

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

08 MAI 1945 UNIVERSITY-GUELMA
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of Letters and English Language

جامعة 8 ماي 1945-قائمة
كلية الآداب واللغات
قسم الآداب و اللغة الإنجليزية



Option: Literature

Writing Trauma as a Healing Experience: Case Study of Tim
O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

Submitted by:

DOUAKHA Zahra

Supervised by:

Mrs. BOUALLEGUE Nadjiba

Board of Examiners

Chairwoman: Ms. MOUMENE Soumia (MAA) Université de 8 Mai 1945 - GUELMA

Examiner : Mrs. BOURSACE Houda (MAA) Université de 8 Mai 1945 - GUELMA

Supervisor: Mrs. BOUALLEGUE Nadjiba (MAA) Université de 8 Mai 1945 - GUELMA

Vu le: 23/09/2021

September 2021

Dedication

I would like to wholeheartedly dedicate this dissertation to my source of power and my eternal bless, Ksouri Said, my grandfather, who has been the only source of inspiration. He gave me strength when thought about giving up. My grandfather was impatiently waiting to see me graduating but destiny had other plans for us.

To my gorgeous grandmother, Bouchemella El Kamla, who taught me patience and hope in life. She spoils me with love and support in her own way.

To My beloved parents, Douakha Allaoua and Ksouri Fatiha, for their endless love, care, guidance and support.

To my relatives for being the reason I am chasing my dreams.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my closest, friends Amina Aidaoui, Roumayssa Himri, Amina Laaraissia, Tebib Rayene and Fareh Khouloud who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate whatthey have done. To Rayan Haloui, Soundous, Manel, Jumana, Nesserin, Amani, and Maroua for all the priceless memories.

To Rania Benchachou and Melek Chaabane who have always been a source of motivation and comfort.

To my dear friend, Zakariya Boughazi, who has always been there to make everything sounds easy and positive.

And last but not least a special dedication for my second family Ahmed Himri, Merabti Dalila, Kawther Himri and Afnene Himri for all the priceless love and support they gave me.

Thank you..

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my heartiest thanks with a deep sense of gratitude and respect to all those who provided me with immense help and guidance during my years of study.

I would like to thank my supervisor **Mrs. BOUALLEGUE Nadjiba** who left a mark in my life since the first year I was her student. Thank you for your time, your patience, and efforts. Thank you for your realness, thank you for encouraging me, for supporting me and thank you for inspiring me to learn.

I would gratefully thank my teachers: Ms. SERHANI Meriem, Pr. TOULGUI Ladi, Ms.TOULGUI Insaf, Dr. BENGRAIT Nawel, Ms. HARIDI Samia, Mrs. HENAINIA Hosna, Mrs.BENYOUNES Djahida, Mrs.ABDAOUI Mouneya, Dr. MLILI Amina, Mrs.CHAHAT Nardjess, Mrs.CHERIBI Lamia who were waymore than teachers to me, thank you all for your motivation, advice and guidance.

To my committee members, Ms. MOUMENE Soumia, and Mrs. BOURSACE Houda for taking the time to review my work and offer an insightful feedback.

Abstract

This study focuses on the ability of the act of writing trauma to heal its wounds. Many writers use fiction to recover from their past trauma and free their negative emotions. Among these writers, one can mention the American writer Tim O'Brien whose writings embody therapeutic strategies. His collection of short stories, *The Things They Carried* (1990), is very suitable to the theme since it is a narrative that tells O'Brien's experience in the Vietnam War. In his works, O'Brien shows how he uses his imagination to let go of the trauma of war. This research draws on Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth's theories of trauma to examine the impact of writing traumatic experience on the healing process. The first chapter deals with trauma theory with the representation of trauma in some literary works. Moreover, the second chapter analyzes war trauma in the short story entitled "The Man I Killed". It explores war trauma and sheds light on the Vietnam War trauma. It discusses trauma, shock, and guilt that the veterans experience in the Vietnam War. The third chapter deals with the meaning of death in the short story named "The Lives of The Dead", by emphasizing the impact of writing trauma in translating the uncomprehended unspeakability and the silence of war trauma.

Table of Content

Dedication.....	I.
Acknowledgements.....	II.
Abstract.....	III.
Table of Content.....	IV.
Introduction.....	1.
Chapter I: A theoretical Examination of Trauma.....	5.
I.1. An Overview of Trauma.....	5.
I.2.Literary Representation of Trauma.....	14.
Chapter II: Trauma in Tim O'Brien's "The Man I killed".....	18.
II.1.War Trauma.....	18.
II.2.War Trauma in "The Man I Killed".....	24.
Chapter III:The Meaning of Death and Healing in "The Lives of The Dead".	32.
III.1.The Meaning Of Death in "The Lives of The Dead".....	32.
III.2.Writing Fiction to Heal Trauma	38.

Conclusion.....48.

Work Cited.....52.

الملخص.....

Résumé.....

Introduction

Trauma is a response to a shock or an extremely stressful and devastating accident, or an event that causes some negative feelings like hopelessness and fear. It leads to lower the ability to fully interact with emotions. Specifically, trauma is a reaction to an action that a person can find shocking, like being in a war zone, a natural disaster, or an accident.

According to Freud, psychological trauma consists of the following three parts: the memory of traumatic events in the childhood, the memory of traumatic events experienced after puberty and the traumatic memory of the events in the earlier life activated by what the person encounters later. The mental trauma can affect a person in many ways, imposing physical, mental, and behavioural changes.

Literature contains multiple depictions of traumatic experiences. In order to recover from their trauma, many authors and novelists have used literature to let go of their traumatic emotions and memories through representing them in their characters. Writing trauma through fiction has been proven to help writers create meaning of their own world of suffering. Moreover, this expression of tough feelings into actual words paves the path to their healing process and to a space of comfort where they are no longer haunted by bad memories and chaos. In this function, one of the most fascinating contemporary writers has been chosen to work on, Tim O'Brien.

Tim O'Brien, full name William Timothy O'Brien, is an American author best known for his works on American troops in the Vietnam War. He was born on October 1, 1946, in Austin, Minnesota. O'Brien served in Vietnam after graduating from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota with a B.A. in political science in 1968. When he returned to the United States, he attended Harvard University on a part-time basis and worked as an intern and reporter for the Washington Post from 1971 to 1974. In his first book, *If I Die in a Combat*

Zone, *Box Me Up* and *Ship Me Home*, he gathered his newspaper and magazine pieces on his combat experiences (1973). It was lauded for its honest representation of a soldier's experience which was both contemplative and brutally realistic. Many of O'Brien's works deal with the Vietnam War. O'Brien has received various honours, including the Pritzker Military Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing (2013).

Trauma is an exhausting emotional response. It causes additional reactions to incorporate erratic nightmares, flashbacks, feelings, and unquestionably physiological health consequences such as migraines or squeamishness. Even though these interpretations are standard, individuals have the inconvenience of moving on with their lives. Psychologists can help these people find useful strategies to monitor their thoughts and emotions. Trauma is difficult to describe and harder to comprehend. Hence, there is a need to do more to increase education and awareness about it.

This study focuses on understanding trauma, exploring its mysteries, and writing trauma as a therapeutic and healing process. It relies on the idea of writing trauma to healing. Since writing is regarded as one of the most effective methods for dealing with trauma, therapists propose that writing could be used as a possible way of healing and recovery. Writing really helps manage emotional pain, as well as gives several life strategies for overcoming them. For trauma-related individuals, writing can be exceptionally therapeutic.

This theme was chosen because of a personal preference to literature and mainly the field of psychoanalysis. Belonging to an Arab country with a history of colonization was the main reason behind choosing this theme. Colonialism is a dire experience for individuals in the Arab region. It is an extremely traumatic event that definitely affects individuals' lives. Another factor, it is the desire to explore the mystery of trauma, and discover why it is hard to understand. Thus this study will investigate the importance of writing trauma through fiction,

and how reflecting the real feelings through the characters can really help in healing the trauma.

Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* is studied through a psychoanalytic criticism. The collection of short stories narrates the story of the narrator "Tim", who is telling the story of his combat in Vietnam. Each of the young Timmy, Tim the soldier and Tim the writer are represented by a history of trauma. The former is a surviving member of war and violence that goes through all that, while the latter is a victim of what is called war zone. Consequently, the use of psychoanalytic approach focuses on the author himself as well as on the related items and features with both him and the central protagonist, and it attempts to explain how writing this collection was some kind of cure to Tim O'Brien.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical one; it is divided into two sections. The first section seeks to examine the theory of trauma through the theories of the Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and the professor of Human Letters, Cathy Caruth. These theories are used to understand the ambiguity of trauma. Likewise, the second section will focus on the representation of trauma in literature.

The second chapter is analytical. This chapter is sectioned into two parts. It is devoted to the analysis of psychoanalysis in *The Things They Carried*. The first section will focus on the trauma of war generally and Vietnamese war specifically. In addition to that, the second section will deal with war trauma in the short story "The Man I Killed".

The third chapter is also an analytical chapter. It deals with storytelling and how it helps in saving people's lives in dealing with death, as well as, how writing fiction can heal the writer's trauma. This chapter is also divided into two sections. The first section tends to analyse the meaning of death in the short story "The Lives of The Dead"; the second section

of the chapter explores storytelling, specifically the use of fiction to heal trauma in “The Lives of The Dead”.

To conclude with, the value of this study mainly focuses on showing how writing fiction can help in healing trauma. Tim O’Brien used fiction to narrate his traumatic experience not only from the Vietnamese war but also from his childhood memories. Through this narration, O’Brien succeeds in getting rid of the heaviness of these traumatic memories on his chest by writing *The Things They Carried* which is a combination of short stories that combine both fiction and reality.

Chapter I: A Theoretical examination of trauma

This chapter elucidates the traditional theory of trauma by Sigmund Freud and the modern theory of trauma by Cathy Caruth. It is sectioned into two parts. The first section of the chapter introduces trauma theory according to Freud and Caruth and discusses the difference between mourning and melancholia. Moreover, the second section of the chapter tackles various examples of fictional representations of trauma in literary works.

I.1. Overview of Trauma

Trauma is a draining emotional reaction that is difficult to explain and much more difficult to understand. It is a mental injury that occurs as a result of a shock or an overstressed action on the part of the person. To get a deeper understanding of the concept of trauma, it is necessary to retake the unavoidable resources in Freud's work "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) to improve the comprehension of trauma principles and theories.

Freud's work on neurosis of war and the issue of traumatic repetition in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" expands and adapts his previous ideas about the ego defence mechanisms and the cause and impact of trauma on the mind. The pressure of the traumatic events creates conflicts in the ego, which cause a split off from the unity of the ego. However, that split is going to be repressed in the unconscious mind of the person to return later, often in a form of dreams that took the traumatized back to the situation that caused him/her the pain. As Freud writes:

On the way it over and again happens that particular instincts, or portions of them, prove irreconcilable in their aims or demands with others which can be welded into the comprehensive unity of the ego. They are thereupon split off from this unity by the process of repression, retained on lower stages of psychic development, and for the time being cut off from all possibility of gratification. If they then succeed, as so easily

happens with the repressed sex-impulses, in fighting their way through— along circuitous routes—to a direct or a substitutive gratification, this success, which might otherwise have brought pleasure, is experienced by the ego as ‘pain’ (“Beyond The Pleasure Principle”⁷).

