

分类号\_\_\_\_\_

UDC\_\_\_\_\_

学 号 M14283\_\_\_\_\_

密 级\_\_\_\_\_



# 硕士学位论文

(全日制学术学位)

**Trauma and Recovery in John Hawkes' *Second Skin***

浅析约翰·霍克斯的《第二层皮》中的创伤与复原

姜 艳

指导教师姓名: 秦旭教授, 扬州大学, 江苏扬州, 225009

申请学位级别: 硕 士 学科专业名称: 英语语言文学

论文提交日期: 2017 年 6 月 论文答辩日期: 2017 年 6 月 3 日

学位授予单位: 扬州大学 学位授予日期: 2017 年 6 月 30 日

答辩委员会主席: 于建华教授

2017 年 6 月

# **Trauma and Recovery in John Hawkes' *Second Skin***

by

Jiang Yan

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Under the Supervision of

Professor Qin Xu

College of International Studies

Yangzhou University

June, 2017

## Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person or material which has to a substantial extent been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

Signature: 姜艳

Name: Jiang Yan

Date: 2017.6.27

## Acknowledgements

In the process of writing this thesis, I have received lots of help from many people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Qin Xu for his constant guidance, inspiring instructions and encouraging advice. To be frank, my literary achievement and linguistic performance are poor. Without his instructions and modification, I would have not made this thesis. It is his strict and meticulous attitude towards academic research that encourages me to complete the thesis and guides me to fall into the good habit of dealing with other things scrupulously.

I am greatly indebted to all the teachers in school of foreign studies. I have benefited a lot from their thought-provoking lectures on literary theories and research perspectives as well as their extensive knowledge, which broadened my horizon and equipped me with knowledge for this thesis.

My gratitude also goes to my friends and my classmates who inspired and motivated me as well as helped me solve problems during the process of writing the thesis.

Last but not least, I want to thank my parents and grandparents for their constant encouragement, support and love.



## Abstract

Known for his outstanding originality in the artistic skills and creative thoughts, John Hawkes (1925-1998) is highly regarded as one of the greatest postmodern novelists in American literature. Published in 1964, *Second Skin* is regarded as one of Hawkes' most influential novels, which establishes his status in American literature after World War II. Nearly all of Hawkes' works seem to be associated with trauma, especially *Second Skin*. *Second Skin* is narrated by a retired naval lieutenant named Skipper who undergoes and recovers from various traumatic events. In *Second Skin*, the author depicts a scarred world, which is inundated with traumatic events such as war, death, betrayal, violence and rape. While most people cannot overcome post-traumatic stress disorder and commit suicide, few survivors bravely face up to trauma and try various means to step out of the shadow of trauma. Through decoding *Second Skin* from the perspective of trauma theory, this thesis analyses various desperate traumatic events that main characters have experienced, traumatic symptoms and recovery. Interpreting *Second Skin* from the perspective of trauma theory not only provides a better understanding of Hawkes' profound criticism about the darkness of modern society, but also offers practical suggestions to deal with human's mental crisis after suffering from trauma.

This thesis consists of three parts, namely, the introduction, the body part which include three chapters and the conclusion. Part one briefly introduces the writer John Hawkes and his works including the novel *Second Skin*. In addition, this part also reviews previous critical views on *Second Skin* from home and abroad and presents trauma theory as theoretical framework. Also the outline of this thesis is presented.

Chapter One analyses the traumatic events that the protagonist Skipper and his daughter have experienced. Skipper experiences parents' deaths in succession, finds his wife dead in a motel, fails to stop his daughter jumping from the lighthouse and is treated violently by his crew, while Cassandra is betrayed by her husband and raped by sailors. This chapter attempts to explore the enormous influence of family members' deaths, violence and betrayal on human beings. Chapter Two explores Skipper's numbness when facing trauma, fragmented consciousness when recalling traumatic memories and loss of self-identity and intense sense of loneliness after being traumatized. All the traumatic symptoms reveal victims' great agony in inner world. Combining with Herman's methods of healing trauma, the third chapter elaborates the reconciliation of the protagonist and his traumatic experiences and how he finally turns back to a normal life. It attempts to illustrate that recovery can be achieved through rebuilding a sense of security, narrating traumatic events and reconstructing relationships.

In the end, the thesis concludes by maintaining that trauma may not be healed completely but the traumatized may work through it by employing recovery methods including rebuilding sense of security, narrating traumatic events and reconstructing relationships. After experiencing trauma, the traumatized should actively face their trauma, bravely retell their traumatic events and reconstruct their relationships with others and the community so as to recover from trauma. Hawkes intentionally has his characters undergo multiple traumatic events and probes into the underlying reasons, symptoms and recovery methods. It implies Hawkes' profound criticism and deep concern about the ultimate destiny of the humankind.

**Keywords:** *Second Skin*; traumatic events; traumatic symptoms; recovery

## 摘要

约翰·霍克斯（John Hawkes, 1925-1998）以其精湛的艺术技巧和独特的创作理念被誉为最杰出的当代美国后现代主义小说家之一。作为约翰·霍克斯最具影响力的作品之一，1964年出版的《第二层皮》奠定了霍克斯在二战后美国文坛的地位。霍克斯的所有小说几乎都与创伤有关，尤其是《第二层皮》。《第二层皮》以五十九岁的退役海军中尉斯基泼自述的形式，讲述了他和女儿卡桑德拉不断遭受的种种创伤事件以及他最终得以从创伤中复原的故事。该小说中，霍克斯描绘了一个满目疮痍的世界。那里充斥着战争、死亡、背叛、暴力和强奸，大多数人因无法逾越创伤后精神障碍而选择结束自己的生命，只有少数几个幸存者勇敢地直面创伤并尝试各种方式努力从创伤中复原。本文从创伤理论的视角解读《第二层皮》，探究了小说中主要人物经历的种种令人绝望的创伤事件，主人公斯基泼的创伤症状以及他如何从创伤中复原。从创伤理论的视角解读《第二层皮》不仅有助于深刻理解霍克斯对现代社会的批判，更有助于探讨小说的现实启示意义，即为人们提供解决创伤后心理难题的途径。

论文由引言、正文和结论组成，正文部分又分为三个章节。

引言部分首先简要介绍了约翰·霍克斯及其作品，其次总结了国内外对《第二层皮》的研究现状，而后简要介绍了创伤理论和本文的基本框架。

第一章分析了小说中主人公斯基泼经历的父母相继死亡、妻子惨死汽车旅馆、女儿跳塔自杀以及属下发动暴乱和卡桑德拉经历的丈夫背叛以及被士兵强暴等创伤事件，并探究死亡、暴力、背叛给人类带来的巨大影响。第二章探讨了主人公在面对创伤时所表现出来症状，包括经历创伤时的麻木、回忆创伤时支离破碎的意识和创伤后的自我迷失和强烈孤单感，以上创伤症状揭示了受害者内心巨大的痛苦。第三章论文结合赫曼的创伤疗法，阐述了主人公与自身创伤经历和解并最终回归了正常生活，意在说明创伤受害者可以通过重建安全感、叙述创伤事件和重建与他人和社区关系等方法治愈创伤。

论文结论部分指出心理创伤虽难以完全治愈，但是创伤受害者可以通过创伤疗法逐渐疏导心理创伤。经历创伤后，受创伤者应该积极面对创伤，勇敢讲述自己的创伤事件，重建与他人和社区的联系，从而治愈创伤。霍克斯将小说人物置身于多重创伤中，深入剖析创伤的原因、症状及复原途径，反映了霍克斯对现代社会的深刻批判和担忧。

**关键词：**《第二层皮》，创伤事件，创伤症状，创伤复原

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>摘要.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
0.1 John Hawkes and <i>Second Skin</i> .....	1
0.2 Literature Review.....	4
0.3 Trauma Theory.....	6
0.4 Structure of The Thesis.....	9
<b>Chapter One Traumatic Events.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Skipper's Trauma from Death.....	11
1.2 Cassandra's Trauma from Betrayal.....	14
1.3 Skipper's and Cassandra's Trauma from Violence.....	16
<b>Chapter Two Traumatic Symptoms.....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Fragmented Consciousness.....	20
2.2 Numbness and Re-experience.....	21
2.3 Loss of Self-identity and Loneliness.....	23
<b>Chapter Three Recovery from Trauma.....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1 Rebuilding Sense of Security.....	26
3.2 Narrating Traumatic Experiences.....	28
3.3 Reconstructing Relationships.....	30
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>34</b>



## Introduction

This section will firstly give a brief introduction to John Hawkes' personal experiences and his works including *Second Skin*, since there is an essential relationship between John Hawkes' life experiences and his works. In addition, previous researches on *Second Skin* are reviewed and trauma theory is presented as the theoretical foundation. Lastly, the structure of the thesis will also be stated.

### 0.1 John Hawkes and *Second Skin*

John Hawkes (August 17, 1925 - May 15, 1998) is one of the four most significant postmodern novelists in America after World War II, together with John Barth, Donald Barthelme and Thomas Pynchon. He, along with John Barth, William Gass and William Gaddis, is also considered by Mel Gussow as a significant figure in a postmodern pantheon of experimental novelist. And he is also famous for breaking constraints of narrative fiction's conventions.

Born in Stamford, Connecticut in 1925, John Hawkes grew up in New England, Alaska and New York. In 1943, he entered Harvard University where he started to write poetry. However, John Hawkes left Harvard with disappointment and served as an ambulance driver for the American Field Service in Italy and Germany. The experiences of his service during the war provided the background for his first novel *The Cannibal*, which established the basic tone of John Hawkes' novels. Then, he returned to Harvard and began writing fiction. During this period, he began to write his first short story *Charivari*, which gained him praise from Albert J. Guerard who became his advisor and encouraged him to write fiction later. In 1951, his second novel *The Beetle Leg*, was published and later viewed by many critics as one of the landmark novels of American literature in the 20th century. After graduating from Harvard, John Hawkes taught at Harvard from 1955 to 1958 and then at Brown University for thirty years until his retirement. In the 1950s, John Hawkes also published another two novels *The Goose on the Grave* and *The Owl*.

