravating his inferiority and loneliness. As Xia Zhenzhen pointed out, the scar is an external projection of psychological trauma, transforming intangible pain into a tangible mark and realizing trauma visualization^[5].

The scar is a "trigger" for Harry's traumatic memories: any touch, mention or Voldemort's power approach causes physical pain and emotional fluctuations. Meeting Quirrell in Diagon Alley and Snape mentioning Voldemort's name at Hogwarts both triggered scar pain, fear and fragmented parental memories; night-time dull pain tormented him physically and mentally. This psychological-physiological linkage implies the fate connection between Harry and Voldemort, reflecting Rowling's exquisite trauma narration conception.

4. Analysis of the formation roots of trauma in the philosopher's stone

4.1. Individual level: Limitations of childhood psychological endurance and cognitive blank

Children's immature minds, weak psychological resilience and undeveloped cognitive system are the core internal factors for trauma formation. Their low psychological adjustment ability makes it hard to cope with negative events; long-term isolation and lack of emotional support lead to trauma accumulation and solidification^[10]. Before 11, Harry suffered abuse and isolation at the Dursleys, bearing parental death pain with weak psychological resilience, making trauma deeply rooted, consistent with Li Hengliang's research conclusion^[2].

Cognitive blank and bias exacerbate trauma: children's cognition is easily affected by others, forming biased cognition that strengthens trauma's negative impact^[7]. The Dursleys instilled wrong cognition into Harry, causing self-denial and self-doubt, aggravating loneliness and affecting his initial self-identity at Hogwarts. Neville's trauma stems from the mismatch between cognitive bias and external expectations, related to childhood cognitive blank and psychological resilience limitations. Innate psychological limitations and acquired cognitive bias form the internal core of Harry and Neville's trauma.

4.2. Family level: Emotional deficiency and oppression of family environment

Family atmosphere, parenting style and emotional supply directly determine childhood trauma formation. Relevant research shows adverse family events are significantly associated with subsequent mental health problems, with emotional abuse, neglect and pressure as core incentives^[8]. Harry's core trauma comes from family homelessness and abuse; the Dursleys' neglect made him inferior, sensitive and insecure. Neville's trauma stems from family pressure and grandmother's excessive expectations, making him dare not face challenges. Snape's trauma comes from mixed origin and family emotional deprivation, causing reserve and sensitivity, forming an obsession with Lily; his contradictory attitude towards Harry is an obscure manifestation of this trauma^[9].

4.3. Dual context level: Alienation and oppression between muggle and magical world

Harry is the most affected by the dual Muggle and magic world context. In the Muggle world, the Dursleys regard him as a freak and ill omen, and neighbors alienate him; the conflict between Muggle "normality" and his "particularity" aggravates identity dislocation and trauma. In the magic world, he is honored as "The Boy Who Lived", bearing excessive expectations that conflict with his trauma memories and inferior psychology, bringing implicit pressure. Malfoy's ridicule of his Muggle origin further stimulates Harry's trauma sensitive points.

5. The germination path and significance of trauma recovery in the philosopher's stone

5.1. Core recovery path: The power of friendship and acceptance

Childhood trauma recovery relies on sincere emotional connection, acceptance and positive social support. Harry's recovery is mainly embodied in Ron and Hermione's friendship and Hogwarts' acceptance. Their sincere friendship is Harry's first equal emotional support: the three fought side by side, helping Harry get rid of loneliness, learn to trust others and let go of self-denial. Hogwarts is Harry's "safe haven"; Hagrid's admission notice made him feel group acceptance for the first time, breaking the Dursleys' negative indoctrination. The friendly campus environment and guidance of Dumbledore and McGonagall helped Harry regain warmth and security, achieving initial relief of core trauma.

5.2. Auxiliary recovery path: Initial reconstruction of self-cognition and awakening of courage

Besides friendship and acceptance, Harry's trauma recovery has three auxiliary paths: self-cognition reconstruction—From regarding himself as an ordinary Muggle to accepting magical talent and "Savior" identity, gaining confidence through school activities and fighting Voldemort, consistent with "accumulating self-efficacy to alleviate trauma" in psychological resilience training; courage awakening—Facing Voldemort's afterimage and dangers, getting rid of cowardice, conforming to APA's definition of psychological resilience as good adaptation in adversity^[10], confirming courage as the core motivation to resist trauma; Mirror of Erised revelation—The mirror reflects his desire for family love, making him realize inner needs, accept the past and cherish the present, laying a foundation for subsequent growth, consistent with the conclusion that "facing emotional needs squarely is the key to trauma repair"^[10].

5.3. Limitations of recovery and significance of germination

Based on the single work's plot, Harry's trauma recovery has obvious limitations: core trauma roots such as parental death and childhood abuse remain untouched; the scar still triggers traumatic memories and emotional fluctuations, with slight self-identity confusion. Neville and Snape's trauma is not alleviated at all, remaining in the initial presentation state. All trauma recovery is only at the initial relief level, without substantive breakthroughs.

The germination of trauma recovery is of great significance: it lays a foundation for Harry's subsequent recovery and expresses that kindness, friendship and courage can alleviate trauma. Harry's experience highlights the reparability of childhood trauma, and the initial recovery process provides important starting value for subsequent trauma research and realistic childhood trauma guidance.

6. Conclusion and reflection

6.1. Research conclusions

As the series' opening work, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* takes Harry's trauma as the core, presenting explicit and implicit childhood trauma formed by the combined effects of individual, family and dual context levels. The work constructs trauma recovery germination paths through friendship, acceptance, self-cognition reconstruction and courage awakening, and reflects the limitations of initial recovery. Interpreting the work from the trauma theory perspective deepens the understanding of character psychology and narrative logic, highlights its unique value as the starting point of the series' trauma narrative, confirms childhood trauma's profound impact on individual initial growth, and provides a literary reference for childhood trauma cognition and guidance.

6.2. Research reflection and extension

This study has limitations: the analysis of Snape and Neville's trauma is brief, with insufficient detailed interpretation; the interpretation of traumatic imagery such as Harry's scar is not in-depth, without further exploring its symbolic significance; the connection between trauma narrative and the work's magical setting is not analyzed, ignoring magical elements' auxiliary role in trauma presentation and alleviation.

Combined with contemporary adolescents' childhood trauma context, the work has realistic value: friendship and acceptance as the core of initial trauma recovery provide reference for adolescent trauma intervention, highlighting the importance of peer support and emotional acceptance. The contrast between the Dursleys' negative parenting and Hogwarts' positive environment provides practical guidance for family education, guiding parents to abandon indifferent and abusive methods, attach importance to emotional supply and equal treatment, and create a safe and inclusive growth environment for children.

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