The conflicts triggered by the injury led to a traumatic neurosis which is also the result of a strong pressure on the barrier against the stimuli, i.e. the traumatic neurosis is the consequence of the shock or the fear that a person has faced without being prepared or expecting it. Fright can be seen as, “the failure of the mechanism of apprehension to make the proper preparation, including the over-charging of the systems first receiving the stimulus” (Freud, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*²⁴). In other words, fright is the state a person experiences danger without being prepared for it, and the lack of apprehension, along with external stimuli, cause traumatic neurosis. This means the apprehension actions serve as a safeguard against traumatic neurosis. Unexpected fright, on the other hand, holds no protection, allowing external stimuli to breach the barrier and reach the unconscious mind without proper internal defence. And from that, traumatic neurosis is defined as any external excitations which are powerful enough to cause a pain. It is also seen as both an external agent that shocks the unprepared system and an internal action of defence against stimulation (24).

According to Freud, traumatic neurosis is marked by the repetition-compulsion of the painful event which means: “The unconscious, i.e. the repressed material, offers no resistance whatever to the curative efforts; indeed, it has no other aim than to force its way through the pressure weighing on it, either to consciousness or to discharge by means of some real action” (*Beyond The Pleasure Principle* 14). When the conscious and preconscious minds resist the pain caused by the traumatic neurosis, they push the memory and the unpleasant feelings to the unconscious mind where it will be repressed. Thus, the dream becomes “a wish-

fulfilment” (25). The unconscious mind brings back those repressed memories through the repetition-compulsion with the hopes of mastering the pain. As a result, the dreams of a traumatized patient repeat the experience as a response to the repetition-compulsion in a way to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety and apprehension whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis. As Freud writes, “The patient cannot recall all of what lies repressed, perhaps not even the essential part of it, and so gains no conviction that the conclusion presented to him is correct” (*Beyond The Pleasure Principle* 13). According to Freud, the patient cannot remember all what is repressed in him. Because the missing part can be precisely the essential part of the event, the patient is forced to replicate the repressed material as a contemporary event rather than remembering it as something from the past. So according to Freud, the self does not recall the real event but rather reproductions of the traumatic experience that occur in dreams.

In Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996) the trauma model takes a particular interpretation of Freud’s trauma theories to forward a larger post structural concern with the referential limits of language and history. Caruth writes that “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 appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11).

Indicating that the capacity to fully comprehend or reflect a traumatic experience is disrupted by a traumatic latency and dissociation. In the final analysis, Caruth states, “Through the notion of trauma, I will argue, we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not” (11). In other words, both individual and collective traumatic events are never understood explicitly, but rather by an interruption of reference that shows the significance of the past as a kind of

reproduction or performance. The idea that a traumatic experience can only be recognized as a repeated absence reflects both “the dissociative essence of trauma” and its “linguistic abnormality”. In her study, Caruth offers a ‘general definition’ of trauma, which she describes as ‘the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena’ (91). This description perfectly captures the two main features Caruth attributes to the traumatic experience: first, the unassimilable nature of the experiential event, and second, the repetition compulsion that has been provoked by the same event.

Trauma's psychoanalytic dilemma, as envisioned in this model, is the inability or the failure to be fully and properly assimilated into the mind and memory. In the same book Caruth argues that “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on” (17). Also she is seeing trauma through Freudian theories as the delayed restoration of the repressed material and a defining disappearance. As Caruth explains:

What the parable of the wound and the voice thus tells us, and what is at the heart of Freud's writing on trauma, both in what it says and in the stories it unwittingly tells, is that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language (17).

The shift in traumatic memory that prevents the individual from knowing the past also applies to the "historical memory" function in relation to a group or cultural trauma experience. (Caruth 15-6). In her explanation of Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, Caruth writes:

“history, like trauma, is never simply one’s own, that history is precisely the way we were implicated in each other’s traumas” (24), giving a universal view of trauma as something that harms the brain and causes a common reaction over time. This point of view emphasizes trauma's implicit permanent value, which can be inherited through generations. Trauma's infectious ability is combined with the timelessness of an extreme experience that refuses to be assimilated into memory. Thus from this perspective trauma’s permanent capacity means that a cultural group's traumatic experience in the past may be part of the psychic environment of a contemporary individual who belongs to the same cultural group.

In her book *Trauma Explorations in Memory*, Caruth quotes herself when she first wrote about the Buffalo Creek catastrophe, trying to distinguish between “individual trauma” and “collective trauma”, Caruth writes, “By individual trauma I mean a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively. . .”(Trauma Explorations in Memory 187) i.e. Individual trauma refers to a psychological blow that destroys one's defensive barriers unexpectedly and with a violent strength to which makes an individual unable to respond properly. Following that with what she means with the collective trauma, Caruth writes:

I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma.” But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. . . I” continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. “You” continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate

to. But “we” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (*Trauma Explorations in Memory* 187).

According to Caruth, collective trauma is a hit to the fundamental structures of social life that breaks the interpersonal relationships and destroys the prevalent sense of involvement. Even though it lacks the element of surprise usually associated with the “trauma”, it is considered a sort of a shock and gradual realization that an important part of one's self has vanished since the community no longer exists as a source of support. Since the two — the individual and the community continue to exist, however, there would be no interconnection between them.

I.1.1. Mourning vs. Melancholia

It is essential to differentiate between the two types of grief which are two main psychological responses to loss: “melancholia and mourning”. Although these two words are loosely related, they both describe a person's abject grief and depression after the loss of an important person, object, or ideal. Yet the notion of melancholia as a physical and mental state existed from ancient times. A contemporary speech derives from the psychological model that is initially set by Sigmund Freud in his 1917 essay, “Mourning and Melancholia” defines the two as separate, contradictory states of being. As a method of coping with grief, mourning is described as “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (243). According to Freud, “mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition and to refer it to medical treatment” (243-4). Again it is seen as a disengagement from normal actions, as well as an outward display of dejection and lack of interest in the outside world, and, in extreme situations, a total rejection of new objects of love or involvement in any activity that is not specifically related to the lost object.

Freud sets specific features that distinguish mourning from melancholia. These features are, “a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-reviling, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (“Mourning and Melancholia”244).

So according to Freud, to mourn is to lose concern and interest in the outside world, and to lose the right to select any new love object that would mean replacing the mourned one, as well as to switch away from any activity that is not connected to the deceased's memory. Under this context, mourning is seen as a normal, healthy response to loss, one that lasts for a certain timeframe and “We rely on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful” (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia”243). The ultimate purpose, or "work," of mourning is to restore the subject's equilibrium when the mourning subject will come to understand that the “loved object no longer exists” (Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* 244) by a process of "reality-testing" (Freud 244), and then will make the bonds of the libido (sexual desire) and that object stronger. The subject's libidinal connection is therefore redirected to a new object, freeing the ego once more (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” 244-245). As Alessia Ricciardi observes in her book, *The Ends of Mourning: psychoanalysis, literature, film (2003)*, “mourning is not simply an emotion for Freud, but the performance of a work that, like interpretation, is a psychically transformative activity” (21). This procedure is thought to be painful, hard, and long; however, it is important to remember that it does have a conclusion, with the libidinal cathexes being relocated to a new object marking the end of it. Caruth believes that mourning is letting go of the pain and the liberation of the traumatic memories which allows the person to reach healing “at once as an exhilarating, unexpected liberation from his nightmares—a

liberation that allows him for the first time to experience feelings both of mourning and of hope” (*Trauma* 48).

As for melancholia, in Freud’s original model, it works much the same as mourning, except with two important differences. For the melancholic, grief is characterized by “self-reproaches” and an “expectation of punishment” (“Mourning and Melancholia” 244). Melancholia can cause extreme anger or hate, which, though mainly aimed at oneself, it can also be directed at others. Second, the duration of melancholia differs from that of mourning. Though mourning “reach an end after a finite amount of time” (Ricciardi 21), melancholia has an indefinite period, sometimes concluding only with the sufferer's death (typically by suicide).

Melancholia is a continuous state of being with no clear end point; it is regarded as “the enduring attachment of the ego to the lost object. It is a continuous mourning, a mourning that never ends” (Kenway 93). In addition to that, Jane Kenway writes: “In sum, mourning is viewed as a ‘successful’ resolution to loss, whilst melancholia is seen as a failure to resolve loss” (93). Melancholia is a stuck phase in which the subject is trapped in compulsive repetition, obsessed with the past, and narcissistically associated with the missing thing, while mourning is a reinvestment in life that allows the subject to move on (Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” 250).

The state of melancholia leads us to wonder about what prevents grief from progressing normally as we see it in mourning. Why can't the subject break his or her libidinal bonds with the missing object and reassign them to another? Thus Sigmund Freud suggests a range of potential causes. For first, he suggests that melancholia can arise as a reaction to “ideal” rather than “real” ways of loss, for instance, one's lover may not have died, but has just stopped being a love-object. The loss can be considered traumatic in this situation because it happened so fast that the psyche was unable to handle it; mourning is not

completed because the object still resides, although in a basically different relation to the subject, obstructing the subject's efforts to reassign his or her interest to a new object (“Mourning and Melancholia” 245).

In her book *Trauma Exploration in Memory* (1995), Caruth talked about the relation between the act of writing and experiencing trauma or facing horror and how important is the act of writing in recalling the memory and facilitates the understanding of it. Caruth explains: “When Freud, while thinking of his dream, resorts to writing down for the first time ever all his free associations, he unexpectedly discovers, all at once, the dreams specific latent meaning, an unprecedented method of dream interpretation, and a theory of dreams as psychical fulfilments of unconscious wishes” (22). Also in the same book, in the chapter entitled “The Address to The Class” Shoshana Felman said:

The writing is designed to be, in other words, an essential element of your working through this experience. And as such, it needs precisely to encroach on your reactions to the first screening session. Many of you, indeed, quite literally said that you felt you did not count after the first session, that, had you been there in the camps, you are certain that you would have died. And I am inviting you now to testify to that experience, so as to accept the obligation—and the right—to repossess yourselves, to take, in other words, the chance to sign, the chance to count. (54)

Felman here asked her students to write their testimony trying to let go all their feelings and traumatic experiences to free themselves from that grief. Then she followed that by “The written work the class had finally submitted turned out to be an amazingly articulate, reflective, and profound statement of the trauma they had gone through and of the significance of their assuming the position of the witness” (55). She claims that writing trauma helped her students to let go of that heavy weighted emotions. Caruth also suggests that transforming the trauma into a narrative memory that enables the story to be verbalized

and communicated, and so incorporated through one's own and others' memories and understanding of the past, which may lead to lose both the precision and the power that distinguishes traumatic recall (*Trauma* 153). Caruth argues that writing can help an individual to transmit suffering into a story telling and enable survivors to use “writing as a form of testimony”. Moreover, writing about a traumatic experience creates a bond between the self and others, enabling for a reconnection with the world when the writer will find comfort, support and, strength in this reconnection.