The turning point of his writing career came in the 1960s. John Hawkes was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1962 but it was *The Lime Twig* that won him acclaim for the first time. It is said that Thomas Pynchon had admired the novel. Then in 1964, the publication of *Second Skin* won him a high praise. *Second skin* was nominated for National Book Award and finally became a runner-up to Saul Bellow's *Herzog* by one vote. Thomas LeClair

ever said, “*Second Skin* is his most widely known book and is, in my opinion, one of the best American novels of the last 30 years” (“The Novelist”, 23). Apart from successful novels, John Hawkes also published a play *The Innocent party* and a short story *Lunar Landscapes*. In the 1970s, Hawkes published *The Blood Oranges*, *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* and *Travesty*, which he called his triad of sex and imagination. In 1973, *The Blood Orange* won the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger, a French literary prize created in 1948 to award books translated into French, which proved his high reputation in France. His last book in the 1970s was *The Passion Artist*, which was translated into Chinese by Liu Song and Wu Baokang and then published together with *Second Skin* in the 1990s. In the 1980s, John Hawkes wrote five books: *Virginie: Her Two Lives*, *Humors of Blood & Skin*, *Adventures in the Alaskan Skin Trade*, *Innocence in Extremis* and *Whistle jacket*, among which *Adventures in the Alaskan Skin Trade* won him Prix Medicis Etranger for the best foreign novel translated into French in 1986. After finishing *Sweet William* and *The Frog*, John Hawkes’ writing career ended with *An Irish Eye* in 1997, a year before his death.

John Hawkes has a writing career of more than 40 years, during which he employed different writing skills to compose his works. He uses a mass of modern and postmodern writing skills such as: illusion, symbolization, metaphor, repetition, parody and irony to make his works more intricate and more puzzling. His constant breaking of time, space and consciousness makes his works hard to comprehend. As Hawkes once said in an interview: “I began to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting and theme and having once abandoned these familiar ways of thinking about fiction, totality of fiction or structure was really all that remained.”(O’Donnell 45). Since Hawkes’ writing style is changeable, Carol A. Macurdy divided Hawkes’ literary career into four stages: “firstly, the use of visionary landscape tied to specific locales; secondly, the use of landscape projected out of first-person perspective; thirdly, the use of landscape contained by psyches; and fourthly, the return with a difference of the visionary historical landscape found in phase one”(Macurdy 318). It is his various styles of writing and fictional landscapes that enable readers to know more about his continual evolving worldview. His novels are full of terrifying situations, especially concerning one’s childhood, verbal imagination, different kinds of death, as well as physical and mental abuse. However, his works not only expose the dark sides of human beings but also express his longing for peaceful and happy life by constructing an ideal landscape in his novels such as a tropical island where Skipper finally settles down in *Second Skin*.

Hawkes’ works also reflect the darkness of the society. In his works, agony and hope coexist at the same time and each of them struggles with each other, indicating his disgust for the

real world and his longing for a better life. Most protagonists in Hawkes' works are anti-heroes with abnormal behaviors and absurd experiences. Hawkes insists that characters should not always be perfect. This is closest to our living world. In other words, John Hawkes tears linear plots into fragments, disorganizes the order of time and space and exposes ugly parts of conventionally perfect character to help readers to learn the true features of the world we are living in and in turn strengthen their abilities to seek happiness in their surroundings. Besides, ridiculous, mysterious and terrible plots in his novels demonstrate inequality, darkness, disorder and ugliness of the society.

It is for these distinctive characteristics in his works that John Hawkes has received great praise from other authors. Just as John Barth said, "in the landscape of our fiction, Hawkes stands improbably as Gibraltar, unaccountable, astonishing, formidable and self-sufficient, at once familiar and erotic. There is not one (contemporary American writers) I more admire" (Barth 12).

Published in 1964, *Second Skin* is a landmark in John Hawkes' writing career. From 1964 on, the book *Second Skin* has been translated into five languages and collected in 1391 libraries around the world. Although the novel is a runner-up for the National Book Award to Saul Bellow's *Herzog* by only one vote, *Second skin* helped Hawkes establish his status as a major contemporary American author and get rid of his early notorious reputation of extreme and obscure style, thus winning him more readers than ever before. In *Second Skin*, John Hawkes emphasized the physical and mental trauma of main characters from war, violence, death of family members and betrayal, which constructs the nightmares of the protagonist and exposes the darkness of society as well as psychological states of human beings after World War II.

The novel *Second Skin* is narrated from the perspective of a fifty-nine-year-old ex-Navy Lieutenant. His name is Edward but other characters usually call him Skipper or PaPa Cue Ball because of his baldness. Skipper recalled his "naked history" during his narration of his peaceful life of the present. The protagonist Skipper is both a comic coward and a fighting hero, known for his inaction as well as his capacity to love and his courage in face of repeated disasters. The language and tone of the narration are controlled by remarkable skills to express the conflict.

The first tragedy for Skipper is that his father shoots himself regardless of his son's efforts to stop him. His father's death seems to contribute to a chain where Skipper treats himself as a guilty link who has witnessed death of relatives but is unable to prevent them. The second comes his mother's suicide. Skipper's mother Mildred pours hot wax in her ears for she is unable to bear the sound of her husband's fatal shot but she still cannot do anything to save his life. Then Gertrude, Skipper's wife, deserts him and their daughter and dies surrounded by unmarried

couples in a cheap motel. Skipper's daughter Cassandra becomes the next in the series of death, which brings him devastating agony. She marries a Peruvian named Fernandez and has a baby Pixie with him. However, Fernandez abandons his wife and daughter and lives with his gay lover, which brings Cassandra devastating despair and makes her gradually become a degenerate later. His son-in-law is earlier accidentally found dead in a hotel in New York by Skipper just before he leaves the army. In order to prevent his daughter's suicide, Skipper brings Cassandra and Pixie to Gentle Island where he is threatened by the widow Miranda. Meanwhile, Cassandra frivolously has affairs with several men. In the end, she jumps down from the top of a lighthouse in spite of her father's efforts to save her life. The death of Skipper's beloved family members, together with the wounds and betrayal from the war and his subordinate, haunts him throughout all his life, which prompts him to escape from his present surroundings. Skipper leaves Gentle Island with Pixie and has his granddaughter adopted by a relative of Gertrude. At the end of the story, Skipper settles down on a tropical island with his black messy boy and his lover Catalina Kate who gives birth to a baby for him. On the peaceful island, he works as an artificial inseminator of cows and makes efforts to recover from the trauma that his early sufferings has brought to him, though it is doubtful whether the scenes on the island really exist or not.

## 0.2 Literature Review

Although John Hawkes also published four plays and a volume of poetry throughout his life, his reputation all over the world mainly comes from his novels. Thus, most researches around the world focus on his novels. As one of Hawkes' most successful works, *Second Skin* not only accumulates a great number of readers but also attracts many researchers' attention.

Researches abroad on John Hawkes' works, especially *Second Skin*, have produced many monographs and theses. Donald J. Greiner has composed two books on Hawkes' works, one is *Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes* and the other is *Understanding John Hawkes*. In the former one, Greiner ("Comic Terror", 35) discusses the black humor in Hawkes' works from the perspective of writing skills; the latter one explores Hawkes' novels from many aspects such as writing background, theme, structure, symbolism and narrative angle ("*Understanding John Hawkes*", 27). These two books both aim at explaining ambiguity and obscurity as well as helping readers better understand Hawkes' works.

Some researchers show interests in the two islands in the novel. Frederic Busch explores how the Gentle Island and Wander Island in the novel relate to the real world from the aspect of linguistics in *John Hawkes: A Guide to His Fictions* (477-479), while Tony Tanner explores the novel from the perspective of structure and points out that the move from the Gentle Island to the Wandering Island is "from malice, to love; from the island of death to the island of life" (215).

*Second Skin* is narrated in the first person, but some critics question the reliability of Skipper's narration. Thomas LeClair says that the narrator Skipper is a liar actually though he tries to give others the impression of "perverse, self-willed innocence" (*The Unreliability of Innocence*", 32-39). Through comparing Skipper's narration of himself to his inaction when facing traumatic events, Ronald Wallace explores comedy in *Second Skin* and points out that Skipper "reflects the ambivalence typical of the comic hero" (185). In addition, some critics research on the protagonist. T. A. Hanzo points out that "*Second Skin* presents a new kind of hero in Skipper - an anti-hero who survives 'in defiance, in indignation, and in the sheer perversity of the will to love'" (Hryciw-Wing 113). Michael Whelan also finds out the Oedipal Complex on the protagonist Skipper. In his opinion, "the Oedipal Complex thus contains the desire for one's own death. The subject, however, cannot consciously know this fatal knowledge. In *Second Skin*, Skipper is the suffering subject, his body the marked text that he attempts to rewrite" (17). Besides the Oedipal Complex, Whelan also explores the narrative skills in the novel. He finds out that ruptured narrative opposes to residual narrative to some degree. However, he also points out that "the actual experience of desiring death, is unconscious and floats behind and beneath the ruptured narrative. It is the omnipresent meta-narrative beyond the ordinary text- the residual narrative" (Whelan 22).

Compared to research abroad, studies of *Second Skin* in China start much later. It is in 1994 that the first translation of John Hawkes' works, *The Passion Artist*, was completed by Liu Song. Then in 1997, Liu Song and Wu Baokang made joint efforts to complete the translation of *Second Skin*. After that, researches on John Hawkes' works began to spring up. Wu Jian is the first critic who has researched on John Hawkes' works. He presents his researches in two journal articles: one introduces John Hawkes and concepts of his works; the other one translates an interview of him. The most comprehensive domestic study of John Hawkes is Gu Yeping's monograph *A Study of Parody in John Hawkes Fiction* in which he analyzes parodying skill of twelve novels of John Hawkes from the perspective of Linda Hutcheon's parody theory. Until now, there are eight master theses and some journal articles devoted to the study of *Second Skin*. Most scholars employ postmodern theories to explore its theme, indeterminacy, utopian thought and so forth in their master theses.

In 2006, Zhang Lisi employed the theories of postmodernism especially Ihab Hassan's theory of postmodern literature to explore indeterminacy on character, plot, themes and symbolic codes in *A Study on Indeterminacy in John Hawkes' Second Skin*. In 2007, Gu Yongjun focused on psychological analysis of characters and interpreted the psychological crisis and conflict in *Second Skin* from a Horneyan approach. He found that "Hawkes' inner conflicts are expressed

but not resolved in the novels” (Gu 6). Yang Xiangqi explored artist presentation of *Second Skin* from viewpoints of postmodernism and feminism in *Second Skin: From Perspectives of Postmodernism and Feminism*. “‘The Postmodernist Techniques’, analyzes the author’s distinguished and artistic treatments in the novel. ‘The Second Sex’, turns to cope with the relationship between Skipper and three major female characters” (Yang 5). Eight years ago, in his journal article, Yang Xiangqi’s supervisor Zhan Shukui ever analyzed postmodern writing skills in *Second Skin* from aspects of nightmare narration, chaotic space and time, indeterminate symbolic images, self-mockery and parody. In 2011, Fu Xiangshu tried to get a general idea of the artist presentation from the perspective of Fredric Jameson’s postmodern theory in *An Interpretation of Second Skin from the Perspective of Postmodern Cultural Theory*. In 2012, Li Hongying decoded the “appeal structure” in *Second Skin* from the perspective of Wolfgang Iser’s reception aesthetics and Zhu Liyuan’s structure modes of the literary work. In her opinion, it is the impedance which was caused by “blank” and “indeterminacies” that appeals the reader to fill in the blanks and make multiple interpretations in the novel. In 2014, Wu Huimin explored the protagonist’s split personalities, split plot arrangement, split symbolic images and the reflections of utopian thoughts in the novel in *An Interpretation of Second Skin from the Perspective of Jameson’s Postmodernism* (7). Besides the above researches, other scholars have explored psychological crisis and terror style as well as death and war in *Second Skin* from different perspectives.

Overseas and domestic researchers have tried to explore theme, structure, writing skills and postmodernism characteristics of *Second Skin* from various angles. However, *Second Skin* has hardly been investigated from the perspective of trauma theory in the last few decades. Based on the former studies, this thesis explores *Second Skin* under the framework of trauma theory. The researcher analyzes the traumatic events that main characters had undergone and the symptoms when they faced traumatic events, as well as the ways for self-treatment and recovery in the novel. This paper interprets *Second Skin* from a new point of view in order to explore how traumatic events such as war, violence, betrayal and death of family members affect human beings and also to provide readers with methods of going through such traumatic events.

### 0.3 Trauma Theory

The word “trauma” originated from a Greek word, which means the body wound caused by external force. Psychical pain and physical wound have similarities, except that wounds on body are visible while pain on psyche is invisible. The word “trauma” later is metaphorically used to describe physical pain. In the seventh edition of *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary*, trauma means “an injury: an unpleasant experience that makes you feel upset and/ or



anxious; a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time" (Hornby 2152). Although many theorists have studied trauma in the last century, the theoretical system of trauma has not been formed yet. As Bessel A. Van der Kolk, Lars Weisaeth and Onno van der Hart note, there have been "vehement arguments about trauma's etiology from the earliest involvement of psychiatry with traumatized patients" (365).

The earliest studies of trauma originated from the study of hysteria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hysteria, in many physicians' opinion, is "a disease proper to women and originating in the uterus" (Ellenberger 142). As the pioneer of the study of hysteria, the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot makes great contributions to hysteria and proves that hysteria is a psychological disease. On the basis of observing and concluding his patients' hysteria, together with abundant researches and materials, "Janet pinpointed the essential pathology in hysteria as 'dissociation': people with hysteria had lost the capacity to integrate the memory of overwhelming life events" (Herman 25). However, he neglects the causes of hysteria, which later shows up in research of Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet. It is Janet's and Freud's researches that make a solid foundation for trauma studies later and thus they are regarded as pioneers of trauma theory.

Freud's study of trauma dates back to his researches on hysteria. In his book *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer point out that "hysterics suffered mostly from recollections" (Wang 5). It is proved by the fact that the traumatic experience constantly haunt the victim after he suffers trauma. In Freud's opinion, most causes of hysteria are not minor physical injuries but the influence of terror, physical trauma. Freud defines trauma as "the wounding of mind brought about by sudden, unexpected, emotional shock" (Leys 4). In other words, Freud regards trauma as a psychologically unpredictable injury that may break psyche's defensive wall. As he makes more and more studies, he puts forward "deferred actions" or "afterwardsness", which he explains as "the ways in which certain experiences, impressions and memory traces are revised at a later date in order to correspond with fresh experiences or with the attainment of a new stage of development" (Freud 76). Concerning the cause of hysteria, Janet draws the similar conclusion as Freud that hysteria is caused by psychological trauma. In addition, Janet also researches on recovery of psychological trauma and "proposes that the key to recovery lies in the access to traumatic memories, through which the memory traces of the trauma linger as unconscious 'fixed ideas' that cannot be 'liquidated' as long as they have not been translated into a personal narrative" (Yu 25). In his opinion, "The integration of the memories and mental contents of the dissociated states with the normal state of consciousness allows the personal identity again to become continuous and complete" (Reviere 13).

The contemporary studies on trauma theory are mainly based on Freud and Janet's theories of trauma, which can be traced to the 1980s. After almost a hundred years' efforts made by many psychologists, studies on trauma have become more and more mature and systematic. In the 1980s, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first introduced by American Psychological Association (APA), which made trauma study attract a lot of attention. PTSD refers to an anxiety disorder associated with serious traumatic events and characterized by such symptoms as survivor guilt, reliving the trauma in dreams, numbness with lack of involvement with reality or recurrent thoughts and images.

Caroline Garland inherits Freud's psychoanalysis and believes that it can be comprehensively understood and treated for traumatic events upon the human mentality only when a deep comprehension of the particular connotation of those experiences is caught on within the patient(4). Thus, it is important to pay attention to the childhood and developmental history of the victims, as the previous experiences of the traumatized will inevitably exert an impact on the nature of the severe psychological injuries received in the traumatic collision with the external world. Instead of the impact of the traumatic events that may result in the victim's trauma, Garland emphasizes the significance of the victim's previous experiences and wrought personality in understanding his present traumatized state. Cathy Caruth is another one who inherits Freud's opinions and puts forward the term "trauma theory" in her book *Unclaimed Experience* for the first time. In her opinion, the pathology exists only in the structure of its experience or reception. Thus she defines trauma in her book: "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearances of hallucination and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth 5). According to Caruth, traumatic events happen when a person is not prepared and the trauma cannot be noticed at the moment it occurs but breaks into his or her consciousness and haunts him or her later. People will not realize that they are affected by previous traumatic events until the event repeats again in their dreams or they have repetitive actions.

Judith Herman is another well-known contemporary trauma theorist and is famous for her book *Trauma and Recovery*. Herman inherited Janet's theories and stressed the importance of the historical traumatic events in traumatizing human beings rather than others. In her opinion, "an understanding of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history" and "to study psychological trauma means bearing witness to horrible events" (Herman 7). In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman also analyzes influences of traumatic events and explores methods of recovery from trauma. She introduces the fundamental stages of recovery which contains

reconstructing the traumatic events, restoring connection between victim and others and community.

The modern studies on trauma theory witness an interdisciplinary trend. Nowadays, more and more researchers attempt to apply trauma theory in different areas, such as psychiatry, psychology, sociology, medicine, literature and so on. In 2004, Anne Whitehead put forward the term “trauma fiction” in her monograph *Trauma Fiction*. In her opinion, “trauma fiction” represents a paradox or contradiction: “if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrated in fiction?” (Whitehead 3). She made efforts to apply trauma theory in literary criticism and used trauma theory to explore literary texts for the first time. Ronald Granofsky defined the “trauma novel” as “contemporary novels which deal symbolically with a collective disaster” (7). This does not mean that all contemporary novels are trauma novels. He argues that “what distinguishes the trauma novel from other novels is the exploration through the agency of literary symbolism of the individual experience of collective trauma, either actual events of the past alarming tendencies of the present or imagined horrors of the future” (10). Whitehead and Granofsky made great contributions to the emergency of a new trend with contemporary literature. Besides them, more and more scholars employ trauma theory to analyze literary texts especially trauma fictions.

In conclusion, Trauma is a term originated from medicine and is gradually applied to psychology, sociology and literary criticism. Trauma in literature mainly focuses on characters' psychological world. It includes different aspects of characters' trauma, such as their traumatic events, symptoms of trauma and methods of recovering from trauma. The current researcher employs trauma theory to interpret *Second Skin* as it is one of the most obvious features in the novel.

#### 0.4 Structure of The Thesis

This thesis is a tentative study on John Hawkes' *Second Skin* from the perspective of trauma theory. It mainly consists of the following five parts.

In the first part Introduction, this thesis briefly introduces John Hawkes' personal experiences and his works including *Second Skin*. In addition, previous researches on *Second Skin* are reviewed and trauma theory is introduced as the theoretical foundation. Lastly, the structure of the thesis is stated.

The following three chapters mainly explore three aspects of trauma: traumatic events, traumatic symptoms and recovery from trauma. Chapter One elaborates how different types of trauma in *Second Skin* originate and how they influence the traumatized people's lives. It draws

people's attention to potential and oncoming traumatic events such as relatives' death, violence in daily life and warns them to avoid inflicting trauma on others as well as being traumatized by others.

Chapter Two focuses on the analysis of different traumatic symptoms. All the traumatic events are so terrible that they leave an enduring impression on victims and cause different post-traumatic disorder symptoms, which greatly disturb their normal life. Through various symptoms in Skipper, Hawkes conveys that numbness, fragmented consciousness, isolation, re-experience and loss of self-identity are common symptoms that reveal victims' psychological agony and should get adequate attention from others.

Chapter Three explores recovery from trauma by Skipper in the novel. Through analyzing Skipper's recovery process, it enlightens traumatized people that they can attempt to seek for recovery by rebuilding sense of security, narrating traumatic events and reconstructing relationships. Once victims recover from their trauma, they get strength from trauma, which leads to new perceptions towards themselves, surroundings and life.

From the above analysis based on a combination of text and trauma theory, this thesis finds that trauma is ubiquitous in our rapidly developing society. One or a series of traumatic events may destroy a person's mentality and make it hard for him or her to live a normal life. However, attempts at exploring recovery methods in the novel may help the traumatized to step out of the shadow of trauma.