I.2.The Literary Representation of Trauma

There are many writers who used writing to escape and heal from psychological issues like Janet Frame, and Nora Okja Keller. Each of these two writers attempt to give voice to the self (or their people) as other and establish an agency, although some of these writers achieved more successful results in healing than others. In telling their stories, however, they must always strive to avoid reaffirming the pain and the melancholy. They are trying to mourn their pain by telling the story. Whether they dealt with traumatic issues or were bothered by other types of issues like racism, sexism and classism, they need to tell their stories in order to subvert silence, and made the wound lose its power by writing it.

Janet Frame, also known as Janet Paterson Frame Clutha, is a prominent New Zealand novelist, short story writer, and poet who lived from August 28, 1924, to January 29, 2004, in Dunedin. Her works were notable for their explorations of loneliness and solitude. Frame was born to a railroad worker and a poet who had previously worked as a maid for author Katherine Mansfield's family. Her early years were characterized by poverty, the death of her sister who drowned and the disturbances caused by her brother's epilepsy. She had a nervous breakdown in 1945 while learning to be a teacher. She was misdiagnosed with schizophrenia and spent almost a decade in mental hospitals. From 1947, following another drowning death of her sister, she was subjected to repeated courses of electroconvulsive therapy. She read a

lot of classics and worked on her writing skills during that time. Frame's first novel, *The Lagoon*, was published in 1951, when she was still a patient. It's a work that reflects the loneliness and vulnerability of those who don't feel like they belong in the world. She was set for a lobotomy (surgical operation on the frontal lobe of the brain intent on treating certain mental illnesses) before hospital authorities heard that her novel *The Lagoon* had secured a literary contest. Frame was launched in 1955 after the operation was cancelled (Kirsty).

Faces in the Water (1961) is a fictionalized account of her stay in psychiatric hospitals in New Zealand. It was published as a therapeutic exercise while she was receiving medical treatment in London, where she lived and wrote from 1956 to 1963 (Britannica). Frame's account is clearly enticing, particularly as she addresses the outside world, which is closed off to Istina and her friends. The use of ruptured language and scattered memory, as well as the stream-of-consciousness style of storytelling, cause the story to come through with all of its misery. Istina is a strikingly dynamic and eerily true character (Kirsty).

Faces in the Water is a strong and heart-breaking book that resulted from Janet Frame's doctor's suggestion that she writes about her painful encounters in mental hospitals in order to liberate herself from them. Frame's life was actually saved by her writing. The hospital director learned she had received the Hubert Church Award for her first collection of short stories, *The Lagoon*, just days before she was due to be lobotomized. She discovered later that she had never had schizophrenia in the first place. Psychiatrists in London tested her and assured that she should have never gone to mental hospitals. She was actually suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, whose symptoms were misdiagnosed as schizophrenia, as a result of the extreme pain of losing two sisters to drowning, as well as an abusive father and abject poverty (Gambaudo).

By writing her story of victimization, Frame asserts agency, she mourned her loss and pain by becoming not merely a victim but a survivor through speaking it out and letting go of

those feelings. Frame reveals her account and provides voice to the other patients who would never have been released, bearing witness to their suffering. Frame's tale is one of the most powerful stories of reclaiming her narrative and breaking away from injustice.

Despite the fact that her father is German and her mother is Korean, Nora Okja Keller, the contemporary writer, considers herself to be an Asian American. Keller has written two highly praised and vital books, *Comfort Woman* 1997 and *Fox Girl* 2002, based on the practically indescribable experiences of Korean women during WWII and the lives of Korean-Americans who followed them ("Nora Keller").

Keller's novel *Comfort Woman*, published in 1997, has recently risen to prominence as one of the most important works of Asian American literature, representing in literary form a long-forgotten historical trauma: the forced sexual servitude of Korean women and girls under Japanese military occupation. Keller's novel is a work of fiction written by someone who has no direct experience of the historical trauma, in contrast to the countless volumes of testimony and autobiography that have been published since the mid-1990s. As a result, the work raises ethical concerns about employing trauma as a literary subject, as well as questions about the purpose of fiction, the author's role, and the position of the traumatized fictional protagonist. It is the story of Akiko, a Korean refugee of WWII who struggles with the pain of the memory of being a comfort woman to Japanese soldiers. (Madsen 82).

Many former comfort women have acknowledged the difficulties and anguish associated in speaking about traumatic memory, admitting in their testimony that recalling their situation makes them physically sick. As each of these women has testified, being identified as a trauma victim put a woman in a certain subject position that guarantees her future distress through its representation. Why, therefore, would you want to revisit such a painful experience? What makes victim testimony so valuable? (Madsen 82).

Trauma narratives are motivated by a desire to make the traumatic experience real for both the survivor and the witness by uniting fragments of traumatic memory and taking control of the meaning of the experience through the retelling. The American missionary who becomes Akiko's husband rescripts her rape and torture ordeal in *Comfort Woman*. His fascination with her history stems from a sexual urge that Akiko describes as paedophilia, and the only way he can understand and define her experience is as prostitution. The novel provides the possibility for validation, and catharsis, Keller offers some ways of "working through" the historical trauma (Madsen 83).

In conclusion, trauma is a mental injury that is caused by an extremely stressful incident. In trauma theory, while Sigmund Freud focuses on the person's unexpectancy of the frightening incident which causes this mental injury; Caruth emphasizes the fact that trauma is a repetitive memory which makes presence even after the occurrence of the traumatic event in form of illusions. In addition to that Freud and Caruth suggest two types of reactions which people adopt after a traumatic event. One is mourning which encompasses the person's isolation after loss. The other is melancholia which is more severe than the previous one. In contrast to mourning, melancholia is an endless grief. At the literary scene, writers illustrate the experience of trauma from different sides. Janet Frame discusses her individual traumatic experience in psychiatric hospital. Whereas Nora Okja Keller tackles communal trauma of Korean women during war.

Chapter II: Trauma in Tim O'Brien's "*The Man I killed*"

The second chapter is an analytical one that focuses essentially on examining trauma the short story "The Man I Killed" by Tim O'Brien. This chapter is sectioned into two parts. The first section of the chapter sheds light on war trauma in general and specifically Vietnam trauma, while the second section deals with the war trauma the narrator Tim O'Brien has experienced in "The Man I Killed".

II.1. War Trauma

In her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Caruth claims that the phenomenon of trauma has become all-encompassing; nevertheless, she contends that it has done so precisely because it pushes us to our boundaries of knowledge. Trauma, according to Caruth, is an interdisciplinary notion that has to be studied in conjunction with history, psychoanalysis, psychology, literature, sociology, and education (ix). In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth argues that literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in "the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (ix). It is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet (3). Indeed, the traumatic event's lack of relocatability in a certain time zone in the past causes the survivor's painful memory to be hunted. According to Caruth, "the texts of psychoanalysis, of literature, and of literary theory—both speak about and speak through the profound story of traumatic experience" (*Unclaimed* 4). In other words, trauma is a focal theme in psychoanalysis and literature because they do not only tell readers about traumatic experiences but they also engage those readers in the experience itself by expressing the unspeakability of trauma.

Caruth illustrates that therapy sessions may "imply the giving-up of an important reality, or the delusion of a special truth into the reassuring terms of therapy" for survivors (*Trauma: Explorations* vii). While the traumatized are called upon to perceive and relive the

relentless actuality of the past, Caruth notes that they “are called upon to see and relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection” (152). She proposes that an overpowering experience that has been obliterated by subsequent suppression or forgetfulness does not resurface in the flashback, but rather that there is an event that is defined in part by “its lack of integration to consciousness”. Similarly, “the literal registration of an event” and the method in which “it *escapes* full consciousness as it occurs” are inextricably linked (152-3).

Trauma implants in the brain a tale that it cannot absorb, explain or transcend. In a constant attempt to make sense of that borderline experience, the brain retells the tale, repeating it obsessively in hallucinations, flashbacks, and nightmares in a critical but fruitless search for understanding. In simple words, the traumatic experience never completely ends. Caruth explains:

what seems to be suggested by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is that the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that ... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. (*Unclaimed* 3-4)

Caruth uses this latency of trauma to the historical narrative in order to explain the interrelationship between trauma and history; yet, she casts doubt on the historical narrative’s legitimacy. The incident is so strong that it breaks time's linearity, allowing the victim to fully comprehend the incident at the time it occurs. Trauma is not documented when it happens, but rather is relived later. Trauma portrays a moment of crisis and disrupts standard representational strategies. Trauma theory becomes a reinforcing motivation of the deconstructive idea that narrative cannot correspond to the fullness of history as the referential

paradox of trauma is translated into the sphere of history. As a result, the two-fold effects of trauma are considered: “its testimony to the event and to the impossibility of its direct access” i.e. the desire to witness and the avoidance of complete comprehension (*Trauma Explorations in Memory*9).

In line with the concept of “inherent latency of the event”, Caruth expands on her research to consider this delay to be important to the sense of historical trauma. She views latency as a history that can only be comprehended in the inaccessibility of its occurrence; the process of traumatic event narration aids the survivor in comprehending the event that he or she refused to recognize psychically at the time of its occurrence. For Caruth, the “latency” through which the event returns to recapture the victim is, precisely and ironically, the path toward history, an indirect entry troubled by the uncertainty of memory. Such a choice calls into question the authority of historical accounts because it creates, as Caruth assumes, a “crisis of truth” that is the result of the tension between the event's instant presence and delayed effectiveness (*Trauma Explorations* 8).

Writing about war trauma is certainly a challenging act. The challenge stems from the stress that trauma engenders. In the recent literature the impacts of war stress on Vietnamese troops were assessed by three difficulties. In his study about war stress and trauma, R. S. Laufer focuses on the challenges of writing about trauma. First, most studies of the impacts of war have focused only on the tensions and issues caused by returning from the combat zone to a civilian community in which the war was unpopular and soldiers got a minimal moral support and encouragement for the sacrifices they had done for their nation. This approach does not address the effect of war-trauma on its victims, but it deals with the moral nature of war as well as the indirect ways of social exclusion and the moral questioning awaiting soldiers on their return. Hence, the influence of war experience on veterans is less of an issue than the impact of the popular response to war has upon veterans (Laufer et al. 66)

Secondly, some war effects analyses centres their research exclusively on the distinction between veterans serving in Vietnamese areas and non-veterans. This simple contradiction is used as a measurement. With combat exposure, many of these studies have concluded that combat experience had modest or insignificant impact on veterans' later lives. Exposing to war trauma is somehow irrelevant. When it is triggered in this manner, because the impacts of experiencing a real war events are reduced by “averaging these effects over the full population” of individuals who fought in the theatre of war. The idea that everyone who served in Vietnam had the same amount of war trauma fails to tackle the issue: “what is important about the war as a stressful experience” (Laufer et al. 66).