## Chapter One Traumatic Events

Based on trauma theory, traumatic events can be understood as enormous injuries to one's mentality, which result in distress and harm physically, emotionally and psychologically. The American Psychiatric Association defines traumatic events as terrible events or experiences that victims experience or witness with intense terror, fear and helplessness including death, serious injury, threats to one's physical integrity or that of other people (Zhu 40). Trauma is caused by one or a variety of traumatic events experienced or witnessed by victims, which may even bring death to them or result in a mental disorder including a loss of ability to deal with such memories. The famous psychologist Judith Herman points out that it is traumatic events overpower normal adaptive capacity rather than the infrequency of traumatic events that make them extraordinary (24). Traumatic events are different from ordinary miserable events because they usually threaten one's life or integrity of one's body or that of their relatives.

Traumatic events usually can be divided into three types. One is natural disasters such as earthquake, flood, hurricane, volcanic eruption, forest fire and so on; the second is unexpected accidents such as traffic accidents, air crash, gas explosion (Li 20); the last is man-made calamities such as domestic violence, war, rape, betrayal, terrorism and so on. After a person experiences traumatic events, he or she may unconsciously changes his or her viewpoint of the world, the way of thinking, the way of remembering traumatic events.

In *Second Skin*, traumatic events that main characters have experienced are mainly man-made calamities. Skipper has experienced family members' deaths, while Cassandra has experienced betrayal of her husband. In addition, both of them have been treated violently by others. These traumatic events leave a enduring shadow on them and are the origins of their psychological trauma. This chapter mainly explores characters' traumatic events in *Second Skin*, such as trauma from death, trauma from betrayal and trauma from violence.

### 1.1 Skipper's Trauma from Death

Skipper experiences death of all his family members, including his father's shot, his mother's suicide, his wife's accidental death in a cheap hotel and his daughter's jumping from the lighthouse. This part mainly analyses his parents' deaths in his childhood and his daughter's suicide in his fifties.

It is believed that people's childhood experiences have great influence on present life. Herman claims that "repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality" (70). Children usually gain primitive consciousness from their parents who have great impacts on

them during the progress of their growth. In *Second Skin*, Skipper experiences parents' death in succession when he is a little boy, which makes it hard for him to step out of the shadow.

In *Second Skin*, Skipper has already witnessed different kinds of death in his childhood. His parents are morticians in a small town and have arranged a variety of funerals, hence, Skipper is familiar with various manners of death. He still remembers people who have appeared in his house when he is a little boy, "the president of the local bank, an unmarried teacher in elementary school, a thin mother of infant twins, a girl who had sold children's underwear in the five and dime" (Hawkes 115). Besides some acquaintances' death, he also remembers the death mode of some strangers, like "two brothers were drowned in a scummy pond at the edge of town" and "three beautiful members of the high school graduating class were decapitated in a scarlet coupe" (Hawkes 115). Their house is not only a residence but also the working place of a mortician and the long black hearse is used as their family car on Sunday afternoons. Skipper is often accompanied with death or things related to death in his childhood. In other words, he grows up in a lifeless atmosphere, which is full of death.

Although Skipper, together with his parents, is surrounded by a miserable atmosphere, they still lives cozily as other ordinary families until one day his father shoots off the top of his head. He is a witness to his father's death and tries to save his life but fails. It is at noon on a Friday in mid-summer that his father hurries to lock himself in the hot lavatory and makes preparations for taking his life. After he sees what his father has done, Skipper crouches with his ear to the door and talks with his father. In order to prevent his father from shooting himself, Skipper also plays his cello to him, but his attempts do not prove effective. After his father's death, he finds the little unused bullet in the bottom of the toilet bowl, which is a companion to the one his father fired and is prepared for him. At that moment, he knows that his father has given up the idea of shooting his son together with himself for he thinks his son could still lead a normal life without him. On one hand, Skipper is guilty for he is a witness and accomplice to his father's death and fails to save his father's life; on the other hand, Skipper saves his own life through his ridiculous attempts to play cello.

After his father shoots himself, Skipper also loses his mother. Mother is the most pivotal anaclitic figure in the process of growing up (Greenberg and Stephen 20). According to Winnicott, the formation of self-concept depends on initial caretakers (usually mother) (27). Mother often plays an important role in developing children's abilities of creation, communication and adaption to the environment. Therefore, it's devastating for children to lose mothers in their childhood.

Skipper's mother is an ordinary woman with the "prosaic name" of Mildred. When the



mortician is alive, his wife is always his perfect partner, the mortician's muse. It is common that Mildred, Skipper's mother, refuses to accept the fact that her husband shoots himself. Soon after her husband's death, she ceases to talk and becomes permanently mute as well as push herself at great distance away from Skipper. That is why Skipper has no recollection of her voice and only few visual memories. In Skipper's memory, "She always knelt in the garden strip next to the little chipped and tarnished electric sign which represented her husband's profession and prayed inertly and ghostly rather than gardening" (Hawkes 115). Since the couple loves each other so much, the mortician's death is a great shock to his wife and makes her fall into great agony and despair, which makes it hard for her to care for her little son. Strictly speaking, Skipper does not get warmth from his family after his father's death. What's more, one morning his mother disappears and dies twenty miles away in the care of her half-brother. She commits suicide by "filling both lovely ears with the melted wax" (Hawkes 117) for she is "unable to bear the sound of the death-dealing shot had lodged in her head like a shadow of the bullet that entered her husband" (Hawkes 117).

As the breadwinner of the family, Skipper's father is the spiritual pillar of his family especially his wife and his son. Skipper witnesses his father's death during which he plays the cello and talks with his father in order to stop his suicide. However, his father does not listen to him. Thus he feels guilty and incapable of dealing with his father's death. In other words, the mortician's death is the first traumatic event of Skipper's boyhood. After the mortician's particular and sudden suicide, his wife is constantly haunted by his death and the sound of gunshot all the time. Although Skipper's mother is a woman as ordinary as her name of Mildred, she is the consoling spirit that helps ease his solitary and wistful heart in times of sadness related to the mortician's death. However, she could not continue to relieve the agony of losing her husband and one morning commits suicide regardless of her little son. At that time, Skipper loses not just his mother but his only consoling spirit after his father's death. His mother's suicide seriously traumatizes him for a second time.

"Repeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of the personality already formed (Herman 70). In the novel, Skipper experiences his beloved daughter's suicide in his fifties, which almost breaks down his mentality. After leaving the army, he brings his daughter to Gentle Island to keep her away from her previous traumatic experiences. On the island, Cassandra caters to Jomo and Captain Red for survival but is raped by Red while sailing. After they return to the island from the sailing, Skipper is more worried about Cassandra even though she pretends to be clam. One night, Skipper can not find Cassandra and feels something abnormal. Thus he drives out to look for her regardless of Mildred's persuasion. He drives quickly all the way even at the

risk of his own life. However, he is disturbed by Mildred and misguided by Bub. Cassandra is so important to him that he “gave way at last to my impulse for the first and only time in all my lifelong experience with treachery, deception and death” (Hawkes 272) and hits Bub to get the position of her. Finally he gets Cassandra’s position and runs to the lighthouse as quickly as he can. At that moment, he has already had a bad feeling as he says “I was afraid of finding her but afraid of losing her too” (Hawkes 273). When he arrives, he calls her name again and again and begs her to show up but only to find it is too late to stop her. At that moment, he is overwhelmed by the feeling of “intense fear, helplessness and loss of control” (Kaplan and Sadock 24), which is regarded as a dominating feeling of psychological trauma by Andreasen.

Skipper knows of his daughter’s trauma and tries to save her life all the time. He does whatever Cassandra wants him to do despite his own will, for example, he can barely bear the agony of printing the tattoo but he agrees to her request and has Fernandez’s name printed on his chest. After Skipper experiences death of parents in succession, Cassandra is the only hope for him. He loves his daughter with all his heart and does whatever he could to make her happy. However, Cassandra turns a blind eye on her father’s efforts of pulling her out of great agony and finally jumps from the lighthouse. No harm has Cassandra ever done to her father could compare to her suicide, which almost destroys Skipper’s hope for life.

## 1.2 Cassandra’s Trauma from Betrayal

Cassandra is another main character in the novel, she is the heroine and protagonist Skipper’s daughter. As the only child of Skipper and Gertrude, Cassandra could have lived happily under parents’ protection. However, her marriage with Fernandez becomes the beginning of her misfortune. After she gets married, Gertrude betrays her husband and does not care for her daughter while Cassandra’s husband betrays her for his gay lover. Cassandra tolerates the agony caused by betrayal and indifference alone and has nobody to talk to. Thus, Cassandra cannot release her trauma, as Alice Miller points out “the girls and women who are most damaged are those who are unable or prevented from voicing their pain” (Kali Tal 215).

As one of Skipper’s family members, Gertrude turns a blind eye on her husband’s affection and has affairs with his sailors. She has motorcycle orgies with members of Skipper’s crew, spends half a season on a nearby burlesque stage without caring her daughter and disappears strangely from time to time. Sixteen months after Cassandra gets married, her mother is found dead in U-Drive-Inn after having affairs with others. Although Skipper is traumatized heavily by his wife’s death and her betrayal as a wife, he pretends to be indifferent to his wife’s affairs and death in order to protect his daughter. However, it is his indifference to his wife’s affairs that makes Cassandra feel helpless when her husband betrays her.

Cassandra is a war bride and marries a Peruvian named Fernandez. In Skipper's narration, "my small son-in-law, who held up his trousers with the feathery translucent skin of a rattlesnake, and who even in his white linen suit and with Cassandra's hand in his at the altar, continued to look like the hapless Peruvian orphan that he was" (Hawkes 113). On the wedding day, Fernandez shows his impatience and dissatisfaction. When Skipper talks to him about the honeymoon, he seems angry, which is not the normal reaction of a bridegroom. Then he throws away the flowers that are prepared for his bride in spite of Skipper's attempt to prevent it. On the contrary, in honor of Fernandez and his Peruvian background, Cassandra wears "draped across across her narrow shoulders, a long with a white Indian shawl with a fringe made of soft white hair that hung down below her knees" (Hawkes 204). In spite of her efforts, Fernandez comes for his bride without flowers and not even a kiss. On top of that, Fernandez arranges his new wife to drive the car regardless of her own feelings and Skipper's resistance. Cassandra makes a concession to her husband and accepts her husband's arrangement. Even so, she still has hope for her marriage and decides to change herself to adapt to her husband's requirements. Fernandez is an inconsiderate groom, a testy son-in-law and shows his bad side on the first day of his marriage. Cassandra is a kind and tolerant lady who bears her husband's defects but actually is traumatized by Fernandez's indifference. She has no one to talk to, thus her trauma cannot be released but added.

Seven and a half months later, Cassandra gives birth to a premature child named Pixie, which makes Fernandez furious. After getting married, Cassandra barely gets any care from her inconsiderate husband and it becomes worse after she has a baby. When her mother who makes them feel shamed commits suicide eight and a half months after she gives birth to Pixie, Skipper and Sony are busy with the funeral arrangements but Fernandez refuses to help them nor takes care of Pixie in the hotel. In Fernandez's opinion, Skipper's family is cursed for his daughter Cassandra gives birth to a premature baby and his wife Gertrude commits suicide. To some degree, Gertrude's suicide makes Fernandez decide to renounce this family and abandons his wife and child. Cassandra loves her husband with all her heart for she tolerates his defects and changes herself for him after getting married. Thus she feels grievous and dazed after Fernandez deserts her and Pixie.

Cassandra could have lived happily with her father and daughter after her husband has deserted them but she falls into the agony of her husband's leaving. In order to pull Cassandra out of her previous sufferings and encourage her to start a new life, her father brings her to a island on the Atlantic. However, it does not make a difference, on the contrary, Cassandra degenerates rapidly on the island and torments her father with others with the purpose of

relieving her agony. Without any other choices, Skipper confesses to her that he found that her husband was killed at the end of his last shore patrol on Second Avenue. He narrates the scene of his death as “he lay naked and covered with blood on his back on the floor and his neck was fastened to the iron leg of the day bed with one of the strings of the smashed guitar together with the other body called Harry” (Hawkes 238). From her father’s narration, Cassandra not only knows that Fernandez is killed cruelly but also learns that he betrays her for the love of a man who is tall, dark-haired, suntanned and wears civilian clothes. Her husband’s gay lover is a tattooed gunner’s mate named Harry, therefore she insists printing a tattoo on her father’s chest in spite of her father’s resistance. Mother’s betrayal roots the seed of trauma in Cassandra’s mind. Casandra is also traumatized by her husband’s indifference at the beginning of the marriage and then his leaving. However the trauma of his betrayal for his gay lover may be much more devastating and finally leads to her suicide. Since she has nobody to talk to, her trauma can not be released but adds as she experiences more traumatic events later.

### 1.3 Skipper’s and Cassandra’s Trauma from Violence

Skipper undergoes family members’ suicide in succession while Cassandra experiences husband’s betrayal; what’s more, they are also traumatized by violence.

As a sailor during the war, Skipper knows the cruelty of war and witnesses death from time to time. Besides general death associated with war, Skipper is also violently traumatized by his sailor Tremlow. It is in the middle of Skipper’s four - year stint on the *U.S.S Starfish* and it is a bright pink and green dawn in early June. That day Tremlow should have been on duty and is supposed to be down in the shack communicating with the rest of the fleet but he leaves his battle station, the shack. However, he stirs up a rebellion and fiercely beats Skipper. In Skipper’s narration, “He knocked down my guard with a tap of his bright fist” (Hawkes 230). Skipper tries to negotiate with him but Tremlow hits him again in the mouth. Skipper’s mouth is bleeding all the time during the fight. They wrestles with each other and together falls into the bottom of a white lifeboat where other sailors also beat Skipper violently: “they had gotten a little rough water cask under my stomach and were rolling me in some odd fashion on that little rough barre” (Hawkes 231). What’s worse, Tremlow rams against Skipper and maybe rapes him on the lifeboat. Skipper is seriously traumatized by his sailors especially Tremlow and is shocked of what Tremlow has done to him. Thus after those sailors leave, Skipper just lies on the desk half-naked, wet and shivering without any actions to punish the perpetrators at all.

Tremlow’s violence traumatizes Skipper not only on his body but more so on his heart. On one hand, as a captain of the fleet *U.S.S Starfish*, Skipper is betrayed by his sailors who are stirred up by Tremlow, with whom that he once worked together. On the other hand, Skipper

suffers torturous violence done by his comrades, which people could hardly tolerate. His body is traumatized and his self-esteem is hurt. This experience exerts great influence on him so that he recalls the suffering every time he is treated badly later in his life.

Beyond all question, Skipper is traumatized heavily by Tremlow during the war. After he leaves the army and goes home, he is also traumatized by his beloved daughter, who delights in her father's great agony and hurts her father both physically and psychologically. At the beginning of the novel, Skipper and his daughter Cassandra are at a party but the lady is lifeless. Skipper tries to make her happy, therefore, he agrees to her request for printing Fernandez's name indelibly on his chest. Although the tattoo artist emphasizes that the color green is going to hurt like hell, Cassandra still insists on the color just because it is the color of her husband's guitar despite her father's fear and resistance. Skipper describes his feeling during the printing process as "I was bulging in every muscle, slick, strained, and the bat was peering into my mouth of pain, kicking, slick with my saliva, and in the stuffed interior of my brain I was resisting, jerking in outraged helplessness" (Hawkes 125). What torture! However his daughter not only looks on beside her father without prevention in the process of tattoo making but even looks like very happy as she has "been cashing in her Daddy's Victory bonds" (Hawkes 127). Even though her father makes all efforts to protect her, Cassandra traumatizes her father both physically and psychologically in order to relieve her own agony. This is the first violence of Skipper caused by his daughter.

After Skipper leaves the army, he brings Cassandra and Pixie to the Gentle Island in order to prevent her from killing herself. After settling down on the island for some time, Skipper and Cassandra goes to a high school dance party together with the house owner Mildred, captain Red and his two sons Jomo and Bub. On that evening, Skipper is violently treated by his daughter twice. At the party, Skipper makes his efforts to protect his daughter by stopping other men from approaching her and keeps his daughter in his sight. However, Cassandra together with her accomplice lures him to the parking lot and hits him with snowballs. The first hit catches him just behind the ear while the second hit is quite furious and catches him on his face. Then the snowballs are winging at him from different angles in the parking lot. Skipper is wet and bleeding because of the snow attack. This is the second hit caused by his daughter. As a 59-year-old man, Skipper is hit by snowballs in a cold winter night, which seriously traumatizes his body. Then he returns to the gym after the attack but only finds that his daughter gets him to participate a belly bumping game. During the competition, belly bumpers can only bump with their bellies. He bumps with many local people even last year's champion Uncle Billy and finally beats him to be the winner of this year's competition. Skipper gets the pain of being crashed into

obese man. Cassandra plays tricks on her father and gets him hurt both in the snowfield and at the dance party. She stands with malevolent people who her father tries to keep her from and never misses a chance to hurt her father physically and psychologically.

Besides Skipper's trauma from violence, Cassandra is also seriously traumatized by rape. Rape is the feminist movement's primitive paradigm for violence against women in the sphere of personal life. Feminists defines rape as "a crime of violence rather than a sexual act" (Herman 21). Most victims of rape do not tell others about their rape experiences because only "in the protected environment of the consulting room, women had dared to speak of rape" (20). In *Second Skin*, Cassandra experiences the traumatic events of rape but she never speaks out her experiences of being raped.

After Skipper leaves the army, he brings Cassandra and Pixie to Gentle Island where they both will have a new beginning. However something happens on the way, which traumatizes Cassandra once again. On the way to the island, the blowout of the bus forces them to disembark. After a while, Skipper hears a mournful bugle and realizes the bus is not stopped in the middle of the desert but at the edge of some sort of military reservation. They find that three sailors are trying to escape from the military. After taking off their equipment, the sailors dig a hole to bury them in order to hide their identity. After that, they threaten Cassandra and Skipper to march to the cactus thirty or forty feet away from the bus and ask for kisses from Cassandra. Skipper and Cassandra have no choice but silence. The three sailors not only kiss Cassandra violently but have their arms "slide inside Cassandra's pea jacket and around her waist" (Hawkes 145). Skipper can see tremors of irritation from her hands but does not take actions to protect her besides holding her hands. Finally, Cassandra's head yields, her little hands leave her father's and she gives up struggling since her father does nothing to help her only to ask her to be brave. After that, on the newly arrived island Cassandra behaves as usual or even much better in her fathers' eyes.

"While prior to the rape they had been no more likely than anyone else to attempt suicide, almost one in five (19.2 percent) made a suicide attempt following the rape" (Herman 36). Cassandra is always unhappy since she is betrayed by her husband, but she pretends be calm after sailors' rape. As she has no method of releasing her trauma, the rape on Gentle Island traumatizes her again and finally results in her suicide.

After Cassandra and Skipper settle down on Gentle Island, they gradually adapt to the life there. They live in the house owned by Mildred, Red's lover. Cassandra also has a boyfriend named Jomo, the son of Captain Red. One day, they are persuaded by Captain Red to travel around the Gentle Island to see a variety of rocks and sunken ships. Actually Cassandra is



uninterested to go out to sea but pretends to be happy and dresses up for the sailing. She has known what will happen that day but has to go. They board at dawn with a rough wind rolling and pitching the little fishing boat. Red helps Cassandra into one of the yellow raincoats and grips her little shoulders when he introduces the views. However, Skipper does not keep her daughter away from Red and Cassandra does not revolt against him. After Skipper goes into the little wooden companionway and climbs up into the open air, at that time he sees "the knees which until now had never been exposed to sun, spray, or the head-on stance of a Captain Red, and because Red had thrown open the stiff crumpling mass of his yellow skins and was smiling and taking his hands away" (Hawkes 263). Cassandra is raped by her boyfriend's father but both her father and her boyfriend Jomo do nothing to stop this. Since then, she becomes calmer and finally jumps from the lighthouse. She is trapped in great agony all the time since she gets married with Fernandez. Fernandez's betrayal roots the seed of suicide in her mind but what makes her decide to suicide is rape from sailors and Red.

Hardly can anyone tolerate the agony brought by any of these traumatic events. However, Skipper and Cassandra experience death, betrayal and violence time after time, which finally leads to Cassandra's death and reflects in Skipper's traumatic symptoms.