The third issue that occurs in the research clearly defines war trauma as combat exposure. This research characterizes war trauma and combat exposure as a single dimension. However, war trauma, on the other hand, can have numerous aspects. Combat has been defined as a series of events in which a person interacts directly with the opponent, in the form of combat by shooting weapons and killing “an enemy soldier”; had his life endangered by military attack; and experienced the accompanying physical and psychological distress. This notion of “combat and war trauma” is indirectly based on “a traditional understanding” of a struggle in which specific geographical regions are occupied by enemy soldiers and the veteran's closeness to such areas reflects their amount of combat exposure (Laufer et al. 67).

II.1.1. Vietnam Trauma:

In the twentieth century the world had witnessed so many wars in different parts of the globe such as: the two world wars, the Gulf War, and the Vietnam War to mention a few. This latter is one of the most known wars that had devastating consequences on the life of both American troops and Vietnamese citizens. The Vietnam War was a violent battle that defined a generation and continues to remain in the thoughts of both Americans and Vietnamese. The United States had no reason to get involved in Vietnam, yet it did so nonetheless and inflicted

significant harm on the region with no possible justification for the agony endured by the Vietnamese and the lives lost by American soldiers. Vietnam War was mostly narrated by soldiers who experienced and witnessed traumatic events in times of combat, which, in turn, made them disproportionately traumatized. Writing their story was their only way to escape from those painful memories to deal with the war and coping with it, in order to mourn that wound (de Lima 26).

In his book *The Soldier's Tale*, Samuel Hynes writes “on the evidence of many men’s narratives from many wars: most men do feel war’s high excitement and romance, and even its beauty (to which there are many testimonies), and not only before they experience war but after” (27). This excitement is something that some warriors never lose. They enjoy the conflict and “love the war”. However, one could question what “these men love”. These men love “Not the killing and the violence, I think, but the excitement, the drama, and the danger—life lived at a high level of intensity, like a complicated, fatal game (or a Wagnerian opera)”. The excitement of the war is definitely present in their "memoirs", it acts as a driving force that pushes the soldiers on even on their darkest days, although it makes good soldiers, it is not good for their "memoirs" (qtd. in De Lima 26). When soldiers who are both aware of their own sentiments and sincere to themselves reflect on their experiences as soldiers, they admit to missing the old days and “feeling nostalgia” for that “strange, exciting world”. This is perhaps another reason why they write (De Lima 26).

The trauma of the Vietnam War was not so different than the trauma of any other war: loss, disillusion, and, in many cases, a devaluation of life. What distinguishes the trauma of the Vietnam War from the trauma of other twentieth-century wars is that representations of the Vietnam War experience shows the symptoms of trauma in its delay and recurrence, the struggle of Vietnam War survivors with surviving, and the lack of community that accompanies survival. Veterans come home from the war bringing confusion and the feeling

of being a stranger in their home with them. This confusion creates a solitary, isolated life that spreads to a broader group as a confidence crisis (Eastman 7-8).

The Vietnamese War is a trauma zone that many still deny that this trauma has ended, which is why we tend to witness attempts in Post-Vietnam War fiction novels to depict this trauma. The Vietnam War, at least in its literary depictions, is distinguished from previous twentieth-century conflicts by the nature of its portrayals, which include aspects of recurrence, delay, and open ends. In depictions of these other wars, the record or narrative is usually complete. The story re-merges the individual into society; and once the person and community have been merged, the journey of healing begins and that did not happen in the Vietnamese aftermath literary works (Eastman 8).

Authors are extending the limits of narratives to portray the Vietnam war traumas. Novelistic depictions of the Vietnam War usually have a succession of alternative endings and a repeating nature that attempts to express the trauma of this war that is frequently accompanied by fragmentary, disorganized, or repetitious writing as in Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge* and Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War*.

Monkey Bridge is a novel by Lan Cao that explores the complicated experience of a Vietnamese refugee through the eyes of a mother-daughter relationship between Mai Nguyen and her mother Thanh, and their interconnected stories. Mai, a Vietnamese refugee, arrives in America on the day Saigon falls in 1975, lives in Falls Church, and is joined by her mother, Thanh, a few months later. *Monkey Bridge* represents the diasporic, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural conflicts that both the mother and daughter must deal with in order to create a future in the United States through mother/daughter and first/second generation immigrant connections (Kristel par.1).

The effects of war on Vietnamese families, the characters' struggle of identity and self-identification trying to become hybrid (both American and Vietnamese at the same time), the loss of the home land, “maternal body”, and memories are all key topics that Lan Cao discusses in her novel. The mother-daughter connection is mostly influenced by both women's traumatic memories, with each responding in her own unique way. Instead of asserting that trauma completely destroys identity, *Monkey Bridge* proposes that trauma, as a challenging concept, deconstructs and reconstructs previous vision of self, reality, and person's relationships with the world (Kristel par.1).

Bao Ninh is a North Vietnamese veteran, who used writing to mourn his traumatic experience in the Vietnam War. His novel *The Sorrow of War* portrays war as something that kills its participants while they are “young, very pure, and very honest” (233), leaving a legacy of “sublime sorrow, more sublime than happiness, and beyond suffering” (*The Sorrow of War* 232). The protagonist Kien, the narrator, is a soldier who becomes a writer. He serves in the military just after graduation. He recalls the horrors of war, as well as his unsatisfying relationships with his father and Phuong, the girl he loves since childhood, in a narrative that jumps back and forth in time from present to past and vice versa. His story begins with a mission to find bodies following a major conflict. The author has the proper foundation for writing this work as he is one of ten surviving members of a youth brigade that was once combined of 500 members, but more significantly, his chemistry converts the recognized horror of a real conflict into glass doors (Kirkus).

II.2. War Trauma in Tim O'Brien's “The Man I Killed”

The Things They Carried is a compilation of twenty-two interlinked short tales about a battalion in the Vietnam War of US troops. Considered a fictional work, O'Brien purposefully blurs the boundary between truth and fiction with characters that seem to exist. In this work, the writer Tim O'Brien constructs “Tim O'Brien” as its protagonist. This fictitious army

persona enables the author to examine emotions as fictional inventions, and therefore challenges the reader to see the tale as real. Tim O'Brien shares his life story and experiences in Vietnam. He narrates the horrors of combat that other soldiers tell him. *The Things They Carried* is a profound memory book, a strong reflection on war experiences and a self-aware analysis of the narrative approaches. On the act of narrating the war, O'Brien states:

You take your material where you find it, which is in your life, at the intersection of past and present. The memory-traffic feeds into a rotary up on your head, where it goes in circles for a while, then pretty soon imagination flows in and the traffic merges and shoots off down a thousand different streets. As a writer, all you can do is pick a street and go for the ride, putting things down as they come at you. That's the real obsession. All those stories. (The Things They Carried 34)

This quote shows that the war veteran becomes into much more than a “recorder” as he grapples with creative conflicts between his recollections of the battles and the changeable force of his imagination. Memory and imagination are tools that O'Brien uses to explore possibilities, solve issues, make decisions, and tell stories. Imagination may be a means of escaping the real world, or it may be a source of “danger”. For Tobey C. Herzog, “Imagination was a killer” (qtd. in de Lima 104).

The collection's introduction is also entitled, *The Things They Carried*. It is the part used to introduce, anxieties, memories, hopes, dreams, and, most importantly, stories that the narrator and other troops take with them, O'Brien employs a technique of enumeration. He describes the details of each “major character”, from “canteens, grenades, knives of the pockets, heat-tabs, dog-tags, C-rations, standard weaponry to emotional elements”. He states:

they carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing—these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific

gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories. and specific gravity, they had tangible weight. They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice barely restrained, the instinct to run or freeze or hide, and in many respects this was the heaviest burden of all, for it could never be put down, it required perfect balance and perfect posture. They carried their reputations. They carried the soldier's greatest fear, which was the fear of blushing. Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to. (25-6)

This paragraph illustrates O'Brien's focus on the themes of courage, uncertainty, and dread that troops bring into battle, in addition to demonstrating that the emotional load these warriors bore was too much to bear. The list of items they carried merely obscures the greater load, the psychological heaviness of their memories and experiences. The first part of the book begins with a list of fighters who have experienced personal and collective trauma. These characters will return in subsequent episodes. The story progresses by recounting the deaths of Alpha Company squad members until all have been found in the last part, which has the title "The Lives of the Dead", implying that these lives are not yet dead (de Lima 111).

This fictitious story about American troops who travel into the mountains, go through a traumatic experience, and after they return safely they address the anxieties of their listeners, who are preparing for their own terrifying mountain operation in the morning. It is genuine to their concerns and aspirations, whether it happened or not. Finally, the survivors' inability to inform others about their experiences suggests that, while narrative is a required mode of "expression for traumatization", "the trauma itself is incommunicable" (Mark A. Heberle 188).

Since the study deals with the importance of writing to heal trauma, the story "The Man I Killed" is selected to probe into O'Brien's trauma and feeling of guilt. O'Brien goes through "The Man I Killed" to recall his emotional breakdown after killing a Vietnamese

soldier. “The Man I Killed” is a part that takes a deep, introspective look into O’Brien’s suspected murder of a Vietnamese soldier. O’Brien utilizes minute bodily details, such as description of his injuries, which cover all of his body: “His jaw was in his throat, his upper lip and teeth were gone, his one eye was shut, his other eye was a star-shaped hole [...]” ... “His rubber sandals had been blow off. One lay beside him, the other a few meters up the trail” (101). Two of O’Brien’s mates, Azar and Kiowa, try to console him after he discovers the man’s death. During the whole narrative, O’Brien never communicates his feelings; in fact, he never speaks a word. The reader can only guess at his surprise, which he expresses by his silence and staring at the body: “Think it over,” Kiowa said. Then later he said, “Tim, it’s a war. The guy wasn’t Heidi – he had a weapon, right? It’s a tough thing, for sure, but you got to cut out that staring” “Listen to me,” Kiowa said. “You feel terrible, I know that” (103).

“The Man I Killed” ends with one sentence which is: “Talk” Kiowa said” (105). These words did end the story, but definitely it did not end the trauma, according to Heberle, trauma is shown as an “intrusive memory” that plagues the narrator, rather than as a past event. Although Tim is able to relive this traumatic experience, it remains unknown to others. Studies of PTSD survivors have also revealed that destruction of the enemy may be just as traumatic as the loss of one’s comrades, but ideological and social standards make public display of mourning more difficult in such circumstances. The narrator of O’Brien’s story reconciles his emotions by reconstructing the Vietnamese man in his own image, particularly his sense of responsibility to others, and by fantasizing that his perpetrator’s murder will be explained. However, no matter how much the narrator reimagines his own grief, it cannot be resolved or transmitted to others (Heberle 202).

This part again presents O’Brien’s story depicting his trauma through “mutism”, in fragments. Silence was his only reaction to the horror he has witnessed and the shock he went through made him speechless. The trauma in “The Man I killed” was not shown in a direct

way, it was evasively portrayed in a complicated manner that reflects the deep level of shock. Heberle argues, “the narrator cannot get over his own killing of the young soldier” (200).