## Chapter Two Traumatic Symptoms

Chapter one has analyzed three types of traumatic events which the protagonists have experienced and bring them severe emotional blow. And this chapter aims to analyze the traumatic symptoms of the protagonist Skipper in the novel. According to Edkins, “the essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as much” (1). Trauma may result in people’s disabilities to cope with the present situations and bring about their abnormal reactions. Although trauma cannot be noticed easily, it is believed by trauma researchers that victims will show some traumatic symptoms after undergoing one or a series of traumatic events. According to different characteristics of trauma, common symptoms of trauma include following types: numbness, fragmented consciousness, re-experience, loss of self-identity, isolation, over alertness and fear, irritability, depression and hopelessness, sadist and masochism (Li 29). Experiences like witnessing the death of relatives, being betrayed by intimate people, suffering violence and so on are devastating trauma events which are usually beyond people’s endurance. In *Second Skin*, Skipper has experienced a series of traumatic events and has shown several symptoms of trauma.

### 2.1 Fragmented Consciousness

In general, fragmented consciousness is considered as an obvious symptom of trauma. Judith Herman has referred fragmented consciousness to a disruption in the usually integrated function of consciousness, memory, and identity (69). Fragmented consciousness is a process that disconnects a person’s memories, feelings and actions. As the novel is narrated by the protagonist Skipper, it is easy to identify his fragmented consciousness from the non-linear narrative after traumatic events.

The most obvious fragmented consciousness embodied in the novel is the chaotic plots. Aristotle once claimed that “The plot, then, is the first essential of tragedy, its life-blood” (McQuillan 41). Plot is an important element of a story. In a traditional structure of plot, a story usually has the beginning, rising, climax, decline and ending according to chronological order. However, ordered events in time are shuffled and plots are replaced by irrelevant fragments of recollection in *Second Skin*. Time in the novel can mainly be divided into three periods: “the past”, “the present” and “the future”. “The past” runs from his father’s suicide to the mutiny led by Tremlow. After Skipper leaves the army, he brings Cassandra to Gentle Island and tries to prolong her life in “the present”. On Wandering Island he lives a peaceful life with Sony and a black girl named Kate in “the future”. However, any of “the past”, “the present” and “the future”

intrudes into another through Skipper's psychological perception of time. After Skipper finds his son-in-law dead in a hotel, he hesitates to tell his daughter the truth and then without any hint the narration shifts from "the present" to "the past" where he recalls his father's suicide and his attempts to prevent his death in detail. However, the narration shifts to "the present" after his recollection of his father's death. Skipper begins his story with seeming traditional narrative, but time shifts suddenly throughout his narration by means of fragments and flashback. It is the chaotic plots and disordered time in Skipper's narration that reflect his traumatic symptom of fragmented consciousness.

## 2.2 Numbness and Re-experience

According to American Psychiatric Association, numbness is one of the negative symptoms of trauma. The constraints on the traumatized person's inner life and outer range of activity are negative symptoms (Herman 36). When a person is completely powerless and any resistance is futile, he may go into a state of surrender. In order to protect themselves from injuries, the system of self-defense shuts down entirely when the victim experiences the same sort event again. The helpless person escapes from his situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering her state of consciousness.

Traumatic events sometimes can irritate not only terror, anger and agony but also calmness which may dissolve terror, anger and agony in turn. Consciousness protects a person through numbness. In the state of numbness, a person is still aware of what happened, what is occurring and what will happen but he can pull himself psychologically out of the ordinary meaning of the situation. After experiencing a variety of miserable activities, Skipper shows the symptom of numbness. Numbness is a traumatic symptom resulting from extraordinary miserable events which shatter the victims' sense of security. They do not experience any feeling, such as anger, sorrow and shame. Common traumatic events that provoke numbness include the death of intimate people, disaster, beloved people's betrayal and so on.

The first time Skipper shows his numbness is in his boyhood when he attempts to stop his father's suicide. Although he is a little boy when his father commits suicide, he knows clearly about his father's intention and wants to save him. He could have saved his father if he goes out at once and asks others for help. However, he does not take any effective action. He runs to his room to get his cello, which has nothing to do with saving his father's life. He recalls the details of getting his cello in his narration "The cello was under my bed and without thinking I flopped to my hands and knees and hauled it out, and then tumbled it onto my bed, turned back the corners of the old worn-out patchwork quilt" (Hawkes 242). After he gets his cello, he also "tightened the strings, tightened the bow and hugged the now upright cello" and returns back

telling his father “now I am going to play” (Hawkes 243). It is much more likely that he wants to show what he has learned to his parents rather than attempting to prevent his father from suicide. When he is playing the Brahms, his father asks him to stop playing. Then he stops, “silence, catch in my throat, legs locked” but no more other actions. “The psychiatrists Roger Pitman and van der Kolk suggest that trauma may produce long-lasting alterations in the regulation of endogenous opioids, which are natural substances having the same effects as opiates within the central nervous system” (32). When he faces the situation of his father trying to shoot himself, instead of persuading his father and asking for help, Skipper shows abnormal calmness and seems to be numb to his father’s shooting.

Besides his father’s death, Skipper is also numb when his daughter is raped later. On their way to Gentle Island, they comes across three army deserters. They show their intention of rape obviously for they call themselves “Kissin’ Bandits”. When the three sailors lined up in front of Cassandra and waited for their turns, he did not take actions or called for help but “stood there trembling, smiling, sweating, squeezing her hand, squeezing Cassandra’s hand for dear life and in all my protective reassurance and slack alarm” (Hawkes 144). As a father, Skipper loves his daughter with all his heart but he does not take actions to help his daughter when she is confronted with miserable situation. Though in the case of knowing his daughter will be raped by those soldiers, Skipper didn’t revolt but just “squeezed her hand - be brave, be brave”. He attempts to make Cassandra happy and protect her all the time but he is numb in that terrible situation. He does not show any feeling such as anger or despair but he smiles when Cassandra is being raped by sailors.

Except numbness to surroundings, the traumatized always re-experience their former painful events. For the symptom of re-experience, Herman claims “Long after the danger is past, traumatized people relives the event as though it were continually recurring the present. They cannot resume the normal course of her life, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts. ” (37). In other words, victims will often re-experience the traumatic events after suffering it, just like the event is repeating again and again. After the traumatic events, victims are disturbed frequently by memories of traumatic experiences and are unable to live a normal life. Although traumatic events have passed for a long time, the horrible memories are still rooted in the victims’ mind, which will repeat from time to time especially when victims experience similar traumatic events. Re-experience not only brings back the events in the forms of flashback and dream but also recalls feelings associated with previous experiences, exactly as Edkins said that re-experience “not only take us right back to the event. but also can bring the feeling and emotions - events, sights, smells and sounds associated with it - into the present” (Cash 55).

Although violence from Tremlow occurred many years ago, Skipper could not break free from it and re-experiences it again and again. When the tattooer is busy printing the green tattoo on Skipper's chest, he falls into pain and outraged helplessness. At that torturous moment, he suddenly recalls what Tremlow has done to him. Here is Skipper's first re-experience of Tremlow's violence. Then on their way to Gentle Island Skipper stares at the night sky, he finds himself "thinking of Tremlow, once more saw him as he looked when he bore down upon me during the height of the *Starfish* mutiny. Again I lived the moment of my degradation." (Hawkes 140). This is the second time that Skipper shows the symptom of re-experience. After they settles down on Gentle Island, the mutiny led by Tremlow and what Tremlow has done to Skipper frequently haunts him in his dreams as if he experiences the same event time after time. Thus he prints the message "wake with a loving thought, work with a happy thought, sleep with a gentle thought" (Hawkes 168) on a yellow paper and always reads it in order to get rid of the influence of horrible dreams. Every time Skipper experiences a traumatic event, he recalls his former traumatic events as if he re-experiences them again. He can hardly break free from previous trauma.

### 2.3 Loss of Self-identity and Loneliness

Traumatic events have primary effects not only on the psychological structures of the self but also on the systems of attachment and meaning that link individual and community. "Traumatic events destroy the victim's fundamental assumptions about the safety of the world, the positive value of the self, and the meaningful order of creation" (Herman 37). "Trauma forces the survivor to relive all her earlier struggles over autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy" (Herman 38). Thus the loss of self-identity is the traumatic symptom of victims in turn.

Along with Skipper's traumatic experiences, his self-identity gradually dissolves. As a son, Skipper has parents but they both die in his childhood, therefore his identity of son dissolves; as a husband, his wife betrays him and dies thus his identity of husband dissolves; as captain of *Starfish*, his sailors stir up rebellion and abuse him hence his identity of captain dissolves; as a father, his daughter looks down upon him and jumps from a lighthouse therefore his identity of father dissolves. In a word, Skipper gradually loses his self-identity, which is obvious after they go to Gentle Island. Even on the evening of cold winter "someone - Miranda? Red? Jomo? Bub? Even Grandma was not above suspicion - had filled the foot warmer with water"(Hawkes 189). He does not have a job to support himself, neither a house owned by himself. He cannot find his position on Gentle Island. He is nothing in the eyes of people on that island and he is bullied by others from that day he arrives. He brings his daughter there to make her and himself apart from

their previous experiences. However, it is on Gentle Island where people has contempt for him and his daughter commits suicide that Skipper loses his self-identity thoroughly.

After a victim is traumatized, he not only loses his self-identity but also shows the symptom of loneliness. The sense of loneliness results from unsatisfied relationships, isolation from companions and is a grievous mental state. In *Second Skin*, Skipper is isolated by surrounding people including his daughter. The novel is a narration through the perspective of a naval officer who is the protagonist of this book. He knows all the characters in the novel but he always feels lonely as nobody accompanies him the majority of the time. At the wedding night, Cassandra could have had dinned together with her father but she leaves him alone. Thus loneliness overwhelms him as he describes in his narration "I was alone. Alone in this mining town of rusted iron pipe and settling rock and corrugated paper turned to mold. Alone with my heavy stomach, my heartburn, the dizziness I still suffered from the altitude." (Hawkes 213). He feels extremely lonely and even "tried to make friends with the wretched little silver dog". After dinner he climbs up to the first balcony where there are only a scattering of broken glass, the wind and blackness. He then "emptied pockets, threw remaining handfuls of confetti out onto the wind" (Hawkes 215). This is the second time he feels lonely. Since Skipper experiences family members' death, betrayal of his wife and abuse by his sailors, he becomes lonelier and lonelier, which reflects his fear and desperation in his inner heart.

After Skipper moves to Gentle Island with his daughter, they live together with many friends. Even so, he still feels lonely from time to time. When he sits with others for supper, he just watches them carefully and finds it difficult to blend in. Gradually he is isolated by people on the island including Cassandra. In his narration, "When Miranda sat in front of the fire to knit, Cassandra was always with her, always kneeling at her feet and holding the yarn." "And I? I would sit in the shadows and wait, maintain my guard." (Hawkes 166). Skipper makes all his efforts to guard Cassandra but she stands up with others and isolates her father. These strengthen Skipper's loneliness and could be seen from "The hours of my lonely and sleepless nights increased, each hour deeper and darker and colder than the one before and with only the dummy - mockery of myself - to keep me company." (Hawkes 167). Finally, his daughter deserts him and commits suicide. He feels unprecedentedly empty for he is unable to stop the suicide of his most important and only family member. In his early life, he fails to prevent suicides of his father, mother and wife. Now he also loses his beloved daughter like every time before, which leads his loneliness to reach the peak. As he narrates "I was only an old bird in an empty nest" (Hawkes 274). Skipper feels lonely after he experiences death of family members and betrayal of his wife as he is deserted by them time after time. He is not powerful enough to dissolve loneliness so it



intensifies every time after he experiences traumatic events. Skipper's intense sense of loneliness reflects his agony from his early traumatic events.

## Chapter Three Recovery from Trauma

People who are traumatized by various events lost their basic abilities and isolated themselves from others and community. Therefore recovery of victims' abilities and reconstruction of the relationships are vital tasks of traumatic recovery. Janet and Freud are pioneers who probe into recovery from trauma. They all find that hysteria symptoms could be eased when traumatic memories and the frightening feelings accompanying them are recovered and put into words. This treatment is called "catharsis" by Freud. The same basic concept of recovery stages has emerged repeatedly from Janet's classic work on hysteria to recent descriptions of work. All observers do not divide their stages into three. some categorize five while others as many as eight stages in the recovery process. Nevertheless, there is a rough congruence in these formulations. Based on victims' different traumatic events and symptoms, there are a variety of conditions during the recovery process, which can be divided into three stages. As Judith Herman once claims in *Trauma and Recovery*: "The fundamental stages of recovery are establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and the community" (3). Each stage contains its vital tasks during recovery. During the first stage, victims should make efforts to rebuild their sense of security such as living in safe places. And in the second stage, they should recall and reconstruct their traumatic experiences such as retelling their stories and writing down their experiences. Then in the last stage, they should rebuild relationships with their acquaintances and construct interpersonal relationships with new people and community, such as having a new marriage.

Recovery from trauma does not mean that traumatized victims can get rid of their traumatic histories completely and return to common life as other normal people. As Yu Jianjun explained, in the process of working through trauma, "victims' trauma can be acknowledged, re-examined, and conceptualized to loosen its intensity" (26). The one who has recovered from trauma successfully can make peace with his or her traumatic memories. Death of parents in his childhood, being abused by Tremlow during the war and daughter's suicide have brought enormous trauma to Skipper. Thus Skipper is caught in tremendous agony after a series of traumatic events. Even though continuously tormented by his early nightmare experiences, Skipper still tries to pursue a safe peaceful life and embrace his bright future.

### 3.1 Rebuilding Sense of Security

The sense of security roots in external safety and inner strength which basically contains excellent working ability and splendid communicative skills. In order to rebuild one's sense of security, he or she has to recover his or her basic living skills in the society, which should be

done during the first stage of traumatic recovery. However, most of things that help to recover one's basic skills can only be done by himself or herself. In other words, the victims' recovery is mainly rely on their own endeavor. As the first stage of recovery, rebuilding sense of security successfully determines whether the recovery proceeds smoothly. In order to possess the sense of security, people have to ensure the safety of their living environment. Herman claims in her *Trauma and Recovery* "Whereas in the first stage of recovery survivors deal with social adversity mainly by retreating to a protected environment" (144).

In the novel, Skipper fails to stop his father shooting himself and his daughter jumping from the lighthouse as well as experiencing a series of traumatic events. Thus he moves to the Wandering Island where he lives a peaceful life in order to break free from previous traumatic experiences. Before he moves to the Wandering Island, he stays with his daughter, widow Miranda, Captain Red, Jomo and Bud in the Gentle Island. He does not have a job to support himself and his daughter and own no house and car, which makes him have a intense sense of insecurity. He and his daughter have to please people who provide them a house and a car. It is his insecurity that leads to more trauma instead of pleasure to his daughter.

After his daughter's suicide, he moves to the Wandering Island where he gradually feels the sense of security. Firstly, Wandering Island is a safe place without war, violence and death, instead it is full of hope for new life. Compared to the Gentle Island "black, wet, snow-swept in a deep relentless sea" (Hawkes 152), there are "a mirage of shimmering water to all ships at sea" and "golden dust" (Hawkes 247) on the Wandering Island. Skipper's narration contains his attitude towards these two islands. Obviously, while he shows his disgust to the other island, he feels comfortable and safe on the Wandering Island where provides the basic condition of rebuilding sense of security.

Besides the safe external surrounding, working ability is another important element of establishing sense of security. Insemination for cows is popular and important on the island so Skipper starts work as a respectable artificial inseminator: "I am much esteemed as the man who inseminates the cows" (Hawkes 146). He feels very proud of his job and thinks: "the mere lowing of a herd, has become my triumph" (Hawkes 148). He also gets confidence from his job which can be found from: "I, Skipper, led the way. I knew the way, was the man in charge — the AI — and there was no mistaking me for anything but the leader now, and they were faithful followers, my entourage" (Hawkes 247). He gets a sense of achievement from his new job for it gives him much respect and hope of life. His sense of achievement from job strengthens his confidence, which is an important part of sense of security. As he works for cows on the island, he gets more joy from other people's attention. He describes his work and life on the island as

“an appealing sort of work, a happy life” (Hawkes 147) because “children and old people crowd around to see Sony and me in action” (Hawkes 148). After he moves to the safe Wandering Island, Skipper gradually rebuilds his sense of security as he works as an artificial inseminator, which makes good preparation for the next step of recovery.

### 3.2 Narrating Traumatic Experiences

Based on successfully building the sense of security in the first stage, “the survivor tells the story of the trauma in the second stage of recovery. She tells it completely, in depth and in detail. This work of reconstruction actually transforms the trauma memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story.”(Herman 125). Brison also agrees with Herman and emphasizes that narrating traumatic events is the only way to heal trauma as it can transform traumatic memories into normal memories (43). During the process of narration, victims reconstruct their earlier traumatic events, integrate their trauma into memories and use their own earlier experiences to recover. Thus, they can lead a better life, for the traumatic events have turned into a part of common life experiences. Remembering and telling the story of trauma remain as the fundamental prerequisite for the healing of a trauma survivor, but because traumatic memories root deeply in one’s mind, the story of the traumatic events always emerges not as verbal narrative but as symptoms. In general, besides repeating traumatic events in the forms of flashback and dream, be easily noticed by victims until they retell their stories. Victims have to export their traumatic events to push themselves out of their agony, which is a necessary and early part of healing trauma. However, victims’ traumatic symptoms are comparatively converted in their subconsciousness if traumatic events happened a long time ago. Only when the traumatic events are brought back into consciousness and told by victims themselves, can traumatic experiences be integrated to themselves and become a normal part of victims. Through narration, victims start to understand the significance of early traumatic events better and gradually recover by integrating them with normal experiences.

As the novel is a narration of Skipper in first-person voice, the process of narrating his early sufferings is that process of his recovery. To tell story is a very useful and effective way of releasing trauma. Although rebuilding traumatic events is a key part of traumatic therapy, it is not sufficient for victims to rebuild traumatic experiences. During the process of reconstruction, victims recover the ability of integrating information. At first, Skipper’s memory of Tremlow’s violence is so little that he can only recollect with fragments and few words. He mentions the abuser for the first time in Chapter one when he names characters in his narration. With the mention of his mother’s name, he emphasizes: “there is no place for Tremlow - my devil, Tremlow” (Hawkes 114), which indicates that he is unwilling to recall anything about Tremlow.

Then in the second chapter, the pain of suffering tattoo printing reminds him of Tremlow for the second time. Still without any details, he just refers as “sick with the sudden recall of what Tremlow had done to me that night” (Hawkes 125). In the third chapter, when Skipper narrates his experiences of marching to Gentle Island, he thinks of “Tremlow, once more saw him as he looked when he born down upon me during the height of the *Starfish* mutiny. Again I lived the moment of my degradation.” (Hawkes 140). He reveals place and reason for Tremlow’s violence and emphasizes his feeling about that rebellion with a couple of sentences. As the story goes on, narration about Tremlow’s insurrection exposes more details and information. In the following chapters, Skipper recollects several details of his sailors’ betrayal. Finally in the chapter *The Brutal Act*, Skipper narrates the whole process of what happens on *Starfish* in detail. He explains the specific time with “I was in the middle of my four-year stint on the U.S.S. *Starfish* and it was a bright pink and green dawn in early June” (Hawkes 224) and he clearly records specific moment with “0500 hours”, “0600 hours”, “0730 hours”, “0800 hours”, “0940 hours”, “1600 hours”, “no more 0130 hours”, “2 A.M.” (Hawkes 222-235), which is a great process in his narration. The more horrific and awful scenes are recollected in Skipper’s mind, the more it is possible for him to reveal his painful experiences through retelling his miserable stories. The gradual process of memorizing makes Skipper able to access his hidden traumatic events, during which he releases his pain with more and more details. Finally, he goes through the whole experience of the incident of violence led by Tremlow again and is able to integrate relative information from his memories. In addition, he finds that he can overcome the fear for Tremlow.

Skipper presents his tragic events not only with the content he writes but with the form of non-linear narrative which reflects his chaotic state of his mind resulting from his early traumatic experiences. In *Second Skin*, time and space change towards Skipper’s psychological perception. Time in the novel can be simply divided into three parts: “the past”, “the present” and “the future”. “The past” begins with his father’s shooting himself and ends with mutiny during the war; in “the present”, he tries to prolong his daughter’s life but fails; in “the future”, he works as an inseminator and marries a black girl. However, in his narration scenes in “the past”, “the present” and “the future” often shifts suddenly. When he narrates the mutiny stirred up by Tremlow in “the past”, his mind flashes back to scenes of his son-in-law’s death in “the present”. Every time he comes across terrible events, his mind shifts to another unrelated scenes in order to escape the trauma in his narration.