Silence is not the only main traumatic element in “The Man I killed”. One of the most traumatic experiences is the “offender’s guilt”. Most studies on war trauma or traumatic experiences focus on the pain and suffering of the victims in order to understand their trauma; however, in “The Man I Killed”, O’Brien attempts to comprehend the trauma experienced by the “perpetrator of the violence” (Field 22).

Out of that guilt O’Brien has become obsessed with the life of his victim to the point that his own presence in the story disappears. As he does not utilize the first person to express his guilt and confusion, O’Brien negotiates his sentiments by working in fantasy through imagining a whole life for his victim, from his childhood and family to his thoughts about the war and about the Americans (*The Things They Carried* 101-5).

In the repetition of thoughts, sentences, and observations, his guilt almost takes on its own beat. Some of the concepts and ideas here, particularly the description of the victim, assist to underline O’Brien’s focus on the consequences of his actions. Simultaneously, his concentration on these physical traits rather than his inner sentiments reveals his desire to maintain some distance in order to ease the pain. Since O’Brien narrates the story from the protagonist’s point of view rather than the narrator’s, there is no narrative commentary on the protagonist’s actions, and we can only guess what O’Brien is feeling. He evokes a sense of unspoken silence about death in the war. In “The Man I Killed,” O’Brien employs some distancing strategies to run from his feelings but he takes them to an extreme, so he doesn’t provide any access to his feelings (*The Things They Carried* 101-5).

Despite the dialogue between Azar and Kiowa, O’Brien’s voice is not actually audible. Instead, O’Brien’s emotions are shown in his description of the dead man’s details. O’Brien

starts imagining the man's whole life in a manner of blaming himself for taking his life. O'Brien's character's reflection is poignant as it reveals that no level of military training can prepare a person for the consequences of a conflict. Furthermore, O'Brien's internal sentiments indicate his guilt in ending another person's life (Field 22).

Nothing can conceal the brutal truths of life and death, as seen by the futile words, attempted comfort from O'Brien's friends, and the apparent silence. Azar's harsh congratulatory words to O'Brien show his neglect of O'Brien's deep sense of guilt. In the other hand, Kiowa is kinder and patient with O'Brien's grief, although he realizes that he can relate to O'Brien to a limited extent. In the end, Kiowa appears more concerned in persuading O'Brien that the murder isn't such a huge thing than in aiding him in working through his feelings. O'Brien stands in the unavoidable "silence of Vietnam" in between the others' words, a silence that forces one to face the "reality of war" ("The Things They Carried").

O'Brien is actually comforting and tormenting himself by fantasizing that he shares certain qualities with the guy he murdered. Despite the fact that he has murdered a duplicate of himself, the resemblance that he imagines is a comfort for him. O'Brien struggles with and attempts to grasp the wrongness of his own death by relating to his victim in this manner. He imagines that the man he killed, like himself, as he describes him:

...the man I killed would have listened to stories about the heroic Trung sisters and Tran Hung Dao's famous rout of the Mongols and Le Loi's final victory against the Chinese at Tot Dong. He would have been taught that to defend the land was a man's highest duty and highest privilege. He had accepted this. It was never open to question. Secretly, though, it also frightened him. He was not a fighter. His health was poor, his body small and frail. He liked books. He wanted someday to be a teacher of mathematics. At night, lying on his mat, he could not picture himself doing the brave

things his father had done, or his uncles, or the heroes of the stories. He hoped in his heart that he would never be tested. He hoped the Americans would go away. Soon, he hoped. He kept hoping and hoping, always, even when he was asleep. (101)

This passage shows how the similarities he draws between the man he murdered and himself before the war, it demonstrates O'Brien's guilt over this man's death since he sees himself in the dead man. The way O'Brien imagined the man was brought up to think that he should be brave and fight, just as O'Brien felt forced to do. O'Brien sees himself reflected in the guy he murdered, and how they both felt compelled to fight. What makes the Vietnamese guy is shown as a projection of the character Tim's identity in this imagined history, which also reveals Tim's worry about his own relationship with his homeland. However, through the story, O'Brien aims to relieve some of the man's guilt and offer him a second chance at life.

In describing the death of the soldier, O'Brien focuses on the beauty of nature. O'Brien's words of his victim laying on the side of the road highlight the strangeness of conflict in the midst of nature. The juxtaposition of pictures is highly ironic, implying the sorrow of death in the midst of such beauty. The existence of the butterfly and the little blue blossoms, on the other hand, shows that life carries on even in the face of such overwhelming grief. In this manner, "The Man I Killed" is a narrative about the beauty of life instead of the awfulness of death ("The Things They Carried").

It is noticeable that "The Man I killed" follows a particular pattern that is an American soldier gets anxious and frightened after witnessing the death he perpetrated on a Vietnamese person and turns to some types of confused self-expression. In "The Man I Killed", the author used narration to tell the imagined story of the dead man as a form of self-expression. As Ruth Lahti writes in her journal "*Gesturing beyond the Frame: Transnational Trauma and US War Fiction*": "In this way, *The Things They Carried* stages at its very centre the situation of the survivor author as he turns from the anxiety provoked by the relational grounds of violence in

war to the one-sided refuge of fiction” (16). In other words, the collection of short stories depicts the situation of the surviving author as he transitions from the anxiety caused by the relational bases of war to the one-sided shelter of fiction, i.e. all of O'Brien's efforts to create this story, come from the candid description of the dead young man. Where O'Brien's guilt outweighs the need to write a new history.

To conclude with, indeed “The Man I Killed” exhibits war trauma in the Vietnamese war. The narrator O'Brien experience death in the war and killing for the first time. O'Brien finds himself lost between his principles and the laws of war where he had to kill a Vietnamese soldier and could not tolerate what he has done. Consequently, Tim O'Brien suffers from shock, trauma and guilt that cause him silence. In order to cope with his trauma, the narrator O'Brien recalls the story of the man he killed and describes the event with all the minor details as an attempt to give a chance for the young Vietnamese man to relive his life.

Chapter III: The Meaning of Death and Healing in “The Lives of The Dead”

The third chapter is an analytical one; It is divided into two parts. While the first section tackles the meaning of death in “The Live of The Dead” the second section of the chapter seeks to prove that writing traumatic experiences through fiction can reduce the negative impacts of trauma and encourage to heal it. Through the short story “The Lives of The Dead”.

III.1. The Meaning of Death

Losing a loved one to death is never easy. It is difficult to accept or conceive that one may never see his/her beloved people again because the idea of losing them forever is too painful. As if one’s life has come to an end with them passing away, he/she continues to live in his/her memories with them. Whenever the need to see a dead beloved possesses the person; the only way to make him/her feel secure is to resurrect him/her. This resurrection is precisely what O’Brien does in his story by reviving his childhood love.

In his last short story entitled “The Lives of The Dead”, O’Brien tells the story of Linda, a nine-year-old girl who was O’Brien's first love and who, despite their early age, always believed it was true love. As he introduced her:

Linda was nine then, as I was, but we were in love. And it was real. When I write about her now, three decades later, it's tempting to dismiss it as a crush, an infatuation of childhood, but I know for a fact that what we felt for each other was as deep and rich as love can ever get. It had all the shadings and complexities of mature adult love, and maybe more, because there were not yet words for it, and because it was not yet fixed to comparisons or chronologies or the ways by which adults measure such things. (178)

Unfortunately, O'Brien's love story was not perfect. As it was told in the story, Tim and Linda were classmates in the fourth grade; they both had real strong feelings for each other that made Tim believe that it was true love. Tim's parents managed a date for him and Linda. The date is perfect for the nine years-old lovers.

After their first date, Linda starts going to school wearing a red cap on her head, where she starts getting bullied because of wearing that cap every day. However, Tim is unable to defend Linda when she is bullied for fear of his reputation. He remains silent, he describes it: "Naturally I wanted to do something about it, but it just wasn't possible. I had my reputation to think about. I had my pride. And there is also the problem of Nick Veenhof. So I stood off to the side, just a spectator, wishing I could do things I couldn't do" (182). Tim could not tolerate the fact that he has not been brave enough to stand by Linda's side and defend her, what creates a feeling of guilt as he writes: "For me, though, it did matter. It still does. I should've stepped in; fourth grade is no excuse. Besides, it doesn't get easier with time" (182). Tim explains that the feeling of guilt does not heal with time, and he wishes he stepped up for the girl he loves. As he thinks that if he was brave at his childhood it would help him learn how to be brave in the war. However, that feeling of guilt does not only stem from the situation of Linda, but also for growing up as a man who wishes he had acted in a brave way as a child to prepare himself for his experiences as a soldier in Vietnam.

It is obvious that Tim does not forgive himself for not defending Linda as he keeps blaming himself for watching her going through all of that bullying while she is already suffering from a tumour. He writes: "Also, too, I might've stopped what happened next. Maybe not, but at least it's possible" (183). That line clearly shows O'Brien blaming himself for not doing anything, as if he punishes himself through blame. Hence, O'Brien believes that he could have done something and that things could have turned out differently and less painfully for Linda.

Tim O'Brien finds out about Linda's disease in a very dramatic way. When their classmate Nick Veenhof takes off the cap from Linda's head in front of the whole class, O'Brien feels shocked. This moment marks O'Brien's first traumatic incident in the story by learning that something is wrong with Linda. After the school incident, O'Brien's mother explains to him what a tumour is. By doing so, his mother informs him about the perilous situation of Linda's health which may not be cured. As she addresses him in the following passage:

bad things start growing inside us. Sometimes you can cut them out and other times you can't, and for Linda it was one of the times when you can't.

I thought about it for several days. "All right," I finally said. "So will she get better now?"

"Well, no," my mother said, "I don't think so." She stared at a spot behind my shoulder. "Sometimes people don't ever get better. They die sometimes."

I shook my head.

"Not Linda," I said. (185)

Grief and guilt do not leave Tim. Consequently, he writes about his fourth grade love three decades later in order to save her life. By doing so, O'Brien attempts to do what he could not do thirty years ago which he badly regrets. In this sense, he writes that "[a]nd as a writer now, I want to save Linda's life. Not her body—her life" (184). This is the reason why he remembers those events that increase his sadness and pain. Linda was Tim's first love and death experience, and her revival is for him, his way to bring her back to life. As he writes: "I needed that kind of miracle. At some point I had come to understand that Linda was sick,

maybe even dying, but I loved her and just couldn't accept it" (184). Linda's death is not easy on Tim, despite his knowledge of her illness.