Narrating traumatic events is a kind of special but effective way to recover from trauma from the perspective of psychology. During narrating process, victims can release the emotions from previous traumatic events through retelling their traumatic experiences. What’s more,

narrators can recover from their early trauma through bringing traumatic events into consciousness and facing them. In the novel, after Skipper settles down on a peaceful island, his safety is ensured but he still could not break away from his agony due to his early traumatic experiences. Then Skipper decides to write down his experiences by himself to release his agony. During the process of his narrative, Skipper tries to write down as many details as he can. That is why there are so many flashbacks, fragmented parts in almost every chapter of the novel. The stories which are written down by victims are a witness to their traumatic events and a reflection of trauma rooted deep in their heart. In the process of narrating victims can gradually integrate fragmented consciousness and information together through roving over his past time with flashbacks. Thus fragments and flashbacks together with non-linear narrative are not only reflections of trauma but evidences of recovery.

### 3.3 Reconstructing Relationships

It is believed that trauma cannot be faced by victims themselves, as Herman points out that trauma should not be confronted alone and recovery can only be got only “within the context of relationship” (133). Emotional support from family members, lovers, intimate friends may help traumatized people to get through trauma. Therefore, traumatized people should actively attempt to not only build intimate relationships with people who they do not know before but also reconstruct new relationships with people who they has already known. In addition to that, victims should also make efforts to blend themselves into the community where they live.

Skipper first reconstructs his relationship with Sony. In Skipper’s narration, Sony is the one who “recognize my need, my purpose, my strength and grace” (Hawkes 113). Sony is also the only one who accompanies Skipper when he experiences traumatic events. The difference is Skipper reconstructs the relationship between he and Sony. During the war, Sony was Skipper’s “messy boy” who served his diet. After a series of traumatic events, Skipper together with only Sony moves to Wandering Island where they are friends. Sony witnesses Skipper’s being abused by Tremlow during the war. Therefore, his relationship with Sony as Captain and “messy boy” reminds him of his previous experiences. Reconstructing relationships with Sony can help him forget trauma caused by Tremlow. What does not change is that Sony respects him, trusts him, cares about him and understands him all the time, which helps Skipper to overcome difficulties and recover from trauma.

Besides reconstructing relationships with his “messy boy”, Skipper begins to take more initiative in his life in the process of creating a new identity. He is ready to construct relationships with others. After he settles down on the Wandering Island. Skipper marries a black girl named Catalina Kate. He is loved and respected by his new wife Catalina Kate who gives

birth to a baby for him later, which helps him construct a new relationship with a little baby. In his marriage with Gertrude, Skipper is betrayed and detested as she says to him: "I hope they sink you, Edward. I really do." (Hawkes 217). However, his new wife Kate always obeys him. When she wants Skipper to visit her, she asks Sister Josie to invite him with caution. Sister Josie tries to protect Skipper from harm when he tries to deal with the terrible iguana on pregnant Kate's back. She expresses her concern and worry for Skipper through "Oh, no, sir. Don't touch iguana, sir. Him suck for so!" Even though Skipper fails to pull the iguana away, Kate does not blame him and still wears a gentle smile to him. In their relationships, Kate shows her care, tolerance, love, respect and worship towards Skipper, which he does not get from his ex-wife. Constructing a new relationship with Kate mainly helps Skipper find his dignity as a husband and recover from the trauma that his ex-wife brings to him.

Finally Skipper constructs relationship with the community he lives in. After he settles down on the Wandering Island, Skipper attempts to blend himself into the surroundings around him. He works for their important cows, invites his neighbors to have dinner with him and goes outside to learn the landscape of the place. Everyone in the community is polite to him. They show respect to him, protect him from danger, support his work and show tolerance to his weakness. Love and care from others keep Skipper from the previous nightmare experiences. With the support and care of his friends Skipper will overcome his fear of traumatic events and gradually recover, as he refers: "How satisfying that virtue always wins. I have only to consider Sony and Catalina Kate and Sister Josie and myself to know that virtue is everywhere and that we, at least, are four particles of its golden dust." (Hawkes 190).

Based on the first two steps, victims can reconstruct relationships with people who knew him before, construct new relationships with others and blend themselves into the community. In the last stage of recovery, surrounded with love and care from their family and friends people who are traumatized will gradually relieve their agony and work through trauma.

## Conclusion

After World War II, while the 1950s of America witnessed the social and economic prosperity, serious disharmony between the superficial boom of economy and the endangering suspicious of deep layers of the society appeared in the 1960s. Observing the literary works in 1960s, we may notice the prominent feature: trauma. As a pioneer of American Contemporary Literature who has served for the army during the war and witnessed the changes in 1960s, John Hawkes has shown his concern about traumatized people at that time in his works especially in *Second Skin*.

*Second skin* has ever been criticized as an incoherent and unstructured novel filled with death, violence and betrayal, which makes it hard to read. In fact, above events do exist everywhere in the novel but they are the evidences of trauma by coincidence. In the novel, the narration of various traumatic events like death, violence and betrayal create images of traumatized characters while traumatic symptoms reveals the great agony rooted deeply in their psychological world. What's more, rebuilding the sense of security, narrating traumatic experiences and reconstructing relationships are proved effective for recovery. Hawkes does not confine himself only to the traumatic events in the novel, but shows more concerns towards human beings. He takes Skipper as the narrator of traumatic events and the successful trial target of recovering from trauma, to guide people in real world to give more care to traumatized people and help them out of trauma.

This thesis explores the characters' psychological crisis and various methods of getting rid of trauma, which is just the point where the practical significance lies. Even though trauma brings injuries to people physically and psychologically, it also can be transformed into positive strength to enlighten people. The model of the self and the world constructed by human beings to provide ways of making the world meaningful is preserved in individual's mind, but the process of constructing the model is continuous. It is the overwhelming power of trauma that makes it much easier to intrude into the process. The traumatized suffer great agony between the period of initial breakdown of the existing model and the reconstruction of a replaced new one. Once they find appropriate ways to revise their model with traumatic experiences and form an enhanced one, their previous trauma can be healed.

With the development of economy and advancement of society, many people struggle for a living under enormous pressure. Therefore, it is common for people all over the world to be traumatized physically and mentally in many circumstances. Once traumatized by painful events, people should not trap themselves into the negative emotions, but bravely face up to it. From



Skipper's success in recovery from trauma, we can get the enlightenment that the traumatized can overcome trauma by rebuilding sense of security, narrating traumatic events and reconstructing relationships. In addition, the traumatized should actively seek ways to reconcile themselves with their traumatic experiences. Except the endeavors of the traumatized, relatives and intimate friends of them should hold a correct view towards their traumatic events and help them step out the shadow of trauma.

## Works Cited

- Barth, John. The Passion Artist: Recalling John Hawkes. *New York Times*, 12 (1998): 12.
- Brison, Susan. J. *Aftermath: Violence and the Remarking of a Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Busch, Frederick. *Hawkes: A Guide to his Fictions*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1973.
- Cash, Adam. *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2006.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996:5.
- Edkins, Jenny. *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Ellenberger, Henri. F. *The Discovery of the Unconscious*. New York: Basic Books Press, 1970.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Hogarth Press, 1990.
- Garland, Caroline. *Understanding Trauma: A Psychoanalytical Approach*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Granofsky, Ronald. *The Trauma Novel: Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of Collective Disaster*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Greenberg, Jay. R. and Mitchell, Stephen. A. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Greiner, Donald. J. *Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes*. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1978.
- Greiner, Donald. J. *Understanding John Hawkes*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985.
- Hawkes, John. *Second Skin*. New York: Penguin Books Press, 1996.
- Herman, Judith. L. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books Press, 1992.
- Hornby, Albert. S, et al, *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary*. 北京: 商务印书馆, 2009: 2152.
- Hryciw-Wing, Carol. A. *JOHN HAWKES A Research Guide*. New York: Garland Press, 1986.
- Kaplan, Harold. I. and Sadock, Benjamin. J. *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*. Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 1985.
- LeClair, Thomas. The Novelists: John Hawkes. *New Republic*, 5 (1979): 23.
- LeClair, Thomas. The Unreliability of Innocence: John Hawkes' 'Second Skin'. *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 3.1(1973): 32-39.

- Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000.
- Maccurdy, Carol. A. A Newly Envisioned World: Fictional Landscape of John Hawkes. *Contemporary Literature*, 27(1987): 318.
- McQuillan, Martin. *The Narrative Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- O'Donnell, Patrick. An Interview with John Hawkes. *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 3 (1982): 45.
- Reviere, Susan. L. *Memory of Childhood Trauma: A Clinician's Guide to the Literature*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1996.
- Tal, Kali. *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Tanner, Tony. *City of Words: American Fiction, 1950-1970*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Van der Kolk, Bessel A., Weisaeth, Lars and van der Hart, Onno. Pierre Janet on Post-traumatic Stress. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 2(1989): 365-378.
- Wallace, Ronald. The Rarer Action: Comedy in John Hawkes' *Second Skin*. *Studies in the Novel* 9(1977): 185.
- Waelan, Michael. *Navigating the Minefield: Hawkes' Narrative of Perversion*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998.
- Whitehead, Anne. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.
- Winnicott, Donald. W. *Playing and Reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Group, 1974.
- 谷拥军, 从霍妮的动机理论解读约翰·霍克斯作品中的心理危机与冲突, 硕士学位论文, 广西师范大学, 2007。
- 王敏, 从创伤理论浅析《小镇畸人》, 硕士学位论文, 西南大学, 2010。
- 吴慧敏, 詹姆逊后现代主义视角下的《第二层皮》, 硕士学位论文, 上海师范大学, 2014。
- 杨湘齐, 后现代主义和女性主义视角下的《第二层皮》, 硕士学位论文, 厦门大学, 2007。
- 余建军, 创伤·历史·愈合——库特·冯内古特《五号屠场》中的创伤理论研究, 硕士学位论文, 西南大学, 2008。
- 朱蒂斯·赫曼, 《创伤与复原》(*Trauma and Recovery*), 杨大和译。台北: 时报文化出版公司, 1995。