In addition to the tragedy of the Vietnam War, O'Brien had a close experience with death when he was a child. Linda's death has left him traumatized, as it is seen by his rich imagery and contrasted language in describing her illness. Additionally, O'Brien remembers the first time he saw her head after her sickness as "a smooth, pale, translucent white. I could see the bones and veins...the exact structure of her skull". O'Brien adds further description as follows, "little patches of grayish brown fuzz" and "large band-aid at the back of her head, a row of black stitches, a piece of gauze taped above her left ear" (183). In the previous passages, rich imagery and details used to depict Linda's sickness demonstrate the shock and pain that this experience has given him. Decades later, he can recall exactly how her head appeared the first time he figured out about her disease. Furthermore, O'Brien applies divergent complexity in phrases, such as "patches of grayish brown fuzz" versus "translucent...bones and veins" to combine a child's memory with an adult's memory. The fact that he recalls this experience from both an adult and a child's perspective as well as his significant use of imagery indicate that he truly experienced it in real life. Hence this early experience with death remains with O'Brien even in his adulthood which makes him deal with death situations in the Vietnam War differently from his fellow soldiers.

The way Tim O'Brien deals with Linda's death in his childhood becomes his way of coping with all the deaths in his adulthood. Furthermore, the attention Tim pays to the details of Linda's body when he stares at her in the funeral parlour and the way he thinks it is different from his expectation continue to be his way of dealing with other coming deaths in his life. When O'Brien first hears of Linda's death, Tim O'Brien goes home trying to process what it means to be dead. He describes the moment in this quote: "I drank some chocolate milk and then lay down on the sofa in the living room, not really sad, just floating, trying to

imagine what it was to be dead. Nothing much came to me” (185). At the beginning, O’Brien could not believe that Linda is gone forever. As a consequence, he falls into a state of denial begging her to come back. The moment O’Brien closes his eyes, he sees Linda and talks to her for the first time. However, he could not identify whether it was a dream or a day dream of his own creation. In this vein, he narrates that, “I remember closing my eyes and whispering her name, almost begging, trying to make her come back. "Linda," I said, "please." And then I concentrated. I willed her alive. It was a dream, I suppose, or a daydream, but I made it happen” (185). It was the beginning of beautiful series of dreams and day dreams about Linda where she could be alive, moving, smiling and talking to him.

Additionally, O’Brien’s father seeks hard to divert his son’s attention away from Linda’s death by making him talk about it. However, the effect of his trauma and the horror of the scene of Linda lying inside the coffin looking very different, O’Brien refuses his father’s attempts. After the funeral Tim O’Brien continues to elaborate stories and create day dreams about Linda. Moreover, young O’Brien’s mind creates these fictional images of the beautiful and healthy Linda in order to cope with her death. In this instance, the visits of Linda in young Timmy’s dreams and day dreams comfort him. As a result, O’Brien gets used of Linda’s presence to the point of making excuses to go to sleep. This habit of constantly sleeping becomes O’Brien’s happy and safe refuge from his sad reality especially when he dreams about his and Linda’s secret meetings.

Tim therefore rescues himself by rescuing Linda. However, at the end of “The Lives of the Dead”, we’re reminded that, while stories can save lives, the lives that are saved are themselves fictions. Moreover, rescuing Linda was O’Brien’s way of feeling alive and safe from death; as if by saving her, he was attempting to rescue himself as well (Mark Heberle 214-5). O’Brien describes that as follow:

And yet right here, in the spell of memory and imagination, I can still see her as if through ice, as if I'm gazing into some other world, a place where there are no brain tumours and no funeral homes, where there are no bodies at all. I can see Kiowa, too, and Ted Lavender and Curt Lemon, and sometimes I can even see Timmy skating with Linda under the yellow floodlights. I'm young and happy. I'll never die. (191)

In that passage O'Brien describes the world he has created through stories, dreams and day dreams where Linda and his friends are still alive. In his world there is no tumour or death everyone is there alive healthy and happy and only there O'Brien can never die.

For Tim O'Brien, Linda's character symbolises innocence, and for him, her death represents the loss of his innocence because he experiences with her for the first time both love and death. However, both Linda and Tim lose their innocence forever when her sickness is revealed. It was not easy on the nine years old Timmy to deal with the loss of the person he thought he would love forever, nor for thirty-five years old Tim. Linda's death had a greater impact on Tim than the other soldiers' death. Linda, unlike the troops, did nothing to expose herself to the danger was faced with. However, as death's ubiquity and certainty became evident, first to Linda and then, to Tim, her death has become an inevitability and grief has become a negotiable emotion for him.

Tim tries to recall his experience during his childhood. The story goes from present to past and vice versa, it has no straight flow, alternating between the two settings. It has nostalgic and mournful feelings as Tim wants Linda to survive. It explains how death affects the lives of those left behind. Tim, for example, recalls Linda and their early life together, despite the fact that he is now an adult. Even after all these years, he still wishes Linda was still alive. The acts of those around him, as well as the deaths of those around him, always remind him of Linda.

Death is the major theme of “The Lives of The Dead”. It describes the impact that death has on the lives of those who are left behind. Tim, for example, recalls Linda and their early life together, regardless of the fact that he is an adult now. And even after all these years, he still wishes Linda was still alive. The acts of those around him, as well as the deaths of those around him, always remind him of Linda. To O'Brien, death is a horrific thing, but talking about it is the greatest way to let go and be optimistic. O'Brien uses dreams and stories in order to help him escape from his traumatic reality (Heberle 177-90).

III.2. Writing Fiction to Heal Trauma

The psychological effects of the war on the individual be it a soldier or a civilian are not miniature ones. Moreover, these effects remain present in the memories of the witness even years after the end of the war itself to shape his/her current reality. In order to approach these traumatic experiences, trauma writing stands as a delicate moderating act between the unspeakability and speakability of trauma, its unnarratability and narratability, and its incomprehensibility and comprehensibility.

Moreover, some trauma theorists claim that it is impossible to write about trauma. However, many other trauma theorists encourage the expression of traumatic wounds into literary words. In her two books *Trauma Explanations* and *Unclaimed Experience*, trauma theorist Cathy Caruth favors the transformation of the traumatic experiences into words. Meanwhile Caruth believes that attempting to unravel the inexplicable facets of trauma will decrease its complexities on individuals. In this sense, Caruth explores this literary expression of trauma as follow: “[T]he transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one’s own, and other’s knowledge of the past, may lose both the precision and the force that characterizes traumatic recall” (qtd.in Christa Schönfelder 31). In other words, Caruth claims that writing about traumatic wounds diminishes its painful impact on the writer.

Similar to Caruth, Whitehead and Vickroy believe that the importance of trauma narratives lies in its ability to perform trauma itself. Furthermore, Whitehead and Vickroy clarify that those trauma narratives “incorporate the rhythms, processes and uncertainties of trauma within [their] consciousness and structures” (qtd. in Christa Schönfelder 31). In addition to that, these critics highlight the fact that trauma is hard to be explained; however, writers who express traumatic experiences have succeeded in finding ways which make trauma understandable to some extent.

In “The Lives of The Dead”, O’Brien’s post-war reality does not only call into doubt his previously held beliefs about life/death, past/present, and fiction/reality; but it also conveys a fresh viewpoint on the function of story in the lives of both the living and the dead. This function clearly appears in the story. This story inaugurates with an interesting passage about the impact of stories on Tim O’Brien’s present life. As the narrator himself indicates in the following quote:

But this too is true: stories can save us. I'm forty-three years old, and a writer now, and even still, right here, I keep dreaming Linda alive. And Ted Lavender, too, and Kiowa, and Curt Lemon, and a slim young man I killed, and an old man sprawled beside a pigpen, and several others whose bodies I once lifted and dumped into a truck. They're all dead. But in a story, which is a kind of dreaming, the dead sometimes smile and sit up and return to the world. (176)

In the previous passage, O’Brien mentions many dead people from both his childhood and from his adulthood including: Linda, his three battle companions Lavender, Kiowa, and Lemon, and two Vietnamese men who were killed in the battle. Furthermore, the narrator creates a fantastical backstory for the “slim young [Vietnamese] man” he murdered. The fact

that O'Brien has already informed the reader about these events makes him utilize the previous paragraph to support the concept which entails that in a post-combat ontology, the act of remembering blurs the past/present dichotomy. In this case, the words "remembering" and "re-happening" are interchangeable (*The Things They Carried* 31). In addition to that, O'Brien refers to the difficulty of the alive/dead binary that arises in his post-war vision by associating storytelling with redemption. Before the war, Tim O'Brien took the alive/dead binary for granted. However, most of the work, according to what he says in "Lives of the Dead," is an attempt to refuse this idea.

In *The Things They Carried*; the Vietnamese war presents a constant traumatic experience for the soldiers especially in the battle field. Thus, these soldiers use an unemotional and harsh language as a mechanism of defence when they face horrific war events. Additionally, this defensive mechanism is used by these soldiers to lessen the effects of trauma on them by pretending not to care about those events. In that sense, Kal Tal claims, in *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, that soldiers in battles suppress their emotions, except anger, since they don't want to be perceived as feminine. And according to Tal, the military system encouraged this alienation of feelings of care and nurture, because it reduces the intimacy and sadness of the soldiers. Furthermore, those who expressed these kind of loving emotions were referred to as 'girls' or 'ladies.' In addition to that, Soldiers sought to demonstrate that they were brave and strong, so they used some phrases to express this alienation such as "There it is" and it "doesn't mean nothing" (qtd in Van De Voorde 80). As a consequence, this self-protective denial will eventually fail because it is unable to mitigate the terrible impact of a soldier's death. An example of unemotional language can be noted in *The Things They Carried*, through the use of the expression "there it is" (25) along with other expressions in order to move or at least lessen the dreadful situation the soldiers are faced with.

In his contribution to *Fourteen Landing Zones: Approaches to Vietnam War Literature*, Owen W. Gilman Junior claims that humour is a way used by soldiers in order to cope with death in the war and turn it to something unreal. In that context, Gilman states that:

To cope with death and its attendant anxiety, the soldiers of Vietnam had only the defensive mechanism of jokes (a motif already noted in Hasford's novel). Jokes provided a life-support system in the war, and sharing jokes forged a kind of desperate community, but the jokes made dark laughter, uncertain laughter—laughter meant to keep the spectre of death at bay: [...] No one should ever underestimate the bonding capacity of humor. [...] Yet *Going After Cacciato* shows that more, much more, than humor is needed to keep a community live and well in the face of life 's (and death 's) challenges. (qtd. in Van De Voorde 81)

In his study, Gilman argues that it is indeed important to use humour in order to gather community and group members together. However, he stresses on the fact that humour is neither suitable nor enough in situations of life hardships such as: wars.

The use of jokes as tool to deal with death during war can be seen in many scenes throughout *The Things They Carried*. One of these scenes earlier on in the work is when Lavender gets shot, Kiowa makes a joke about it when he returns from peeing. As O'Brien describes it, "A pisser, you know? Still zipping himself up. Zapped while zipping." (22). The joke helps Kiowa feel better, and the death does not seem as real to him. Moreover, when Kiowa himself dies later on in the work, Azar one of the troop members depicts Kiowa's death in the toilet as "wasted in the waste" and Dave Jensen one of the team members toosings "Lemon Tree" while plucking Lemon's body pieces off the tree (70). These jokes seem vicious and unlike his fellow soldiers, O'Brien who is new to the battle field cannot bear those jokes even when he recalls them later.

The comedy as a coping defence in face of trauma in *The Things They Carried* does not manifest in the jokes made by soldiers only but it also appears in their ironic and tragic deed. In this manner, the narrator describes their actions when someone dies as follow:

Dave Jensen went over and shook the old man's hand. "How-dee-doo," he said.

One by one the others did it too. They didn't disturb the body, they just grabbed the old man's hand and offered a few words and moved away.

Rat Kiley bent over the corpse. "Gimme five," he said. "A real honor."

"Pleased as punch", said Henry Dobbins. (176)

In the previous quote, O'Brien describes how soldiers attempt to reject mortality by acting roles as if the dead bodies are still alive. This indicates to what extent these soldiers are used to the scenes of death to the point of adopting such methods for survival.

According to Herbele, the title's contradiction encapsulates a major theme of "The Lives of the Dead" which represents the focus of Tim O'Brien in *The Things They Carried*. Herbele further explains that this contradiction entails "theway survivors carry the dead with them for the rest of their lives" (243). This means that this part is dominated by the theme of the dead rising from the grave. O'Brien resurrects characters by envisioning and animating them beyond the realm of concrete, sensory existence. *The Things They Carried* begins with Ted Lavender's death and concludes with his body waiting for a helicopter to transport wounded soldiers from a battlefield. Lavender is miraculously revived here, and Mitchell Sanders and the rest of the platoon converse with him before sending him home:

Mitchell Sanders smiled. "There it is, my man, this chopper gonna

take you up high and cool. Gonna relax you. Gonna alter your whole perspective on this sorry, sorry shit.”

We could almost see Ted Lavender’s dreamy blue eyes. We could almost hear him.

“Roger that,” somebody said. I’m ready to fly.” (181)

The facts are not as important as the “truth” that the tale has persuaded readers to accept. And the deceased are made-up characters in a “true war story” that saves Linda's and the other characters’ lives forever:

And right here, in the spell of memory and imagination, I can still see her as if through ice, as if I’m gazing into some other world, a place where there are no brain tumors and no funeral homes, where there are no bodies at all. I can see Kiowa, too, and Ted Lavender and Curt Lemon, and sometimes I can even see Timmy skating with Linda under the yellow floodlights. I’m young and happy. I’ll never die. (191)

In “The Lives of the Dead,” the deaths of other squad members, of the Vietnamese soldier O’Brien did or did not kill, and of Vietnamese civilians blend with the death of nine-year-old Linda, Timmy’s girlfriend in fourth grade. This section embodies and dramatizes what *The Things They Carried* has exemplified about “true war stories” and their relationship to traumatic experiences. Beginning with the clear statement that “stories can save us” (O’Brien 176). This final section brings back to life Ted Lavender, Kiowa, Curt Lemon, and “a slim young man I killed, an old man sprawled beside a pigpen, and several others whose bodies I once lifted and dumped into a truck. They’re all dead. But in a story, which is a kind of dreaming, the dead sometimes smile and sit up and return to the world” (176). By combining Vietnam with a love story, soldiers, and nine-year-olds; Tim the narrator moves

beyond the war in “The Lives of the Dead” demonstrating his prior assertion that “a true war story is never about war” (*The Things They Carried* 71).

O’Brien starts the story with a line “stories can save us” (176). In this section he describes the death of a childhood friend Linda. He compares the death of this girl with the deaths he encounters in the Vietnam War. He uses fiction to make the dead live again. According to him, the power of fiction lies in the resurrection of dead people. O’Brien proves he can keep his friends alive by telling stories as a way to save his own life. In this matter he writes that: “I’ll never die. I’m skimming across the surface of my own history, moving fast, riding the melt beneath the blades, doing loops and spins, and when I take a high leap into the dark and come down thirty years later, I realize it is as Tim trying to save Timmy’s life with a story” (191). In this part, O’Brien uses fiction to bring together past, present and future and merges them into one story through fiction. As if Tim O’Brien is trying to save his childhood version Timmy’s life with a story (Van de Voorde 78).

Writers claim that the act of writing may help people heal from moral injury. Veterans can re-examine and cope with their traumatic experience via writing. Also writers maintain that a veteran can achieve peace through sharing their traumatic experience. In her dissertation “Stories Can Save Us”: Writing as Therapy in War Literature, Poetry, and Memoir, Nicole Yoko Uchida claims that in Tim O’Brien’s work *The Things They Carried*, O’Brien offers a collection of short stories. Through these short stories, O’Brien suggests that the act of telling and writing stories may help in accomplishing healing (1). Furthermore, Uchida explains in her thesis how sharing the traumatic experiences through literary texts emboldens the collective characterization of trauma. Moreover, these literary texts provide a healing opportunity for the veterans with moral damage. In this vein she writes: “[T]he processes of creating and sharing traumatic experiences through war literature, poetry, and memoir encourages the communalization of trauma and, in these respective stories, ultimately offers

the opportunity for healing for veterans suffering from moral injury” (Uchida 1). In other words, writers who write their own personal experience pave the way to their recovery from trauma.

According to the story, O’Brien’s writing grows directly out of his trauma but refashions it beyond the unreality of death. Like the rest of the dead, and in the same way that the narrator’s stories bring Linda back to life, an image of him as a nine-year-old also does bring young Timmy back to life: “[T]here is no doubt that the Timmy smiling at the camera is the Tim I am now. . . . The human life is all one thing, like a blade tracing loops on ice: a little kid, a twenty-three-year-old infantry sergeant, a middle-aged writer knowing guilt and sorrow. And as a writer now, I want to save Linda’s life. Not her body—her life” (184). As if in saving her, therefore, he saves himself.

Near the end of “The Lives of the Dead,” however, we are reminded that while stories can save lives, what is saved is itself a fiction: “I’m forty-three years old, and a writer now, still dreaming Linda alive in exactly the same way. She’s not the embodied Linda; she’s mostly made up, with a new identity and a new name. . . . Her true war stories real name doesn’t matter. She was nine years old. I loved her and then she died” (191).

The facts are less important than the truth that the story has compelled us to believe. Employing the tropes of memory and storytelling for the last time as the book comes to an end, O’Brien uses them together not to represent the fact of death—even the dead are fictions in a true war story—but to save the lives of Linda and his other characters forever.

O’Brien seems to have saved his life through writing, in an article written by Michael S. Rosenwald about a phone call between him and O’Brien, Rosenwald writes: “The other day, I called him to chat about it, a conversation that quickly turned to how the war still consumes him, to how difficult it is to watch Burns make literature of it, to the fantasy he

creates every night to fall asleep” and added “I wrote the story mainly to keep myself alive,” O’Brien told me. “I guess to tell myself that you don’t have to be in a war to have been in a war”. Rosenwald follows that with a dialogue:

I asked O’Brien what watching these scenes was like for him.

“It makes me cry,” he said. “I can’t stop crying. I can’t stop thinking of what a waste it all was.”

His voice trailed off for a moment.

“It’s a sense of my life too — it was kind of wasted,” he said. (Micael S. Rosenwald)

O’Brien still feels the pain of the war, he feels it was a waste of time and lives. Meanwhile it hurts him how much pain, loss and grief he had to go through along with many other people for nothing.

O’Brien is considered as a trauma survivor who has translated what he could not bear into true war stories, Tim O'Brien goes through fear, guilt, and grief to find his own separate peace. His ability to memorialize a terrible war masterfully and the apparent resolution of his personal traumas make him even more compensated. As it is seen in the book, traumas are endlessly recycled through memory and storytelling or visually fabricated into multiple versions, that most of it are directly experienced by the author. Although the narrator’s inescapable and endless trauma have not cost him his life, writing about this painful trauma has enabled him to save it.

In conclusion, the representation of death in “The Lives of The Dead” is shown through the characters of Linda and the other soldiers. In this regard, Linda is O’Brien’s first experience with death and each time he loses one of his friends he goes back to his childhood. O’Brien resorts to his dreams and day dreams to see Linda alive and communicate with her.

In addition to that, O'Brien's friends Kiowa Lavender and Lemon's deaths were not easy on him. Moreover, the soldiers joke about dead bodies and death as a way to hide their repressed emotions. At the end, O'Brien succeeds in overcoming his war Trauma by narrating and writing fictional stories that translates his real experience in Vietnam.

Conclusion

Trauma is an emotional reaction to a stressful incident such as: a car accident, war, or natural disaster. It causes shock, denial, unpredictable emotions, memories, and strained relationships. Some people find it difficult to move forward in their life after going through a traumatic experience especially wars. War veterans for examples mostly suffer from an unexplainable silence and isolation that make them reject the post war life.

The generation of writers who grew up during the Vietnam War has written with compassion and understanding about that tumultuous period in American history. During the war and the post-war era, these writers were known for interpreting the reality of battle and the actual pain of war trauma. Tim O'Brien, a veteran and a writer, is one of the famous American writer of the Vietnamese war. His works portray the war in a highly realistic manner. O'Brien's works have received great critical and popular acclaim, because of his ability to translate the war experience into points of view on the most important themes of life and death. Through his remarkable work, *The Things They Carried*, this study draws attention to the question whether writing trauma through fiction helps the writer to heal the trauma or not.

This study has attempted to explain the theory of trauma. It explored the traditional theory of trauma by the German psychologist, Sigmund Freud, and the modern theory of trauma by the Doctor, Cathy Caruth, in addition to a discussion of different ideas about trauma of war. Moreover, this study examined the process of healing trauma through the concepts of mourning and melancholia. In addition to that, various literary works by different authors who have written about their own trauma through fiction were presented. Among these novels, *Faces in the Water* (1961) by the New Zealand writer, Janet Frame, which narrates her own experience in a psychiatric hospital in New Zealand. *Faces in The Water* was written as a therapeutical exercise while Frame was receiving a medical treatment in

London. Therefore, the novel is the representation of writing fiction to heal the trauma of the writer herself. Another literary text is *Comfort Woman* (1997) by the Asian American author Nora O. Killer. In this novel, Killer accentuates the historical trauma that Asian/Korean women have been through during wars, since they were forced on the sexual servitude to the Japanese military. Hence, this novel exposes a true story of a Korean refugee of WWII named Akiko.

The dissertation tried to discuss how translating real life trauma through fictional literature helps the writer heal, through the analysis of Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. one of the first chapter's sections tackled war trauma and how it is important to write about it. In addition to that it explains how writing about war trauma is challenging. Moreover, the dissertation tackled specifically Vietnam trauma, and what distinguishes it from any other twentieth-century wars trauma. Furthermore, some examples of literary works were written by Vietnamese writers to express the war trauma in Vietnam, such as: Lan Cao's *Monkey Bridge*. *Monkey Bridge* is a novel that sheds light on the hard experience of the Vietnamese refugee, through a mother-daughter relationship between the teenage Mai Nguyen and her mother Thanh. The novel is used as a representation of the post war traumatic experience of the Vietnamese. Additionally, Bao Ninh's novel, *The Sorrow of War*, was used as a representation of how a veteran can use writing to mourn his traumatic experience in war. The novel portrays the dark side of the war from killing young people and leaving a legacy of pain and sorrow.

Another section tackles the trauma of war in "The Man I Killed". O'Brien addresses the guilt and shock of killing innocent people in wars and facing death for the first time in the battlefield through narrating his own experience in the Vietnamese war. Moreover, Tim O'Brien has killed a young man in the battle field, where it was the first time he sees a real dead body. O'Brien could not tolerate that he has killed a young man. This realization is

shocking to him. Furthermore, O'Brien feels guilty for killing the young man. He keeps describing him and imagining how his life was, his dreams, goals, and love story as if he is punishing himself for taking all that away. Thus, Tim O'Brien sees himself in the dead body of the young man he killed. Additionally, he keeps staring at the body of the young man without even moving or saying a word, but staring at each part of the body and insanely memorizing its details is his way of dealing with death.

There is another section which entails the theme of death in "The Lives of The Dead". Tim O'Brien is well known for his unique representation of the Vietnamese war that feels so real. In "The Live of The Dead", O'Brien narrates his first love story with the 9 years old Linda. Linda died at that age because of a brain tumour. The death of Linda was O'Brien's first experience with death, where he could not deal with. It was his first traumatic experience where he lost the girl he was in love with. In the short story, O'Brien uses resurrection to mourn Linda's death and cope with it. Moreover, O'Brien dreams and daydreams about Linda did not end in his childhood but it became his escape from his horrific reality. He has created a world where there is no sickness and no death where he can be young, healthy and happy world where he can never die.

The final part shows how writing trauma through fiction heals the trauma and helps to mourn it. The story of "The Lives of The Dead" starts with line that says "stories can save us" (176). In this story, O'Brien recalls the stories of Linda his fourth grade lover, his squad members: Kiowa, Lavender and Curt Lemon, and the dead Vietnamese old man. All these stories were recalled to remind O'Brien that he is alive. Moreover, O'Brien uses resurrection to bring Linda, his friends and the man he killed to life again as if he is giving them a second chance to life. Furthermore, it was hard for O'Brien to tolerate the way soldiers used jokes to deal with death in an unemotional way. he could never get used to it. Thus the soldier's harshness was their only way to cope with the war since they were asked to separate their

emotions from their experiences. They were humiliated and called names like “ladies and girls” if they ever show any kind of emotions except anger. In addition to that the dissertation discusses how writing trauma is very beneficial and how it was an escape for O’Brien to dispose of the heaviness of the war scenes he has witnessed. He used writing to translate the unspeakable pain of the war through a fictional realistic texts that hold all the heavy emotions he had.

Indeed, Tim O’Brien’s “The Lives of The Dead” reflects his traumatic experience in the Vietnam War through his writings. In the short story “The Man I Killed” O’Brien translates his shock and guilt for killing the young Vietnamese soldier. Additionally, O’Brien significantly accentuates his traumatic experience through his life moving from past to present and vice versa in “The Lives of The Dead”. In the *The Things They Carried* O’Brien tackles the power of storytelling, and how the stories can bring the dead back to life and make it feels like they were never gone. Thus, these stories save the narrator himself in his attempting of rescuing his beloved ones. Furthermore, Tim O’Brien used the writing fictional stories in order to dispose of the painful horrific memories. This helped him break the unspeakability of those traumatic memories, recall the stories and narrate them.

Work cited

- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Janet Frame". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 Mar. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Janet-Frame>. Accessed 3 June 2021.
- Cao, Lan. *Monkey Bridge*. 1997. Paw Prints, 2008.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- . *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. 1996. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.
- de Lima, Sérgio Marino. *The Translation of Traumatic Memories of the Vietnam War into Narrative Memory: Tim O'Brien's the Things They Carried and in the Lake of the Woods*. 2010, p. 174.
- Eastman, Susan Lynn. *Trauma: Survival, Repetition, and Repetition, and Representation in Aftermath Esentation in Aftermath Vietnam War Literature*. Aug. 2003, p. 75.
- Felman, Shoshana. "The Address to the Class." *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, by Cathy Caruth, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Field, Jenna C. "The Soldierly Code: War Trauma and Coping in Tim O'Brien's the Things They Carried." *Scientia et Humanitas: A Journal of Student Research*, 2020, pp. 16–27.
- Frame, Janet. *Faces in the Water*. 1961. Virago Press, 2008.
- Freud, S. (1917). "Mourning and Melancholia". The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, 237-258
- Freud, Sigmund. (1920). *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*. THE INTERNATIONAL

PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL LIBRARY press.

Freud, Sigmund. *Collected Papers. Vol. 5.* Hogarth Press, 1917.

Gambaudo, Sylvie. "Melancholia in Janet Frame's *Faces in the Water*." *Literature and Medicine*, vol. 30 no. 1, 2012, p. 42-60. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/lm.2012.0008.

Haven, Cynthia. "Two Famous Authors Discuss One War: Tim O'Brien, Tobias Wolff on Writing about Vietnam." *Stanford University*, 26 Jan. 2011.

Heberle, Mark A. *A Trauma Artist: TIM O'BRIEN and the Fiction of VIETNAM*. 2001, p. 375. Accessed 2021.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. 1992. Basicbooks, 2015.

Kenway, Jane. "A Melancholic Melody." *Education, Social Justice and the Legacy of Deakin University: Reflections of the Deakin Diaspora*, edited by Richard Tinning and Sirna Karen, Sense Publishers, 2011.

Kirkus. *THE SORROW of WAR* / *Kirkus Reviews*. 2010. *Www.kirkusreviews.com*, Pantheon, www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/bao-ninh/the-sorrow-of-war/. Accessed 21 June 2021.

kirsty. "'Faces in the Water' by Janet Frame." *TheLiterarySisters*, 23 Mar. 2017, theliterarysisters.wordpress.com/2017/03/23/faces-in-the-water-by-janet-frame/. a blog for all things bookish.

Kristel. "- Monkey Bridge by Lan Cao." *Sites.google.com*, 2010, sites.google.com/site/lancaomonkeybridge/home/group-3/analysis/kritel-s-analysis. Accessed 17 June 2021.

Lahti, Ruth A. H. "Gesturing beyond the Frame: Transnational Trauma and US War Fiction." *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2012, 10.5070/t842012749. Accessed 23 June 2021.

- Laufer, Robert S., et al. "War Stress and Trauma: The Vietnam Veteran Experience." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1984, pp. 65–85, www.jstor.org/stable/2136705?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents, 10.2307/2136705. Accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
- Madsen, Deborah Lea. "Nora Okja Keller's Comfort Woman and the Ethics of Literary Trauma." *Concentric*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2007, pp. 81–97, archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:87862. Accessed 4 June 2021.
- Ninh, Bào. *The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam*. 1987. Anchor Books, 2018.
- Nora Okja Keller. *Comfort Woman*. 1997. Virago Press, 2012.
- "Nora Keller." *Prabook.com*, prabook.com/web/nora.keller/2107587. Accessed 4 June 2021.
- O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. 1990. Mariner Books, 2019.
- Ricciardi, Alessia. *The Ends of Mourning: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Film*. Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Rosenwald, Michael S. "Analysis | 'It Makes Me Cry:' Tim O'Brien's Vietnam War Wounds Will Never Heal." *Washington Post*, 24 Sept. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/09/24/it-makes-me-cry-tim-obriens-vietnam-war-wounds-will-never-heal/. Accessed 25 July 2021.
- Schönfelder, Christa. "Theorizing Trauma Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds." *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction*, Transcript Verlag, 14 May 2013, p. 346.
- . "Theorizing Trauma Romantic and Postmodern Perspectives on Mental Wounds." *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction*, Transcript Verlag, 14 May 2013, p. 346.
- TalKali. *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Uchida, Nicole Yoko. "*STORIES CAN SAVE US*": *WRITING as THERAPY in WAR LITERATURE, POETRY, and MEMOIR*. 1 Aug. 2017, p. 76.

Van de Voorde, Eline. "*The Burden of Being Alive*" a Trauma-Theoretical Reading of Tim O'Brien's *the Things They Carried*. May 2007, p. 96.

المخلص

تركز هذه الدراسة على قدرة فعل كتابة الصدمة على علاج جروحها. يلجأ العديد من الكتاب الى الخيال للتعافي من صدماته السابقة وتحرير مشاعره السلبية. من بين هؤلاء الكتاب، يمكن ذكر الكاتب الامريكي تيم اوبراين الذي تجسد كتاباته استراتيجية علاجية. مجموعته القصصية "الاشياء التي حملوها" (1990) مناسبة جدا للموضوع حيث انها سرد لتجربة اوبراين في حرب الفيتنام. في هذا العمل، اوبراين يوضح كيف يستخدم مخيلته للتخلي عن صدمة الحرب. هذا البحث يعتمد على نظريات سيغموند فرويد و كاثي كاروث عن الصدمة لدراسة تأثير كتابة المشاعر الصادمة على عملية الشفاء. يتناول الفصل الأول نظرية الصدمة مع تمثيل الصدمة في بعض الأعمال الأدبية. إضافة الى ذلك الفصل الثاني يحلل صدمة الحرب في القصة القصيرة "الرجل الذي قتل"، كما يناقش الصدمة والشعور بالذنب التي يعاني منها قدامى المحاربين في حرب الفيتنام. تناول الفصل الثالث معنى الموت في القصة القصيرة المسماة "حياة الموتى" من خلال التأكيد على تأثير كتابة الصدمة في ترجمة عدم استيعاب عدم القدرة على الكلام والصمت لصدمة الحرب.

Résumé

Cette étude se concentre sur la capacité de l'acte d'écriture un traumatisme à guérir les blessures traumatiques. De nombreux écrivains utilisent la fiction pour se remettre de leurs traumatismes passés et libérer leurs émotions. Parmi ces écrivains, on peut citer l'écrivain Américain Tim O'Brien dont l'écriture incarne une stratégie thérapeutique. Son recueil de nouvelles "les choses qu'ils portaient" est très approprié au thème car c'est un récit qui raconte l'expérience d'O'Brien dans la guerre du Vietnam. IL utilise son imagination pour abandonner le traumatisme de la guerre. Cette recherche s'appuie sur les théories du traumatisme de Sigmund Freud et Cathy Caruth pour examiner l'impact de l'écriture de sentiments traumatiques sur le processus d'échauffement. Le premier chapitre traite la théorie du traumatisme avec la représentation du traumatisme dans certaines œuvres littéraires.

Le deuxième chapitre analyse le traumatisme de la guerre dans la nouvelle intitulée "L'homme que j'ai tué ".IL traite du traumatisme, du choc et de la culpabilité que les vétérans subissent pendant la guerre du Vietnam. Le troisième chapitre traite du sens de la mort dans la nouvelle intitulée « les vies des morts » en insistant sur l'impact de l'écriture du traumatisme dans la traduction de l'indicible incompréhensible et du silence du traumatisme de la guerre.